

What is an Interest Group

- Any organization that seeks to influence public policy
- Organizations outside the government that attempt to influence the government's behavior, decision-making, and allocation of resources
 - Examples: American Council on Education, American Cotton Manufacturers, NRA, NAACP, AMA, Sierra Club

Do you want a larger pie or a larger slice of the existing pie?



It must be a gourmet pie.



I don't eat meat.



Is it halal?



It must be organic beef slaughtered humanely



It's a plot to cut our meal break.



The pie culture is homophobic.



It's Pie in the Sky



■ Interest Groups - Need to Know Interest Groups

Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

Though our class activity will concentrate on only a few interest groups you are expected to become familiar with the following listed groups. Research to familiarize yourself and to answer the following for each group.

- What are the goals of the interest group?
- What resources does the group have?
- What are the benefits of being a member of this group?
- What information is available on the site?

1. American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)
2. American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
3. American Federation of Labor (AFL-CIO)
4. National Education Association (NEA) (www.nea.org)
5. American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)
6. Christian Coalition
7. Common Cause
8. League of Conservation Voters
9. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
10. National Organization for Women (NOW)
11. District of Columbia Chamber of Commerce

What are interest groups?

- **Interest groups** - private organizations that try to shape public policy by influencing the behavior of political decision-makers.
- Interest groups serve as **important instruments to attain democracy and serve the public interest.**
- Pluralists: interest groups an additional tool, NOT necessarily a problem.

Interest Groups? Political Parties? They're all the same...right?

- Interest groups do not nominate members to win elections & hold public office **but, they do influence elections**
- IG's represent specific interests, unlike PP's that represent a whole range of public affairs/issues.

Birth of Interest Groups

- Early Period - During the 1770s there were a number who agitated for American Independence
- 1830s-1860s - Anti-Slavery, Religious Associations
- 1900s on - NAACP, American Farm Bureau, Farmers' unions, 1960s and 1970s were BOOM years

What explains the rise of interest groups?

- Broad Economic Developments created new interests and redefined old ones
- Governmental Policy - wars create veterans, veterans interest groups, people who can become a lawyer, doctor qualifications
- Charismatic leaders that can gain a following for their interest

Interest Groups: Reason for their Growth

- Definition: Group with common interest that seeks to influence government
- Madison's Dilemma: Wanting both liberty and order
 - Allowing people the liberty to form groups and express their views could destroy the hope for an orderly society
 - *Political factions were inevitable ---Need to control their effects.*

Interest Groups: Reason for their Growth

- Pluralism: growth of interest groups prevents the concentration of excessive power in the hands of a few, and thus enhances democracy

DO YOU AGREE???????

Interest Groups: Reason for their Growth

- Specific reasons for growth:
 - Tocqueville: Americans have a propensity to join groups
“The liberty of association has become a necessary guarantee against the tyranny of the majority...I am therefore led to conclude that the right of association is almost as inalienable as the right of personal liberty”
 - Economic developments (farmers forming the Grange)
 - Govt. agencies create entry point for interest groups
 - Diverse population
 - Diffusion of power
 - Local chapters lure members and raise money

Interest Groups: Reason for their Growth

- Specific reasons for growth:
 - *Weakness of political parties*
 - 1970s reforms opened up the government process
 - Interest groups spark the rise of other interest groups to counter them
 - Rise of public-interest lobbies since the 70s.
 - Technology
 - Conservative reaction to excessive liberalism of the 60s and 70s

Types of Interest Groups

◆ Traditional

◆ Nontraditional protest

◆ Single Issue

◆ Public Interest

◆ Ideological

Types of Interest Groups...

Business and Trade
National Association
of Retail Grocers

Labor Unions
United Mine
Workers of America

Agricultural
Associated Milk
Producers

Professional
American Bar
Association

Promote Causes
The League of
Women Voters

Promote Welfare
American
Association of
Retired Persons

Religious
Christian Coalition

Types of Interest Groups

- Traditional - (promote economic interests of its members)
 - Agriculture - (Am. Farm Bureau Federation - nation's largest)
 - Labor - (AFL- CIO; Teamsters; Union membership on the decline)- on the decline
 - Business - (Chamber of Commerce)
 - Professional - (AMA)

Types of Interest Groups

- **Nontraditional protest** - (protest the status of its members and to convince government to take remedial action)
 - NAACP
 - NOW

Types of Interest Groups

- **Single Issue** - (get the govt. to take action on one overriding issue)
 - Right to Life league
 - National Abortion Rights league
 - NRA
 - MADD

Polarizing groups

Types of Interest Groups

- **Public Interest** - (bring about good policy for society as a whole)
 - Nader Groups
 - League of Women's Voters
 - Consumer's Union
 - Sierra Club

Types of Interest Groups

- **Ideological** - (convince govt. to implement policies that are consistent with their philosophies- based upon a coherent set of principles)
 - Christian Coalition
 - ACLU
 - “Think tanks” (Brookings Institution)

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Types of Interest Groups

Public Interest Groups (citizen groups)

- Interests that are connected in one way or another to the general welfare of the community
- Primarily non-economic groups motivated by:
 - ideology
 - the desire to advance a general cause
 - the commitment to some public policy

They attract members using
***solidaristic or purposive
incentives***

Public Interest Groups

- Try to get government to do things that will benefit the general public.
- Number of public interest groups has increased markedly since the 1960s.



Private Interest Groups (economic groups)

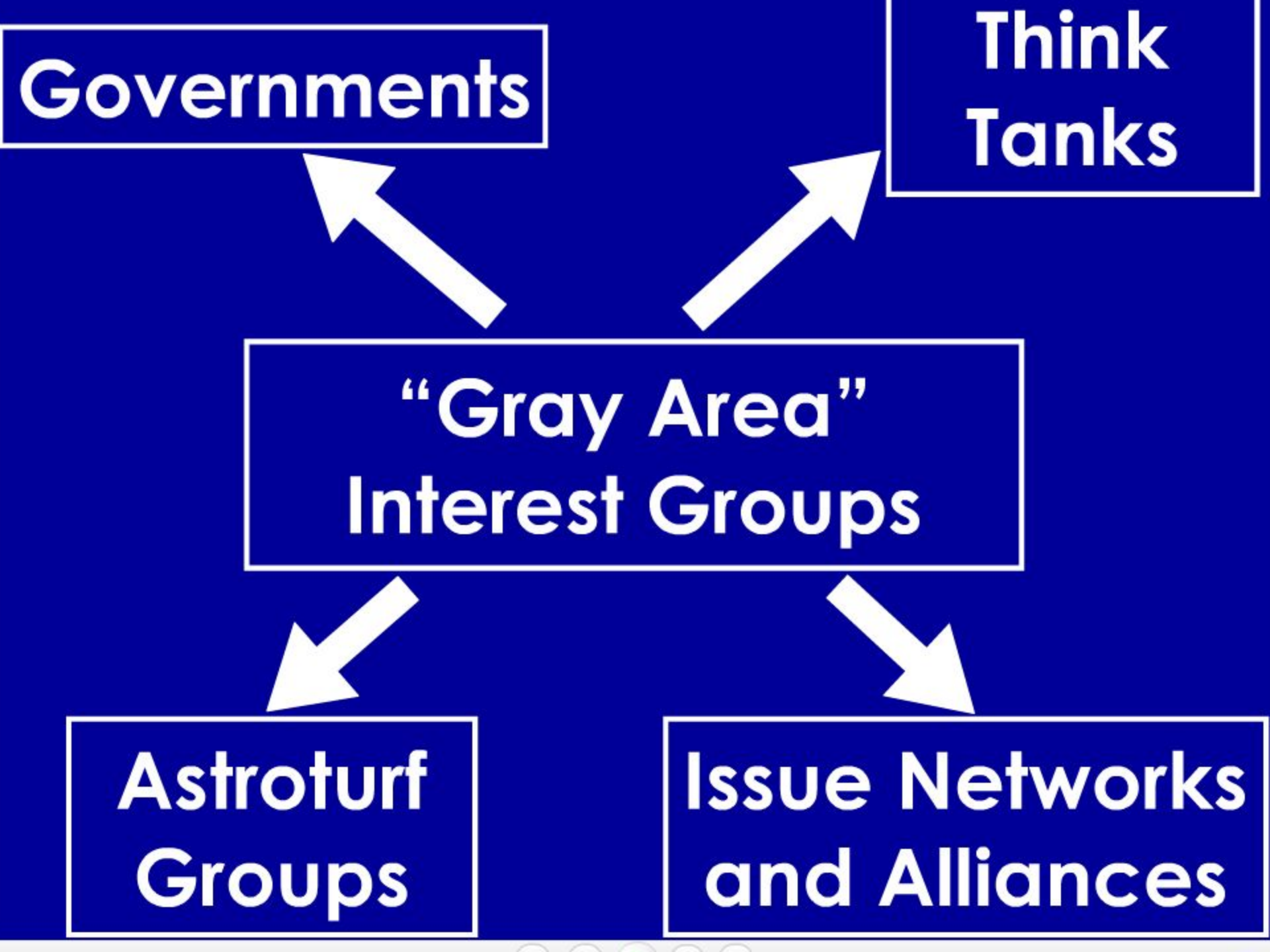
- Groups with some tangible stake that they wish to protect or to advance by means of government action.
- Associated with benefits for some ***fraction*** of the community.

Private Interest (economic) groups

- **Producer groups** represent enterprises that produce goods or services, such as businesses or agriculture.
- **Professional groups** represent the interests of professionals, such as doctors, lawyers, and dentists.
- **Unions** – primary role has been to protect jobs of members, work for maximum wage & benefit levels.

“Gray Area” Interest Groups

- Difficult to place as precisely **public** or **private** interest groups.
- Governments
- Think Tanks (research policy groups)
- Issue Networks and Alliances
- “Astroturf” Groups



Governments

**Think
Tanks**

**"Gray Area"
Interest Groups**

**Astroturf
Groups**

**Issue Networks
and Alliances**

What Interest Groups Do
the “**inside**” and “**outside**” games

- Outsider Strategy
 - Individualistic - Radio, fax machines, people can directly get in touch with officials
- Insider Strategy
 - Work closely with a few key members of Congress to exchange information and favors

The Inside Game

- *aka*, “old-breed lobbying”.
- Direct contact of interest group representative, government officials.
- Does *not* involve bribery. It’s the politics of insiders, the “good old boy” network, “one on one” persuasion.
- Access, genuine understanding of “the game” critical to success.

The **inside game** is most effective when the issues:

- are narrow and technical;
- do not command much media or public attention;
- do not stir up counteractivity by other interest groups.

Inside Game: Lobbying Congress

- The skilled lobbyist cultivates personal contacts, relationships with key members, staff of committees & subcommittees.
- Access may be gained if interest group has made significant contribution to the campaign.
- Interest group representatives offer testimony at public committee, subcommittee hearings.

Lobbying

- Attempt to influence government (most effective on narrow, technical issues that are not well publicized)
- Function of Lobbyists
 - Influence govt.
 - *Provide information to the govt.*
 - Provide political cues on issues
 - Testify at hearings
 - Help write legislation

A “third house of Congress”

Lobbying

Regulations on Lobbying - 1964 Federal Regulation Lobbying Act

- Provisions:
 - Defines lobbyist as one whose principal purpose is to influence government
 - Requires registration
 - Disclosure of lobbyist's employer, finances and legislation to be influenced
 - Publication of disclosed information

Lobbying

- Loopholes in Regulations
- Principle purpose lang. is ambiguous
- Disclosure stmts. are filed, not analyzed
- No enforcement
- Few check the publications
- Only covers congressional lobby, not White House (executive branch lobby)

Lobbying

- Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995
 - Expanded def. to include part-time lobbyists
 - Covered lobbyists of the executive branch
- Sources of Lobbying funds today:
 - Foundation grants
 - Government grants
 - Direct-mail solicitations

Lobbying- good or bad?

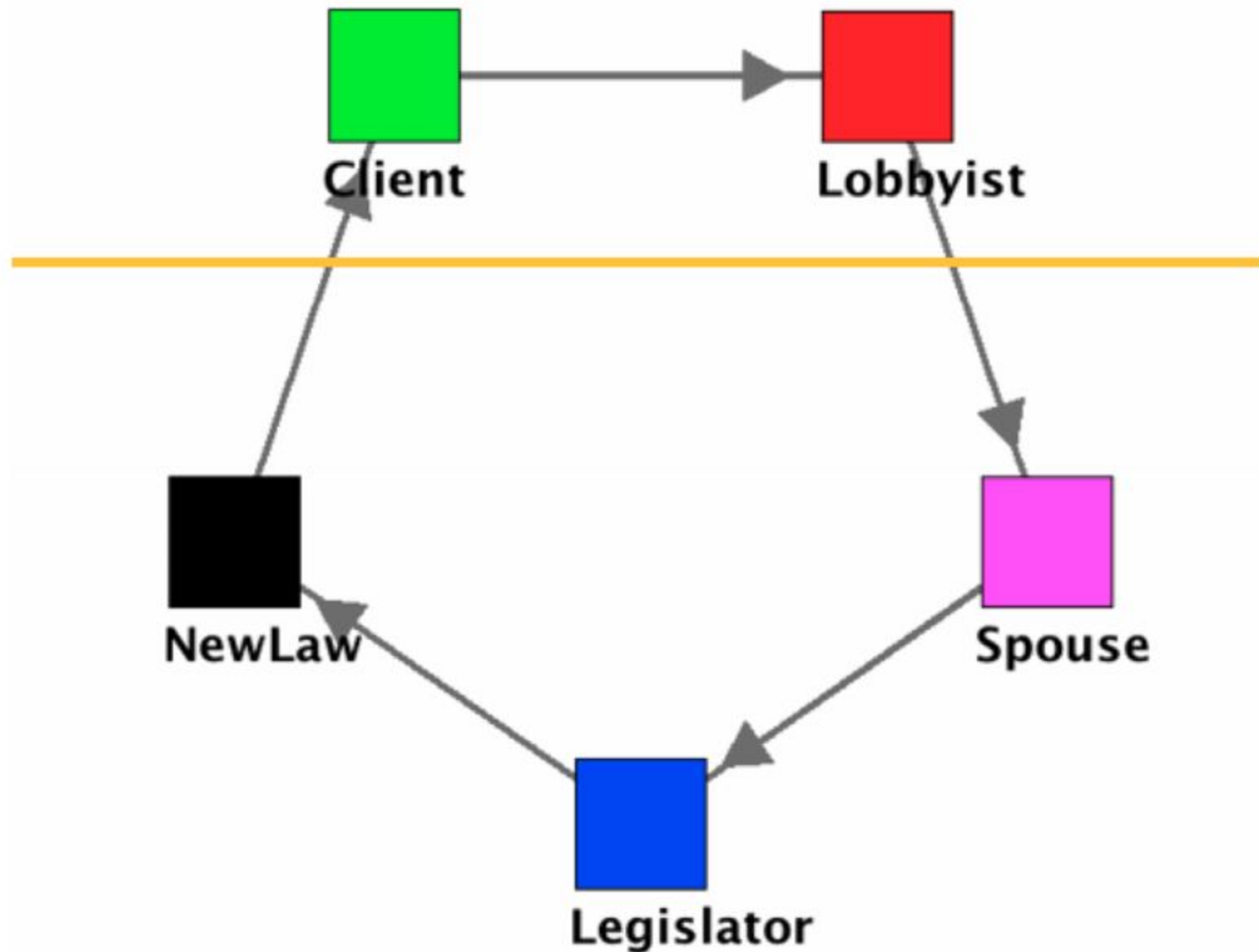
■ Pros

- *Provide useful info to govt.*
- *Means of participation*
- *Representation based upon interest rather than geography*
- *1st amendment protection*
- Madison in Fed 10- to rid us of factions would cause the loss of liberty

■ Cons

- Rich and powerful interests over-represented
- Average and poor people under-represented.
- Safeguard liberty and sacrifice equality
- Contribute to polarizations
- Further diffusion of power
- National interests sacrificed for narrow interests

The “Lobbyist’s Loop of Deceit”



The Outside Game

- *aka*, “new-breed lobbying.”
- Efforts to mobilize public opinion, voters, and important contributors in order to bring pressure on elected officials.

Tools of the Outside Game

- Mobilizing Membership
- Organizing the District
- Shaping Opinion
 - Publication of Research results
 - Advertising
 - Maintaining working relationships with the media
 - Political Action Committees
 - Blogging and Web 2.0 activism

Reasons for Joining

- Solidary incentives (companionship)
 - Organized as small local units (LWV, NAACP, PTA)
- Material Incentives (farm org.; AARP)
- Purposive
 - Passion about goal (which groups might encourage this?)
 - Sense of civic duty
 - Minimal costs in joining

Tactics of Interest Groups

- Use the mass media
- Boycott
- *Litigation*
- *Amicus Curiae* briefs (Disabled groups filing on behalf of PGA golfer Casey Martin)
- *Campaign Contributions*
- Endorse or target candidate (MoveOn.org; Swift Boat Veterans)
- Report Card ratings of candidates - influence behavior
- Initiative, Referendum, Recall
- Mass Mailings
- Lobbying