

# INTEREST GROUPS, POLITICAL PARTIES, AND THE MEDIA

## ❖ Interest Groups

1. **Faction** – A term the founders used to refer to political parties and special interests or interest groups.
2. **Pluralism** – A theory of government that holds that open, multiple, and competing groups can check the asserted power by any one group.
3. **Interest group** – A collection of people who share a common interest or attitude and seek to influence government for specific ends. Interest groups usually work within the framework of government and try to achieve their goals through tactics such as lobbying.
4. **Movement** – A large body of people interested in a common issue, idea, or concern that is of continuing significance and who are willing to take action. Movements seek to change attitudes or institutions, not just policies.
5. **Open shop** – A company with a labor agreement under which union membership cannot be required as a condition of employment.
6. **Closed shop** – A company with a labor agreement under which union membership can be a condition of employment.
7. **Free rider** – An individual who does not join a group representing his or her interests yet receives the benefit of the group's influence.
8. **Nongovernmental organization (NGO)** – A nonprofit association or group operating outside of government that advocates and pursues policy objectives.
9. **Federal Register** – An official document, published every weekday, which lists the new and proposed regulations of executive departments and regulatory agencies.
10. **amicus curiae brief** – Literally, a "friend of the court" brief, filed by an individual or organization to present arguments in addition to those presented by the immediate parties to a case.
11. **Lobbyist** – A person who is employed by and acts for an organized interest group or corporation to try to influence policy decisions and positions in the executive and legislative branches.
12. **Lobbying** – Engaging in activities aimed at influencing public officials, especially legislators, and the policies they enact.
13. **Revolving door** – Employment cycle in which individuals who work for governmental agencies that regulate interests eventually end up working for interest groups or businesses with the same policy concern.
14. **Issue network** – Relationships among interest groups, congressional committees and subcommittees, and the government agencies that share a common policy concern.
15. **Political action committee (PAC)** – The political arm of an interest group that is legally entitled to raise funds on a voluntary basis from members, stockholders, or employees to contribute funds to candidates or political parties.
16. **Bundling** – A tactic in which PACs collect contributions from like-minded individuals (each limited to \$2000) and present them to a candidate or political party as a "bundle," thus increasing the PAC's influence.
17. **Soft money** – Unlimited amounts of money that political parties previously could raise for party-building purposes. Now largely illegal except for limited contributions to state and local parties for voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts.
18. **Quid pro quo** – Something given with the expectation of receiving something in return.
19. **Independent expenditures** – The Supreme Court has ruled that individuals, groups, and parties can spend unlimited amounts in campaigns for or against candidates as long as they operate independently from the candidates. When an individual, group, or party does so, they are making an independent expenditure.
20. **Issue advocacy** – Unlimited and undisclosed spending by an individual or group on communications that do not use words like "vote for" or "vote against," although much of this activity is actually about electing or defeating candidates.

21. **527 organization** – A political group organized under section 527 of the IRS code that may accept and spend unlimited amounts of money on election activities so long as they are not spent on broadcast ads run in the last 30 days before a primary or 60 days before a general election in which clearly identified candidate is referred to and a relevant electorate is targeted.

#### ❖ Political Parties

1. **Political party** – An organization that seeks political power by electing people to office so that its positions and philosophy become public policy.
2. **Nonpartisan election** – A local or judicial election in which candidates are not selected or endorsed by political parties and party affiliation is not listed on ballots.
3. **Patronage** – The dispensing of government jobs to persons who belong to the winning political party.
4. **Soft money** – Money raised in unlimited amounts by political parties for party-building purposes. Now largely illegal except for limited contributions to state or local parties for voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts.
5. **Hard money** – Political contributions given to a party, candidate, or interest group that are limited in amounts and fully disclosed. Raising such limited funds is harder than raising unlimited funds, hence the term “hard money.”
6. **Independent expenditure** – The Supreme Court has ruled that individuals, groups, and parties can spend unlimited amounts in campaigns for or against candidates as long as they operate independently from the candidates. When an individual, group, or party does so, they are making an independent expenditure.
7. **Honeymoon** – Period at the beginning of the new president’s term during which the president enjoys generally positive relations with the press and Congress, usually lasting about six months.
8. **Caucus** – A meeting of local party members to choose party officials or candidates for public office and to decide the platform.
9. **Party convention** – A meeting of party delegates to vote on matters of policy and in some cases to select party candidates for public office.
10. **Direct primary** – Election in which voters choose party nominees.
11. **Open primary** – Primary election in which any voter, regardless of party, may vote.
12. **Crossover voting** – Voting by member of one party for a candidate of another party.
13. **Closed primary** – Primary election in which only persons registered in the party holding the primary may vote.
14. **Proportional representation** – An election system in which each party running receives the proportion of legislative seats corresponding to its proportion of the vote.
15. **Winner-take-all system** – Election system in which the candidate with the most votes wins.
16. **Minor party** – A small political party that rises and falls with a charismatic candidate or, if composed of ideologies on the right or left, usually persists over time; also called a *third party*.
17. **Libertarian party** – A minor party that believes in extremely limited government. Libertarians call for a free market system, expanded individual liberties such as drug legalization, and a foreign policy of nonintervention, free trade, and open immigration.
18. **Green party** – A minor party dedicated to the environment, social justice, nonviolence, and the foreign policy of nonintervention. Ralph Nader ran as the Green party’s nominee in 2000.
19. **Reform party** – A minor party founded by Ross Perot in 1995. It focuses on national government reform, fiscal responsibility, and political accountability. It has recently struggled with internal strife and criticism that it lacks an identity.
20. **Realigning election** – An election during periods of expanded suffrage and change in the economy and society that proves to be a turning point, redefining the agenda of politics and the alignment of voters within parties.
21. **Laissez-faire economics** – Theory that opposes governmental interference in economic affairs beyond what is necessary to protect life and property.
22. **Keynesian economics** – Theory based on the principles of John Maynard Keynes, stating that government spending should increase during business slumps and the curve during booms.
23. **Divided government** – Governance divided between the parties, as when one holds the presidency and the other controls one or both houses of Congress.

24. **National party convention** – A national meeting of delegates elected in primaries, caucuses, or state conventions who assemble once every four years to nominate candidates for president and vice president, ratify the party platform, elect officers, and adopt rules.
25. **Party registration** – The act of declaring party affiliation; required by some states when one registers to vote.
26. **Party identification** – An informal and subjective affiliation with a political party that most people acquire in childhood.
27. **Dealignment** – Weakening of partisan preferences that points to a rejection of both major parties and a rise in the number of independents.

#### ❖The Media and American Politics

1. **Mass media** – Means of communication that are reaching the public, including newspapers and magazines, radio, television (broadcast, cable, and satellite), films, recordings, books, and electronic communication.
2. **News media** – Media that emphasize the news.
3. **Issue advocacy** – Promoting a particular position or an issue by interest groups or individuals but not candidates. Much issue advocacy is often electioneering for or against a candidate and, until 2004 had not been subject to regulation.
4. **Political socialization** – The process by which we develop our political attitudes, values, and beliefs.
5. **Selective exposure** – The process by which individuals screen out messages that do not conform to their own biases.
6. **Selected perception** – The process by which individuals perceive what they want to in media messages.
7. **Horse race** – A close contest; by extension, any contest in which the focus is on who is ahead and by how much rather than on substantive differences between the candidates.