

2015-2016 Edition

PRACTICING  
**TEXAS**  
POLITICS



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# The Politics of Interest Groups



## Chapter 7

# Learning Objectives

- 7.1 Explain what interest groups are, why they form, and what their essential characteristics are.
- 7.2 Describe the types of interest groups and analyze the qualities of a powerful interest group.
- 7.3 Evaluate the kinds of activities that interest groups use to influence Texas government.
- 7.4 Analyze how interest groups are

~~regulated and evaluate the effectiveness of these laws.~~

# Interest Groups in the Political Process

- What Is an Interest Group?
  - Pressure group, a special interest group, or a lobby
  - Seeks to *influence* government officials *regardless of their party affiliation*, not run government
  - Intermediaries for those sharing common interests

# Interest Groups in the Political Process

- What Is an Interest Group?
  - Serve the interest of their members by providing functional representation within the political system
  - Business people, laborers, farmers, religious groups, racial/ethnic groups, teachers, physicians

# Interest Groups in the Political Process

- What Is an Interest Group?
  - Groups composed of people who have similar interests but who many not constitute a majority in any city, county, legislative district or state

# Interest Groups in the Political Process

- The Reasons for Interest Groups
  - **Legal and cultural reasons**
    - Right of association/petition government for grievances (Vietnam ,Civil Rights)
    - Nation's political culture encouraged citizens to organize themselves into a bewildering array of associations

# Interest Groups in the Political Process

- The Reasons for Interest Groups
  - **Decentralized government**-not concentrated at the top
  - National/50 states and states with local government. (vertical)
  - Within each level of government, power is separated into three branches or departments; legislative, executive, and ~~judicial~~ (horizontal)
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# Interest Groups in the Political Process

- The Reasons for Interest Groups
- **Strength of the party system and political ideologies**
- Lack of strong, organized political parties can particularly affect policymakers (state and local); less party line voting and more susceptible to pressure from well organized groups (Establishment/Tea Party; liberal/conservative Democrats)



# Interest Groups in the Political Process

- The Reasons for Interest Groups
- **Strength of the party system and political ideologies**(developed systems of political, social, and economic beliefs)
- Ideologies not strong factors in Texas politics (though public officials are likely to have a stronger commitment to ideological beliefs than most voters)  

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Public officials rely more on their constituents or on the issues and less on ideology

# Interest Groups in the Political Process

- Characteristics of Interest Groups
    - Join for financial, professional, or social reasons
    - Organizational patterns
      - Highly centralized → National Rifle Association
      - Decentralized alliances → trade associations
    - Members tend to be educated and have resources
- 
- Active minority and passive majority <sup>10</sup>

# Interest Groups in the Political Process

- Questions:

- Name at least two factors that motivate interest group formation

- Most interest groups have an active formation

# ▪ Texas Professional and Occupational Associations

## Health Related

Texas Dental Association  
Texas Health Care Association  
Texas Hospital Association  
Texas Medical Association  
Texas Ophthalmological Association  
Texas Nurses Association  
Texas Physical Therapy Association  
Texas Counseling Association

## Law Related

Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association  
Texas Civil Justice League  
Texas Trial Lawyers Association  
Mexican American Bar Association of Texas  
Texas Women Lawyers  
Texas Young Lawyers Association  
Texas Association of Consumer Lawyers

## Education Related

Texas American Federation of Teachers  
Texas Association of College Teachers  
Texas Classroom Teachers Association  
Texas PTA (Parent Teacher Association)  
Texas Community College Teachers Association  
Texas State Teachers Association  
Texas Library Association  
Texas Association of College and University Student Personnel  
Texas Faculty Association  
Texas School Counselor Association  
Texas Association of School Administrators

## Miscellaneous

Association of Environmental and Engineering Geologists (AEG) Texas  
Texas Society of Architects  
Texas Society of Certified Public Accountants  
Intelligent Transportation Society (ITS) Texas



**Critical Thinking Question:** *Review these professional interest groups. Given your professional goals, which interest group might you join? What, do you suppose, would be the advantages of joining a professional interest group?*

# Types of Interest Groups

- Economic Groups
- Promote their members' economic self-interest (lower taxes, a lessening or elimination of price and quality controls by government, minimal concessions to labor unions.
- Trade associations and labor unions
  - promote policies that will maximize profits and wages

# Types of Interest Groups

- Economic Groups
- Association of Business (TAB) and Chamber of Commerce is broader type of interest group known as an umbrella organization; cover many businesses)

# Types of Interest Groups

- Economic Groups
- Individual corporations (AT&T that uses the political process to promote a company's particular economic interests of single type (restaurant ass.)

# Types of Interest Groups

- Economic Groups
  - Business groups
    - Texas Gaming Association (trade association)
    - Texas Association of Builders
    - Texas Good Roads and Transportation (highway construction, contractors, chamber of commerce, professionals, and transportation experts)
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# Types of Interest Groups

- Economic Groups (cont)
- Labor groups-increase wages, health insurance, unemployment safe working conditions
  - Texas State Employees Union
  - AFL-CIO

**Participants in a Texas AFL-CIO “Health Care Can’t Wait” rally, held at the Capitol building in Austin in 2013.**



**Critical Thinking Question:**

*Reflect on this photo. What impact do you think rallies have on lawmakers when passing legislation?*

# Types of Interest Groups

- Professional/Public Employee Groups
  - Professional groups-policies beneficial to members
    - State Bar of Texas
    - Texas Medical Association-passage of a constitutional amendment to impose a \$250,000 cap for non-economic damages in medical malpractice cases

# Types of Interest Groups

- Professional/Public Employee Groups
  - Public employee groups-resist efforts to reduce the size of state and local governmental bureaucracies
    - Texas Public Employees Association
    - Teacher organizations

# Interest Groups

- Social Groups
  - Racial and ethnic groups
    - NAACP
    - Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund
  - Women's groups
    - Texas Women's Political Caucus
    - League of Women Voters-Voters Guide

# Interest Groups

- Social Groups
  - Religion-based groups- policies to promote its religious interests
    - Christian Coalition
    - Texas Freedom Network (more social and not religious base; to challenge christian coalition)
    - Texas Industrial Areas Foundation (made up of churches and schools;more social as well. Increase Medicaid benefits, and CHIP)

# Interest Groups

- Sister organizations in San Antonio( Communities Organized for Public Service)-lobbied the legislature to allow cities to use sales tax revenue to create job training and early childhood development programs

# Interest Groups

- Public Interest Groups
  - Promote general interests of society rather than narrow private or corporate or labor interest; environmental, political participation, education-related
    - Common Cause Texas-governmental and institutional reform (open meeting laws, public financing of political campaigns)
    - Texans for Public Justice- campaign finance reform, limitations on campaign contributions by Political Action



# Interest Groups

- Public Interest Groups
  - Mother's Against Drunk Driving
  - Texas Right to Life
  - National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League (NARAL)
  - Texans for Education Reform

# Texas Public Interest Groups

## Education Related

Texas Parent PAC  
Texans for Education Reform  
Texans for Real Efficiency and Equity in Education

## Environmental

Texas Campaign for the Environment  
Texas Wildlife Association  
Environment Texas  
Sierra Club, Lone Star Chapter

## Public Participation and Social Justice

Texas Association of Community Action Agencies  
Communities Organized for Public Service  
Public Citizen/Texas  
The League of Women Voters of Texas  
Equality Texas

## Public Morality

Mothers Against Drunk Driving  
Texas Right to Life Committee  
National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League Pro-Choice Texas



**Critical Thinking Question:** *Review this sample of public interest groups. If given the opportunity, what central issue/concern would you create a public interest group around?*

# Interest Groups

- Texas Power Groups
    - Most powerful in Texas: business-oriented trade associations, professional associations, labor unions
    - Common traits:
      - Strong links to legislators (policy decisions) and bureaucrats (regulatory authority controls)
      - “Repeat players”
  - Headquarters in Austin
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# Interest Group Activities

- Participate in the political process
- Shape conflict and consensus in society
- Support Government officials who need support for their policies
- Galvanize coalitions among various groups

# Interest Group Activities

- Questions:

All interest groups have one objective in common: to promote their self interest

- Which are generally more powerful in Texas, business interest groups or labor groups

# Interest Group Activities

- Lobbying-Communicating with legislators or other government officials on behalf of an interest group for the purpose of influencing decision makers
  - Personal communication
    - Favors and gifts
    - Grassroots activities
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# Interest Group Activities

## Personal communication-

gain access, inform officials of their group's position on an issue

Choose the most appropriate target

Technology and cell phones

Make sure information is correct; often will tell the pros and cons to inform legislators; why their constituents will benefit

# Interest Group Activities

At present, no effective laws prohibit former Texas legislators from becoming lobbyists. Perry and Obama

Can use surplus campaign funds by lawmakers turned lobbyists for campaign donation to any public official

Favors and gifts-cannot exceed \$500 per calendar years (1 legislator and single lobbyists and must report gifts more than \$250 to the Texas Ethics Commission

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# Interest Group Activities

## Grassroots activities

- Create an image of broad public support for a group's goals, mobilizing support when needed
- Zip codes and legislator's district to influence vote
- Internet, Facebook, Twitter-generate information favorable to an interest group's cause and to spread it widely among legislators, other policymakers

Lobbyists wait in the halls of the state Capitol in hope of speaking with state legislators.



**Critical Thinking Question:**  
*Reflect on this photo. What do you think it takes to be an effective lobbyist? What skills are necessary?*

# Interest Group Activities

- Electioneering-Active campaigning by an interest group in support of, or in opposition to, a candidate; actions urging the public to act on an issue
  - Issue advocacy
  - Publicizing political records
  - Providing group membership info

# Interest Group Activities

- Speaking opportunities at meetings
  - Public endorsements
  - GOTV campaigns
  - Usually supports the incumbent and in the general election/not as much with primary campaigns

# Interest Group Activities

- Campaign Financing by Political Action Committees
  - Texas Ethics Commission-a State agency that enforces state standards for lobbyists and public officials, including registering of lobbyists and reporting of political campaign contributions

# Interest Group Activities

- Campaign Financing by Political Action Committees
  - PACs- raising funds and distributing financial contributions to candidates who are sympathetic to their cause (Accepting or making campaign contributions)
  - In Texas, no limits on what PACs (or citizens) can raise or contribute to candidates running for statewide or legislative offices. Exception in judicial cases

# Interest Group Activities

- Campaign Financing by Political Action Committees
  - Best indication of power among interest groups is the connection between the election campaign contributions of PACs and lobbying activities (2014- 1,800 PACs)
  - Coordinated effort to influence political process (the campaign) while also affecting policy decision in other areas (the legislative and executive branches)<sup>39</sup>

# Top Ten Biggest Texas PACs in Spending and by Interest Category, 2012 Election

Donor	2011–2012 Spending	Category
1. Texans for Lawsuit Reform	\$7,046,000	Focuses on lawsuit restrictions
2. Texas Association of Realtors	\$4,840,000	Business group
3. Associated Republicans of Texas	\$3,544,000	Supports Republicans
4. Texans for Insurance Reform	\$2,896,000	Trial lawyer group
5. Republican State Leadership Committee	\$2,726,000	Supports Republicans
6. Annie’s List PAC	\$2,726,000	Supports Democrat women
7. Republican Party of Texas	\$2,564,000	Supports Republicans
8. Border Health PAC	\$1,470,000	Focuses on health
9. Valero Energy Corp.	\$2,009,000	Business group
10. Texas Democratic Party	\$1,745,000	Supports Democrats



**Critical Thinking Question:** *What are your initial impressions regarding the types of interest groups that are the top ten donors in Texas elections? In your opinion, do certain interest groups have undue influence in Texas politics?*



# Interest Group Activities

- Bribery and Unethical Practices
  - Sharpstown Bank scandal (1970s)- bribes for passing deposit insurance bills as requested by Houston banker Frank Sharp. After this, candidates for Speaker of the House cannot give supportive legislators anything of value for their help or support in a campaign

# Interest Group Activities

- Bribery and Unethical Practices
  - Speaker Billy Clayton (1980)-accepted money for a state employee insurance contract (but never cashed the check)
  - Speaker Gib Lewis (1991)-two misdemeanor ethics charges by a Travis county grand jury. Paid fines and did not seek reelection but became lobbyists

# Interest Group Activities

- Bribery and Unethical Practices
  - Rep. Tom Craddick (2002) Texas Law prohibits a Speaker candidate from donating money to House candidates elections campaigns. Donated \$20,000 to political action committee and this PAC in turn gave all to eight GOP house candidates. Not charged with any violations of law

# Interest Group Activities

- Bribery and Unethical Practices
  - U.S. Rep. Tom DeLay (Accused of money laundering and conspiracy to launder of \$190,000 of campaign contributions from corporate contributions. At the time, no laws against using corporate monies to a PAC. Travis County grand jury (3) before indictment; Up to the Texas

Learning Check

~~Court of Criminal Appeals and tossed  
out all convictions~~

# Interest Group Activities

- Questions: Name two techniques lobbyists uses to influence legislators
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- Does Texas place limits on PAC contributions to candidates, as the federal government does?

# Power and Regulation in Interest Group Politics

- Regulation of Interest Group Politics
    - Texas Ethics Commission and new ethics laws (1991)
    - To increase the power of public prosecutors to use evidence when more than campaign contributions
    - Expanded disclosure requirements for ~~lobbyists and legislators~~
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# Power and Regulation in Interest Group Politics

- Regulation of Interest Group Politics
    - put a \$500 annual cap on lobbyist provided food and drink
    - Bans honoraria (gratuitous payments in recognition of political services for which there is no legally enforceable obligation to pay) and lobbyist-paid pleasure trips (unless legislators makes a speech or participates in a panel discussion)
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# Power and Regulation in Interest Group Politics

- Regulation of Interest Group Politics
    - Requires public officials to disclose any gifts valued greater than \$250 and include a description
    - Detailed records of political contributions and how this money is spent must be filed with the Texas Ethics Commission between two and seven times each year (electronic)
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# Power and Regulation in

## Interest

## Group Politics

- Electronic campaign disclosure reports
- Up to two days before election, will go on the next report
- “Late train” donations
- Don't have to report exact amounts  
Less than 10,000 and then in \$15,000 increments

# Power and Regulation in Interest Group Politics

## ▪ Regulation of Interest Group Politics

- Texas Election Code: weak and difficult to enforce
- Reform advocates and others contend that staff members with the commission are restricted from investigating complaints because of strict confidentiality rules that expose them to possible criminal prosecution

# Power and Regulation in Interest Group Politics

- Regulation of Interest Group Politics
  - The Texas Ethics Commission is required to dismiss any election code complaint if the respondent claims that the violation was a clerical error and corrects the mistake within two weeks

# Power and Regulation in Interest Group Politics

- Regulation of Interest Group Politics
- Texas law prohibits corporations and union from providing campaign contributions directly to candidates “ but soft money can be directed to state Republican and Democratic party coffers for “administrative expenses”
- Since they can't give directly to candidates, corporations and unions give to PACs and they in turn will spend on candidate

# Power and Regulation in Interest Group Politics

- Regulation of Interest Group Politics
- *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*-corporations, unions, and nonprofits could give to campaigns
- Texas overturned prohibition against super PACs in 2014. Corporations and unions are allowed to make expenditures independent of a political candidate (calls for the election or defeat)

# Power and Regulation in Interest Group Politics

- Regulation of Interest Group Politics
- In other words, still can't give directly to candidate but can have a Superpac in which they advocate for the candidate but cannot directly coordinate with the candidates campaign

# Power and Regulation in Interest Group Politics

- Regulation of Interest Group Politics
- Relationship between campaign contributions and policy decision (hard to prove)
- Campaign contributions are also connected to influential political appointments (both parties)
- Still favors incumbents and still inadequate though regulatory authority strengthened in 2003 (Sunset Advisory Commission)

# Power and Regulation in Interest Group Politics

- Interest Group Power and Public Policy
- **Internal Factors**
  - Sizable membership
  - Above average financial resources
  - Knowledgeable and dedicated leadership
  - High Degree of Unity



# Power and Regulation in Interest Group Politics

- Interest Group Power and Public Policy
- **Internal Factors**
- Alignment with broad public beliefs
- Interest groups are well represented in the structure of the government itself

# Power and Regulation in Interest Group Politics

## ▪ Interest Group Power and Public Policy

### External factors

- Strong relationship exists between the larger socioeconomic conditions in a state and the power of interest groups.
- States with high population levels
- advance industrialization
- significant per capita wealth

# Power and Regulation in Interest Group Politics

- Interest Group Power and Public Policy
  - high levels of formal education
  - Texas doesn't fit into this because though large population, has strong interest groups and weak parties.
    - Political culture( Free enterprise, distrust of government, one party town so less competition and political participation)

# Power and Regulation in Interest Group Politics

- Interest Group Power and Public Policy
- Weak political parties
- Unwieldy Constitution -Texas  
Constitution of 1876 and its many amendments have created state and local governments beset by weak and uncoordinated institutions

# Power and Regulation in Interest Group Politics

- Pinpointing Political Power
  - Extent of power is complex. Political decisions are made by a variety of individuals and groups. No top down or bottom up arrangement
  - Which individuals or groups have the greatest influence often depends on the issue or issues involved. (Issue-dependent)

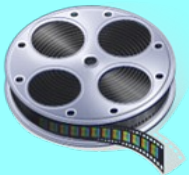
# Power and Regulation in Interest Group Politics

- Pinpointing Political Power
  - But organized interests groups in Texas have advantage over unorganized citizens

# Power and Regulation in Interest Group Politics

- Questions:
- Texas's campaign finance laws often involve public disclosure by public officials and lobbyists
- The Texas Ethics Commission is the primary state agency regulating political contributions and expenditures by lobbyists and public officials

# Clean Technologies



**Click picture to watch video**



# Video Discussion Questions

1. Why are industries such as TXU so powerful in affecting public policy?
2. How are clean technologies reflective of “good business”?
3. What other special interests are affected by the TXU initiatives?

