

INTEREST GROUPS

Imagine a person with an intense devotion to a social cause. Let's say that he or she believes strongly in animal rights, or is distressed about the deteriorating earth environment. Or think of someone else whose work is seriously undervalued, who works very hard but is paid very little money. What can any of these imagined people do to improve their situation? One solution is to start or join a group with similar interests, with the idea that people together can do more to bring about change than people alone. They could organize an interest group to put pressure for change on elected officials and policy makers on all levels of government.

* An interest group is an organization of people who enter the political process to try to achieve their shared goals. Almost from the beginning, Americans have joined political groups, as noted by Alexis de Tocqueville in 1834. In no country of the world has the principle of association been more successfully used than in America. Today about 2/3 of Americans belong to such groups. However, Americans historically have distrusted the motives and methods of interest groups. James Madison called interest groups and political parties factions, and he saw federalism and separation of powers as necessary to control their "evils." Since the number of interest groups and the people who participate in them have increased greatly over the past half century, they appear to be even more important today than they have been in the past.

PARTIES, INTEREST GROUPS, PACS, AND 527S

Interest groups, like political parties, are organizations that exist outside the structure of government, but they interact with government in such a way that it is impossible to separate them. Policy making is intertwined with both parties and interest groups so that government would operate very differently without them. In recent years two other type of outside organizations, political action committees (PACs) and 527s, have joined parties and interest groups as major influence on policy making in this country.

PARTIES VS. INTEREST GROUPS - Venn diagram is appropriate

Parties and interest groups have a great deal in common because they represent political points of view of various people who want to influence policy making. This similarity has led some observers to suggest that interest groups may someday even replace parties as linkage institutions to the electorate. However, some significant differences still exist.

- Parties influence government primarily through the electoral process. Although they serve many purposes, parties always run candidates for public office. Interest groups and PACs support candidates, but they do not run their own slate of candidates.
- Parties generate and support a broad spectrum of policies; interest groups support one or a few related policies. So, whereas a party may take a position on gun control, business regulations, campaign finance reform, and U.S. involvement in conflicts abroad, an interest group almost always focuses on one area.

* PACS AND 527S - you need to know these better than I taught them

Political action committees (PACs) are the political arms of interest groups, legally entitled to raise voluntary funds to contribute to favored candidates or political parties. Like political parties, PACs focus on influencing election results, but their interest in the candidates is narrowly based because they are almost always affiliated with particular interest groups. The number of PACs has mushroomed over the past 30 years, especially since the Campaign Reform Act of 1974, which limited individual contributions to campaigns. The Act did allow PACs to exist, and most large interest groups formed them as ways to funnel money to their favorite candidates for office. Today more than 4000 PACs

How can IG's influence elections?

represent corporations, labor unions, and professional and trade associations, but the biggest explosion has been in the business world, with more than half of them representing corporations or other business interests.

527 groups, named after a section of the United States tax code, are tax-exempt organizations created primarily to influence the nomination, election, appointment, or defeat of candidates for public office. Although PACs were also created under Section 527 of the Internal Revenue Code, 527s are not regulated by the Federal Election Commission and not subject to the same contribution limits as PACs. During April of 2004, the Federal Election Commission (FEC) held hearings to determine whether or not 527s should be regulated under campaign finance rules, but they decided to delay any ruling until after the 2004 presidential election. During that election 527s, such as Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, Texans for Truth, The Media Fund, America Coming Together, and Moveon.org Voter Fund, raised large sums of money for both parties.

THEORIES OF INTEREST GROUP POLITICS (taught this the 1st day - on memories)

Are interest groups good or bad for American politics? Different points of view can be separated into three theories with different answers to that question.

• ELITIST THEORY so we're an oligarchy?

Elitist theory argues that just a few interest groups have most of the power. Although many groups exist, most of them have no real power. The government is run by a few big groups trying to preserve their own interests. Furthermore, an extensive system of interlocking directorates (the same people sitting on several boards of corporations, foundations, and universities) fortifies the control. Elitists believe that corporate interests control a great many government decisions.

• PLURALIST THEORY so we're a democracy?

Pluralist theory claims that interest groups benefit American democracy by bringing representation to all. According to pluralists, some of the benefits of interest groups are:

- Groups provide linkage between people and government. They allow people's voices to be heard in ways that otherwise would be lost.
- The existence of many groups means that any one group can't become too powerful because others counterbalance it. voice to minority
- Groups usually follow the rules, and those that don't get bad publicity that helps to keep them in line.
- No one set of groups dominates because those weak in one resource are strong in others. So although business interest groups usually have more money, labor groups have more members.

• HYPERPLURALIST THEORY so we're screwed?

Hyperpluralist theory says that too many groups are trying to influence the political process, resulting in political chaos and contradiction among government policies. gridlock

Hyperpluralists argue that the political system is out of control because the government tries to please every interest and allows them to dictate policy in their area. Since all interest groups try to protect their self-interest, the policies that result from their pressure are haphazard and ill-conceived.

THE GROWTH OF INTEREST GROUPS

Want to know more about interest groups?

Interest groups have been a part of American politics since the beginning, but their numbers have grown incredibly in recent years. Some well-known groups, such as the Sierra Club and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People have existed for a century. Many interest groups, however, are relatively new, with more than half forming after World War II.

Interest groups seem to exist for everyone. Some are broad-based, like the National Association of Manufacturers, but others are almost unbelievably specific, such as the American Cricket Growers Association. Many groups base their organization on economics. More than three-fourths originated from industrial, occupational, or professional membership. In recent years more groups have moved their headquarters to Washington to be as close to the source of power as possible. Today very few occupations or industries go without interest groups to represent them in Washington. *nerd alert*

TYPES OF MEMBERSHIP

Membership in interest groups may be classified in two ways: institutional and individual. A group's members may be composed of organizations, such as businesses or corporations, or they may be composed of individuals.

- **Institutional Interests** - The most usual organization represents a business or corporation. Over five hundred firms have lobbyists, public-relations experts, and/or lawyers in Washington, most of them opening offices since 1970. Other institutions represented in Washington are universities, foundations, and governments. For example, city governments are represented through the National League of Cities, and counties through the National Association of Counties. The National Council on Education speaks for institutions of higher learning.
- **Individual Interests** - Individual Americans are much more likely to join religious and political associations than are citizens in other democracies. Many of the organizations they join are represented in Washington and lobby the government for favorable policies for their interest. Many of the largest interest groups have individual, not institutional, membership. For example, the American Federation of Labor - Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), one of the most powerful labor unions, has more than 13 million members. Other well-known groups, such as the NAACP, the Sierra Club, and the National Organization for Women (NOW), have very large memberships. Religious organizations are also well-represented, such as the influential Christian Coalition.

* TYPES OF INTEREST GROUPS

Interest groups may be divided broadly into three general types: economic interests, consumer and public interests, and equality and justice interests. Every interest group does not fit easily into this classification, but many do.

ECONOMIC INTERESTS

Economic groups are concerned primarily with profits, prices, and wages. Although government does not set them directly, government can significantly effect them through regulations, subsidies and contracts, trade policy, and tax advantages.

- **Labor unions** focus on better working conditions and higher wages. To ensure their solidarity, unions have established the union shop, which requires new employees to join the union representing them. Employers, on the other hand, have supported right-to-work laws, which argue that union membership should be optional. Some, but by no means all, states have adopted right-to-work laws, but many union members today work in a union shop. In 1970 about 25 percent of the work force belonged to a union, but membership has been declining over the past 25 years or so. By 2000 unions were losing support among the general population, and many strikes were proving to be unsuccessful. However, national labor unions remain today as powerful lobby groups in Washington. - exam won't ask about Wisconsin
- **Agriculture groups** were once more powerful than they are today, since this once most usual occupation now employs only a small fraction of the American public. For many years, government policies that deal with acreage controls, price supports, and import quotas have been important to farmers. There are several broad-based agricultural groups, such as the National Farmers' Organization and the American Farm Bureau Federation, but equally important are the specialized groups. Different crops have different groups, such as the National Potato Council, the National Peanut Council, and the American Mushroom Institute. As proof of the lobby power of agricultural groups, in May 2002, President George W. Bush signed the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act, which authorized the largest agricultural subsidy in U.S. history.
 - Farmers still have tons of power in DC
- **Business groups** Large corporations, such as General Motors and AT&T, exercise considerable political influence, as do hundreds of smaller corporations. Since the late 1800s government has regulated business practices, and those regulations continue to be a major concern of business interest groups. A less visible type represents trade associations, which are as diverse as the products and services they provide. Examples are life insurance groups, tire manufacturers, restaurants, real estate dealers, and moviemakers. The broadest trade association is the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, a federation of several thousand local chambers of commerce representing more than 200,000 of business firms. The pharmaceutical lobby, which represents many drug manufacturers is one of the most powerful business lobbies with over 600 registered lobbyists. The industry spent close to \$200 million in 1999-2000 for lobbying and campaign purposes.
- **Professional groups** Some of the most powerful interest groups are professional groups that represent various occupations. Some well-known ones are the American Medical Association, the American Bar Association, the American Association of University Professors, and the National Education Association. These groups are interested in the many government policies that affect their professions. For example, lawyers are licensed by states, which set up certain standards of admission to the state bar. The American Bar Association is interested in influencing those standards. Likewise, the American Medical Association has been very involved in recent government proposals for nationally sponsored healthcare reforms, especially as they affect doctors.

CONSUMER AND PUBLIC INTEREST GROUPS

Today over two thousand groups champion causes "in the public interest." They differ from many other interest groups in that they seek a collective good, benefits for everyone, not just the members of the interest groups themselves.

- **Public interest groups** began during the 1960s under the leadership of consumer advocate Ralph Nader. Nader first gained national attention with his book, *Unsafe at Any Speed*, which attacked General Motors' Corvair as a dangerous and mechanically deficient automobile. Public Interest Research Groups (PIRGs) actively promote environmental issues, safe energy, consumer protection, and good government. PIRGS have a national membership of more than 400,000, making them one of the largest individual membership organizations in the country. Another well known public interest group is Common Cause, founded in 1970 to promote electoral reform and

still a
BAMF

a political process that is more open to the public. The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan public interest group, sponsored presidential debates until 2000, when the candidates did not agree with debate rules set by the League.

- **Environmental interests** - A special type of public interest group focuses on **environmental interests**. A few, like the Sierra Club and Audubon Society, were founded in the late 19th century, but most were created after 1970. Environmental groups promote pollution control, wilderness protection, and population control. They have opposed strip-mining, oil pipelines, offshore oil drilling, supersonic aircraft, and nuclear power plants. Their concerns often directly conflict with those of corporations whose activities they wish to control. Energy producers argue that environmentalists oppose energy projects necessary to keep our modern society operating.

EQUALITY AND JUSTICE INTERESTS

Interest groups have championed equal rights and justice, particularly for women and minorities. The oldest and largest of these groups is the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The NAACP has lobbied and pressed court cases to defend equal rights in voting, employment, and housing. The most prominent women's rights organization is the National Organization for Women (NOW) that pushed for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in the 1970s. Although the amendment did not pass, NOW still lobbies for an end to sexual discrimination. Other organizations that support equal rights are the National Urban League and the National Women's Political Caucus.

* HOW INTEREST GROUPS WORK

how do they accomplish goals ↴

Interest groups generally employ four strategies for accomplishing their goals: lobbying, electioneering, litigation, and appealing to the public for support.

LOBBYING

To lobby means to attempt to influence government policies. The term was originally used in the mid-seventeenth century to refer to a large room near the English House of Commons where people could plead their cases to members of Parliament. In early United States history, lobbyists traditionally buttonholed members of Congress in the lobbies just outside the chambers of the House or Senate. In the nineteenth century lobbyists were seen as vote buyers who used money to corrupt legislators. Today lobbying is regarded less negatively, but the old stereotypes still remain.

Lobbyists today influence lawmakers and agency bureaucrats in many different ways than cornering them outside their work places. Some of their activities include:

- contacting government officials by phone or letter
- meeting and socializing at conventions
- taking officials to lunch
- testifying at committee hearings.

Members of Congress have learned to rely on lobbyists for information and advice on political strategy. How effective is lobbying? Lobbying clearly works best on people already committed to the lobbyist's point of view, so much of it is directed at reinforcing and strengthening support.

ELECTIONEERING

congressional hearings
their jobs are more boring than you think

In order to accomplish their goals, interest groups need to get and keep people in office who support

their causes. Electioneering, then, is another important part of the work that interest groups do. Many groups aid congressional candidates sympathetic to their interests by providing money for their political campaigns.

Today PACs do most of the electioneering. As campaign costs have risen, PACs have helped pay the bills. About half of the members of the House of Representatives get the majority of their campaign funds from PACs. PACs overwhelmingly support incumbents, although they sometimes play it safe by contributing to the campaigns of challengers as well. Incumbents, however, have voting records to check and also are likely to be reelected. Most candidates, including incumbents, readily accept PAC money.

LITIGATION

If interest groups cannot get what they want from Congress, they may sue businesses or the federal government for action. Environmentalist groups have used this tactic successfully to force businesses to follow government regulations. Even the threat of lawsuits may force businesses to change their ways.

Lawsuits were used successfully during the 1950s by civil rights groups. Civil rights bills were stalled in Congress, so interest groups, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, turned to the courts to gain a forum for school desegregation, equal housing, and labor market equality. → Brown v. Board of Education Topeka, KA Latin ☺

Interest groups may influence court decisions by filing amicus curiae ("friends of the court") briefs, which consist of written arguments submitted to the courts in support of one side of a case or the other. In particularly controversial cases, many briefs may be filed on both sides of the issue. For example, in the case of Regents of the University of California v. Bakke, which challenged affirmative action programs as reverse discrimination, over a hundred different groups filed amicus briefings.

Groups may also file class action lawsuits, which enable a group of similar plaintiffs to combine their grievances into a single suit. A famous example is Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka in 1954, which not only represented Linda Brown in Topeka, Kansas, but several other children similarly situated around the country.

APPEALING TO THE PUBLIC

Interest groups sometimes may best influence policy making by carefully cultivating their public image. Labor interests may want Americans to see them as hard-working men and women, the backbone of the country. Farmers may favor an image that represents old-fashioned values of working close to the earth in order to feed everyone else. Groups that suffer adverse publicity, like meat and egg producers whose products have been criticized for their high cholesterol and fat content, often advertise to defend their products. Their goal may be not only to promote business and sell their products, but to keep a favorable position among lobby groups in Washington. Because these ads do not directly affect the lobbying process, it is difficult to tell just how successful they are, but more and more groups are turning to high-profile ad campaigns. Ingrid Newkirk → PETA ads

THE RATING GAME

One well-known activity of interest groups is rating members of Congress in terms of the amount of support they give to legislation that is favorable to their causes. Many interest groups use these rating systems to describe members' voting records to interested citizens, and other times they use them to embarrass members. For example, environmental groups identified the twelve representatives that were most likely to vote against environmental bills, and named them the Dirty Dozen. The typical scheme ranges from 0 to 100 percent, reflecting the percentage of times the member supports the group's legislative agenda.

WHERE DO INTEREST GROUPS GET THEIR MONEY?

Most interest groups have to work hard to raise money, but individual membership organizations have more trouble than most. In addition to dues collected from members, groups receive money from three important sources: foundation grants, federal grants and contracts, and direct mail.

- **Foundation grants** - Public interest groups particularly depend on **foundation grants**, funds established usually by prominent families or corporations for philanthropy. The Ford Foundation, for example, contributes to liberal public-interest groups, and the Rockefeller Family Fund almost single-handedly supports the Environmental Defense Fund. The Bill and Linda Gates Foundation supports many endeavors, including public education.
- **Federal grants and contracts** are not granted directly to organizations for lobbying purposes, but they may be given to support a project the organization supports. For example, Jesse Jackson's community-development organization called PUSH was heavily supported by federal grants from various agencies. The Reagan administration reduced grants to interest groups, at least partly because much of the money was going to liberal causes.
- **Direct solicitation** - Most groups heavily rely on direct mail to solicit funds. By using computers, groups can mail directly to selected individuals identified from lists developed by staff or purchased from other groups. Many groups maintain websites that encourage visitors to contribute to their causes. **NRA**

EFFECTIVE INTEREST GROUPS

Many factors contribute to the success of an interest group, including its size, intensity and financial resources.

- **Size** - It seems logical that large interest groups would be more effective than small ones, but almost the opposite is true. If a group has a large membership, it tends to have a **free rider** problem. Since there are so many members, individuals tend to think someone else will do the work. It is inherently easier to organize a small, rather than a large, group for action, and interest groups are no exception. The problem is particularly acute for public interest groups who seek benefits for all, not just for themselves. In contrast, smaller business-oriented lobbies often provide tangible, specific advantages for their members.
there are so many of us!
- **Intensity** - Groups that are intensely committed to their goals are quite logically more successful than those that are not. A single-issue group, devoted to such causes as pro-life, anti-nuclear energy, or gun control, often is most intense. Their members often are willing to actively protest or push for legislation. For example, the proponents of gun control gathered their forces more intensely after the presidential advisor Jim Brady was shot and almost killed during the assassination attempt on Ronald Reagan in 1982. They gathered support from Brady's wife and launched a campaign to regulate guns that culminated in the passage of the Brady Bill in 1993.
We're so hardcore!
- **Financial resources** - An interest group has only a limited influence if it does not have financial resources adequate to carry on its work. Most of their activities - such as lobbying, electioneering, and writing amicus curiae briefs - cost money, so successful fund-raising is crucial to the success of any type of interest group.
\$

THE "REVOLVING DOOR"

vocab - you'll see this!

Interest groups are often criticized for a type of interaction with government known as the "**revolving door**." Through this practice, government officials - both in Congress and executive agencies - quit their jobs to take positions as lobbyists or consultants to businesses. Many people fear that the

MASS MEDIA

Any study of linkage institutions would be incomplete without a consideration of the role that mass media plays in the American political system. Political parties and interest groups serve as important links between citizens and government, but an increasingly important component is mass media that provides information, and also shapes, fosters, or censors it. Mass media has become such an integral part of the political system that it is sometimes called the fourth branch of government, and it both reflects and influences public opinion. The media link public opinion and the government, and the influence of the mass media on politics is enormous.

THE FUNCTIONS AND STRUCTURE OF THE MEDIA

Mass media may be broken down into three major components: print media, electronic media, and the internet. Print media has played a role in American politics almost from the beginning, when the early political parties published their own, very partisan newspapers. Electronic media became a force during the 20th century, first with the invention of radio, and later the invention and widespread access to television. The internet first came to be used in the early 1970s by the government, and developed into a major medium of communication by the century's end.

FUNCTIONS OF THE MEDIA

The mass media perform a number of functions in American society, and all have an impact on the political system.

- á **Entertainment** ò Radio and television both emphasize entertainment, with prime-time ratings for television often making or breaking the overall success of the networks and individual stations. Particularly in recent years politics has been a topic for entertainment, with numerous movies focused on the president as the star of fictional political sagas. A popular TV series, The West Wing, began as an obvious take-off on the real White House Office of President Bill Clinton, but it survived the transition to the very different style and personnel of George W. Bush's staff. Popular late-night shows, such as Saturday Night Live, also entertain people with their humorous treatment of political figures and events. This type of entertainment may play an important role in political socialization, shaping opinions of political institutions and practices at the same time they are entertaining us. SNL cameos: Barack Obama, McCain, Hillary Clinton, Palin
- they must entertain us too
- á **News Reports** ò Reporting the news has been a major function of print media since the early 19th century, and newspapers and magazines remain an important source for people interested in simply finding out what is happening in the country and the world outside. Today more people rely on television than on newspapers and magazines to provide news. In the early days of television, news was generally reported early every evening in a fifteen-minute segment before the night's entertainment began. Today network news has expanded to thirty and sixty minute segments, but cable television has made round-the-clock news reporting possible, with CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC focusing on news stories and commentaries virtually 24 hours a day. - need to fill the air w/ something
- á **Agenda Setting** ò One important source of political, social, and economic power is the ability of the media to draw public attention to particular issues. Equally important are the issues that the media doesn't focus on. For example, the media may promote terrorism as a major issue in American society by airing the latest tape by Osama bin Laden, but Americans may remain unconcerned about the AIDS epidemic in Africa because the media is silent about that issue. The media may promote a president's agenda by focusing on his proposals, or they may distract from a president's agenda by focusing on a "sideshow," such as they did with Bill Clinton's personal and financial life. Conservative radio hosts, such as Rush Limbaugh, have developed large audiences

main job!

that are influenced not just by the opinions expressed, but are also encouraged to focus on some issues but not on others.

- á **Creation of Political Forums** - Politicians have learned to use the mass media to make important announcements or to encourage citizens to focus on their issues. *Obama - immigration* The media wants to make politics interesting so that viewer ratings remain high, so politicians often respond by "making news" that will draw attention from the media. A presidential candidate may dress up in hunting gear, or pose in a "photo op" with a respected former president, as John Kerry did in 2004. Members of Congress may call attention to their causes through filibusters or public announcements of popular legislation passed. The individual that has the most direct access to the media is the president, who may command prime time for important announcements and speeches. Presidential press conferences usually get extensive coverage, and the president's daily activities are followed *bully pulpit* carefully.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE MEDIA

In the past 50 years, the broadcast, or electronic, media have gradually replaced the print media as the main source of political information. Today, the internet is the most rapidly growing type of mass media.

- á **Print Media** - Most newspapers today are still locally based, although many of them are part of massive media conglomerates, such as Gannett, Knight, Ridder, and Newhouse. However, papers such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* have a national readership that makes them an important force in policymaking. Most magazines do not focus on politics, but news magazines, such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *Nation*, and *New Republic*, have considerable influence on American government and politics.
- á **Electronic Media** - **Radio** was first invented in 1903, but made its big debut in politics when a Pittsburgh station broadcast the 1920 election returns. President Franklin Roosevelt used radio successfully in his "fireside chats" to the nation. Despite the advent of television in the mid-20th century, radio remains an important linkage institution, especially since many Americans spend time in their cars for work commutes and travel. Conservative talk shows provide commentary on national politics, and National Public Radio puts a great deal of focus on political events and personalities. Television's influence on the American public is tremendous, especially with the advent of cable television. Americans not only get information from television, but they also listen to commentaries and analysis of the news. *we don't get facts, we get opinions*
- á **The Internet** - Internet technology and access has transformed communications in a very short period of time, particularly during the late 1990s and early 21st century. The internet has become a tool for researching almost any topic under the planet, and also serves as a major entertainment outlet for millions. People across the globe may instantaneously contact one another by e-mail, and written letters have almost become a thing of the past. Today "blogs" and list serves devote much time to political topics, and provide an interactive forum for people to express and react to political opinions. Internet communications played an integral role in the election campaign of 2004, when candidates raised unprecedented amounts of money on campaign websites. In addition, 527s established internet sites that not only raised money, but spread their influence through interactive "chats." On election day in 2004, electronic news media pledged to not make public reports from exit polls until everyone had voted. However, internet sources made no such commitment, and strong rumors passed around the websites that predicted victory for Democratic candidate John Kerry. The predictions were wrong, and President George W. Bush was reelected, but the election affirmed the growing political influence of the internet.

GOVERNMENT REGULATION OF THE MEDIA

As a general rule, print media has much fewer government restrictions than does electronic media. The First Amendment to the Constitution has been interpreted to mean that no government, federal or state, can place aprior restraints on the press before stories are published. Once something is published, a newspaper or magazine may be sued or prosecuted for libel or obscenity, but these charges are very difficult to prove. Most journalists value confidentiality of sources, or the right to keep the sources for their information private. However, the Supreme Court has upheld the right of the government to compel reporters to divulge information as party of a criminal investigation, so the conflict between reporters and the government is still an issue.

In contrast, broadcasting is carefully regulated by the government. No one may operate a radio or television station without a license from the Federal Communications Commission. The government must renew licenses, and until recently the FCC used its power of renewal to influence what the station put on the air. For example, they might require a network to change their depictions of racial or ethnic groups, restrict the number of commercials aired, or decrease the number of shows that emphasize violence. In recent years a movement to deregulate both television and radio has taken hold. With the increasing choice of television and radio shows available to the American public, supporters of deregulation argue that competition should be allowed to determine how each station defines and serves community needs. Now many of the old rules are less vigorously enforced. Radio broadcasting has been deregulated more than televisions, and in 1996 the Telecommunications Act allowed one radio company to own as many as eight stations in large markets and as many as it wished nationally.

rewed ds to
-allowed for the monopolization of airwaves we see today
Despite these recent trends, the content of radio and television is still regulated in ways that newspapers and magazines are not. One example is the equal time rule that requires a station selling time to one candidate for office to make the same amount of time available to another. Also in force is the right-of-reply rule that allows a person who is attacked on a broadcast the right to reply over that same station. A candidate may also reply if a broadcaster endorses an opponent. For many years a fairness doctrine was in place, which required broadcasters to give time to opposing views if they broadcast a program giving one side of a controversial issue. The FCC abolished the doctrine in 1987, arguing that it inhibited the free discussion of issues. However, most broadcasters still follow the rule voluntarily.

THE IMPACT OF MEDIA ON POLITICS

The media influences the political system in many ways, as reflected in the functions of the media summarized earlier in this chapter. Electronic media has been criticized for forcing political figures and events to conform to sound bites, or comments compressed into several-second segments. Although newspapers and magazines have longer formats, most Americans today are much more reliant on television and radio for their news. As a result, stories are boiled down to their basics, and those that don't fit are not covered. The impact of the internet is yet to be seen, but the interactive nature of the medium allows the user to spend as much or little time with an issue as he or she likes.

THE MEDIA AND POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

Media influence is probably most obvious during political campaigns for office, especially during presidential years. Because television is the primary news source for Americans, candidates and their consultants spend much of their time strategizing as to how to use it to their benefit. Television is widely used by presidential and senatorial candidates, and increasingly by candidates for the House of Representatives.

á Advertising • Television advertising is very expensive, and as a result, the cost of campaigns has skyrocketed. Most campaign ads are negative, making them even more controversial. The typical pattern is for one candidate to attack the other, who in turn counterattacks. Even though most people claim to dislike these ads, political consultants believe that they work, so it appears as if negative ads have become the norm. (Critics worry that this type of advertising reduces political participation and encourages citizens to be cynical about politics.)
"It's morning in America."
"Heeeyahhh!"

Photo ops

4 News Coverage & Television ads cost money, but news coverage is as long as you can get it is free. So candidates and consultants spend a great deal of time planning news events that will be covered on the evening news and by cable news shows. They may also arrange to be invited to appear on news shows to comment on particular issues or events. As a result, an invitation to appear on CNN's Larry King show can be worth thousands of dollars in campaign ads. Some campaign staff specialize in media techniques, such as camera angles, necessary equipment, timing, and deadlines, so that even if the news coverage is free the advice is not. An important position on any campaign staff is that of spin doctor, or one who tries to influence journalists with interpretations of events that are favorable to a particular candidate. "Journeys w/ George"

4 Presidential Debates & The most famous series of television events in American politics are the presidential debates. The television precedent was set in 1960 when the Democratic candidate, John Kennedy, was generally perceived to defeat the sitting Vice President Richard Nixon. Challengers generally benefit more than incumbents from the debates because they are not as well known. However, the results are often unpredictable, since usually the differences come down to style. Both candidates are prepared extensively for the debates, and usually don't make any serious mistakes. An exception occurred in 1976 when President Gerald Ford argued that eastern European countries were not communist. In 2004 President George W. Bush was criticized for inconsistent performances over the course of the debates, but challenger John Kerry was widely criticized by the media (and the Republican Party) for bringing up the sexual orientation of Vice President Cheney's daughter. The debates give the public an opportunity to see both candidates together, and even though the ability of debates to change votes has been questioned, they are now a part of political campaigning tradition.

THE MEDIA AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

The media impacts all officials in government on local, state, and national levels. Town newspapers often cover local school board candidates, and town meetings often appear in full broadcasts on local television stations. Governors particularly those in large states often have staff members that help them with news coverage. On the national level, members of Congress must share the stage with 534 others. However, party leaders and committee chairmen often play to media events. The importance of the presidency is reflected in the existence of the **White House press corps** that is assigned full-time to cover the activities of the president. Once or twice a day they are briefed by the president's **press secretary**, who is responsible for handling the press corps. Because the reporters are in close proximity to the president, they tend to report almost every visible action he takes. Presidents, then, live their lives in public view, a situation that they may use to their benefit since they have a built-in audience. However, the need to get a story may lead reporters to emphasize the trivial and leave a president frustrated by a focus on matters he considers to be unimportant.

(The media do not make direct policy decisions, but their influence on American government and politics is tremendous. Whether they manipulate the policymakers or are manipulated by the politicians is a matter of some dispute, but their presence is an integral part of American society. They link the public to government and often set the public agenda, two very important components of the political system.)