

Objective: Complete the activity listed below by reading the various documents and responding to the questions listed. Start by creating a new google doc, sharing it with me (cf_parkers@cftigers.org) and then properly labeling each section as you go through and respond to the various prompts. **This is due by the time you walk out of class on Friday, March 20th.** We will have part of Wednesday's class as well as Thursday and the shortened period on Friday. **I highly recommend you do not leave much left to be done walking into class on Friday, because not only is it a shortened period, but it is the Friday before spring break...How motivated are you going to be?**

Interest Groups

Interest groups (also known as special interest groups) are organizations of people with shared policy goals that enter the political process at several points to try to achieve those goals. Like the news media, interest groups are examples of linkage institutions, which connect "the people" to the government. This online activity explores the various ways that interest groups attempt to influence public policy. Specifically, it will focus on two categories of activity: indirect lobbying, and litigation. Direct lobbying will be covered in a future class.

Indirect Lobbying - "Going Public" and "Grassroots" Activism

Step 1 - *Indirect lobbying, in which special interest groups use public opinion to put pressure on politicians, is one of the most powerful and fastest-growing kinds of lobbying. Indirect lobbying strategies include "going public," using media like television, radio and the Internet to promote an issue. Related to this is "grassroots" activism, or the mobilization of ordinary citizens throughout the country to contact their representatives and express support of a group's position.*

- *The following web links illustrate different forms of activism practiced by various interest groups.*
 - *A few groups involved in the political arena are [Americans for Prosperity](#), founded by billionaire David Koch of Koch industries. And the [American Association for Justice](#), founded by a group of plaintiff's attorneys in 1946. Describe the message of the two groups? Are their websites effective at spreading their message? Why or why not?*
 - *Another interest group, the conservative and business-friendly Freedom Works, relies on donations from some major corporations, including AT&T and Verizon, although it does not publicly reveal its corporate contributors. Check out [this web page](#) from Freedom Works, which involved itself in several fights in the political arena. In what ways does the organization suggest*

people can impact government action? How is this an example of grassroots activism?

1. Last year, the U.S. Department of Defense was in the process of deciding which company would be awarded a \$35 billion contract to build an Air Force refueling plane. The contest was between two manufacturers, Boeing and the European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company (EADS). In the months leading up to the decision, the two manufacturers plastered Washington, D.C. with print and media ads. Here's an example of a [print ad by EADS](#). What is the purpose of the ad? Having been published in Washington, D.C. news publications, who do you think is the intended audience? Do you think it is ethical for a manufacturer to promote government spending on their product in this fashion?
2. Read "[The Return of the Dirty Dozen](#)" about the actions of an environmental group. This is an example of a "[legislative scorecard](#)." What does the article describe? How successful was the group in achieving its goals?
3. The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) has established [this web page](#). Have a look around. What is the purpose of the page? What proposed legislation is highlighted on this page, and why do you think members of the AARP might be concerned about this legislation? How effective do you think the AARP's website might be in influencing legislation?
4. Interest groups don't only attempt to influence legislation. Since the court system is responsible for some of the most important policy decisions in recent U.S. history, special interest groups attempt to influence the Supreme Court judicial [confirmation process](#). For example, the National Rifle Association (NRA), the most powerful gun rights group in the country, put together an [ad campaign](#) in opposition to the confirmation of Supreme Court Justice nominee Elena Kagan. What is the message of the campaign? Is it an effective campaign? Why or why not?
5. Examine [this list of the most influential interest groups](#) in 2014. Then compare that to this [list of PAC's that contributed the most to candidates](#) in 2013 - 2014. What do the most influential interest groups tend to focus on? Who seems to be getting the most support? Why do you think this is? Why do you think some groups focus on direct lobbying, while others focus on indirect lobbying?

Litigation - Interest groups often pursue their agendas via the court system.

1. Traditionally, matters concerning immigration have been under the jurisdiction of the federal government. Local and state law enforcement officers tend to have little to no role in determining the immigration status of persons arrested or stopped for questioning. However, concern over what many residents saw as weak federal enforcement of laws controlling illegal immigration from Mexico prompted the state legislature of Arizona to pass a law in 2010 that requires police officers, "when practicable," to detain people they suspect are in the country without authorization and to verify their status with federal officials. The law also makes it a state crime - a misdemeanor - to not carry immigration papers.
2. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has been working to oppose this law. Read the [ACLU's "About Us" web page](#), then read [this description of actions taken by the organization](#) against the law.
 1. What is the purpose of the ACLU? What kind of interest group is it?
 2. What is the ACLU doing in response to the Arizona state law?
 3. What are the ACLU's arguments against the law?
 4. Do you agree or disagree with the ACLU's arguments? Explain.
3. Read the ["About"](#) and ["Our Work"](#) sections of the Americans United for Separation of Church and State website. Then read [this article from the Atlanta Journal Constitution](#).
 1. What is the mission of the AUSCS? What kind of interest group is it?
 2. How does the AUSCS pursue its agenda?
 3. What actions is the organization taking in the Atlanta area?
4. [This news story](#) is about a court case involving how airlines publish their fares. What branch of the federal government is at the center of this controversy? Why was the lawsuit initiated? By whom?
5. One option for interest groups interested in the outcome of a U.S. Supreme Court case is to file an [amicus curiae](#) brief. [This web page](#) contains documents related to the Citizens United ruling. Scroll down to the "Briefs and Documents" section.
 1. What is an amicus curiae brief?
 2. What kinds of organizations filed amicus curiae briefs for the Citizens United case?
6. This year, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010. Read [this article](#) and summarize the actions of special interest groups before the Court reached its decision.

