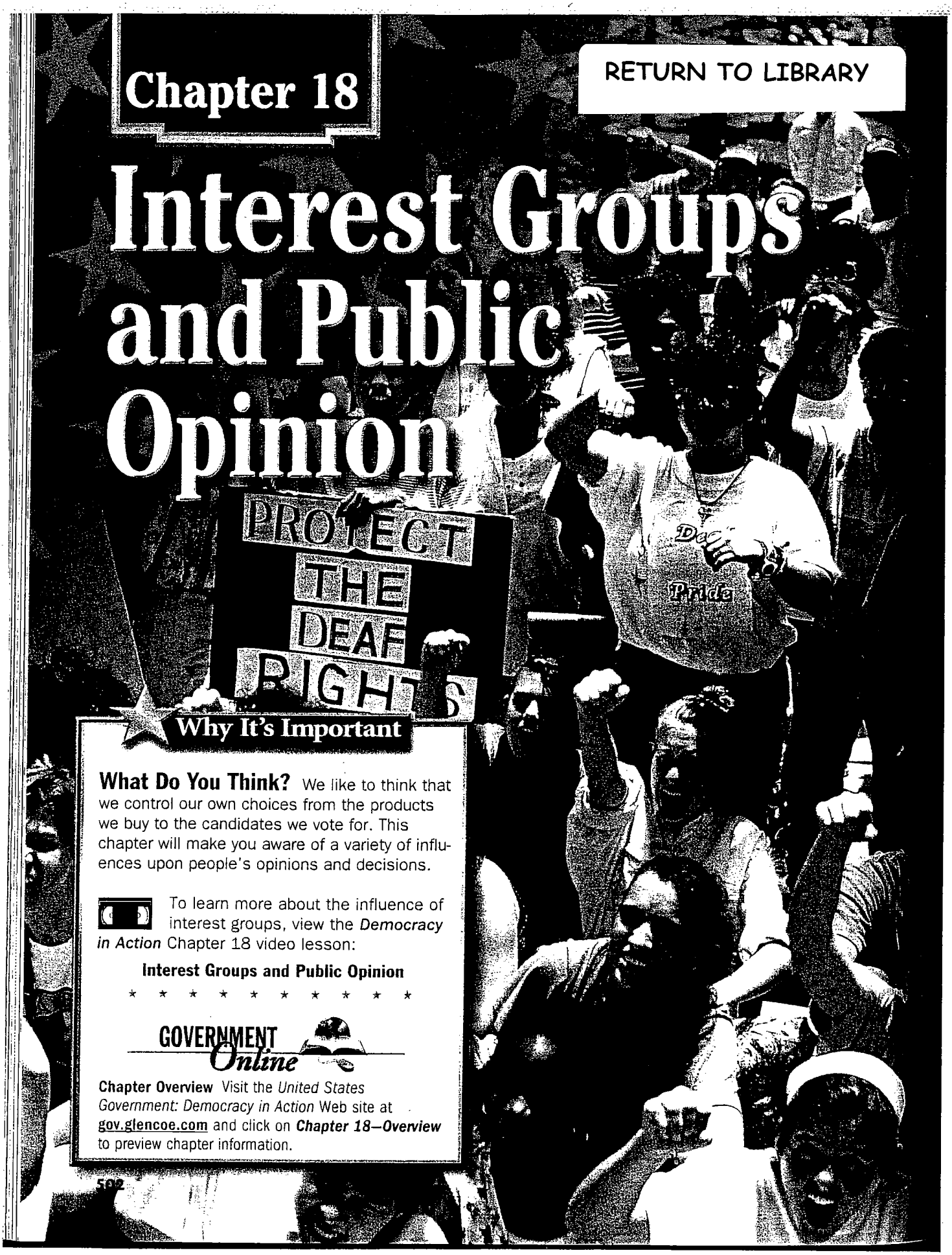
Chapter 18

Interest Groups and Public Opinion



Why It's Important

What Do You Think? We like to think that we control our own choices from the products we buy to the candidates we vote for. This chapter will make you aware of a variety of influences upon people's opinions and decisions.

To learn more about the influence of interest groups, view the *Democracy in Action* Chapter 18 video lesson:

Interest Groups and Public Opinion

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GOVERNMENT *Online*

Chapter Overview Visit the *United States Government: Democracy in Action* Web site at **gov.glencoe.com** and click on ***Chapter 18—Overview*** to preview chapter information.

Section 1

Interest Group Organization

Reader's Guide

Key Terms

interest group, public-interest group

Find Out

- Why are interest groups powerful agents in influencing public policy?
- What are the main categories of interest groups?

Understanding Concepts

Civic Participation Why do you think many people choose not to participate in an interest group?

COVER STORY

MADD Issues Grades

DALLAS, TEXAS, APRIL 2001

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), a nonprofit organization with 600 chapters nationwide, has announced its support of House Bill H.R. 1509 and Senate Bill S. 866, both of which would establish a "National Media Campaign to Prevent Underage Drinking." The bills would provide money to allow the Department of Health and Human Services to identify the extent of underage drinking and create a media campaign to communicate to children and parents the dangers of underage drinking. The campaign would include radio, television, print, and Internet advertisements.

In addition to political parties, Americans have historically formed a wide variety of special-interest groups. An **interest group** is a group of people who share common goals and organize to influence government. MADD is one special-interest group in the United States.

Many early leaders in the United States believed that interest groups could be harmful to the function of government. In *The Federalist,* No. 10[1] James Madison referred to **"factions"** as groups of people united to promote special interests that were "adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community." Madison explained that removing the causes of factions was not as acceptable as removing their effects. He believed that the Constitution would be a sufficient safeguard against the potential abuses of these interest groups.

Whether the Constitution has served to eliminate the harmful effects of interest groups is still a current issue. Today Americans have organized to pressure all levels of government through interest groups. These groups spend much time and money in organized efforts to influence officeholders to support laws that the groups feel will be beneficial. Are the activities of these groups "adverse to the rights of other citizens," as Madison believed they could be? Or do interest groups serve an important role in helping people interact with their government?

Power of Interest Groups

Alexis de Tocqueville, a French traveler in the United States in the early 1800s and author of *Democracy in America,* recognized the Americans' tendency toward group membership:

See the following footnoted materials in the Reference Handbook:

1. *The Federalist,* No. 10, pages 812–814.

◀ **Demanding rights for the hearing impaired**

> *"In no country of the world has the principle of association been more successfully used, or applied to a greater multitude of objects, than in America. . . . In the United States associations are established to promote the public safety, commerce, industry, morality, and religion."*
>
> —Alexis de Tocqueville, 1835

Defining Interest Groups Political parties nominate candidates for office and try to win elections to gain control of the government. Interest groups may support candidates who favor their ideas, but they do not nominate candidates for office. Instead, interest groups try to influence government officials to support certain policies.

Another difference between interest groups and political parties is that interest groups usually are concerned with only a few issues or specific problems. They do not try to gain members with different points of view. Political parties, on the other hand, are broad-based organizations. They must attract the support of many opposing groups to win elections. They also must consider conflicting issues and problems that affect all Americans, not just certain groups.

Finally, most interest groups are organized on the basis of common values, rather than on geographic location. Political parties elect officials from geographic areas to represent the interests of people in those areas. National interest groups unite people with common attitudes from every region of the country.

The Purpose of Interest Groups Interest groups help bridge the gap between the citizen and the government. Through interest groups, citizens communicate their "wants," or policy goals, to government leaders—the president, Congress, city council, or state legislators. When lawmakers begin to address the vital concerns of an interest group, its members swing into action.

Political Power Interest groups follow the old principle, "There is strength in numbers." By representing more than one individual, an interest group has a stronger bargaining position with leaders in government, but only proportionally. Officials in a small community, for example, will listen to a 100-member group of citizens organized into a "Local Safety Association," while a large city would not.

On the state and national levels, an interest group draws from the financial resources and expertise of its many members. Organized and equipped with sufficient resources, an interest group can exert influence far beyond the power of its individual members.

Pleading for Parks

Civics Park supporters demonstrate all over the country every year to raise funds for habitat restoration, recycling programs, trail building, and interpretive display fortification. ***Analyze why public rallies sometimes sway lawmakers' opinions more effectively than individual, face-to-face persuasion.***

National Parks and Conservation Association logo

Leadership and Membership

Interest group leaders strengthen the political power of the group by unifying its members. They keep members informed of the group's activities through newsletters, mailings, and telephone calls. They act as speakers for their group and try to improve its image in the media. They plan the group's strategy, raise money to run the organization, and oversee all financial decisions of the group.

Why do people belong to interest groups? First, a group may help promote an individual's economic self-interests. For example, a labor union works to gain higher wages and other benefits for its members. Business groups try to get the government to pass laws and make decisions that will help them increase profits. A senior citizens' group, such as the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), works for higher Social Security benefits.

A second reason for joining a group centers on an individual's beliefs, values, or attitudes. Many citizens believe in certain ideas or political principles that they wish to see passed into law. For example, the Sierra Club and the Farm Bureau both work to conserve natural resources and protect the environment from pollution. Members want laws passed requiring clean air and water.

Other reasons are nonpolitical. A person who joins a farm organization may simply like the company of other farmers. This social function also helps create group unity, a vital element in attaining the group's political goals.

Many people, however, do not belong to any interest group. Studies have shown that people on lower socioeconomic levels are less likely to join such groups. Studies of business organizations and other interest groups also show that membership tends to come from upper income levels. So, while the opportunity to join together to influence government is a right of all, the people who might benefit most do not often exercise that right.

Business and Labor Groups

Nearly all Americans have economic interests and concerns about taxes, food prices, housing, inflation, unemployment, and so forth. As a result, many interest groups are concerned with economic issues. These business and labor interest groups seek to convince lawmakers of policies that they feel will strengthen the economy.

Business-Related Interest Groups Business interest groups are among the oldest and largest in the United States. The National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) works to lower individual and corporate taxes and limit government regulation of business. Another business group—the United States Chamber of Commerce—tends to speak for smaller businesses. A third group is the Business Roundtable, composed of executives from almost 150 of the country's largest and most powerful corporations.

Labor-Related Interest Groups The largest and most powerful labor organization today is the **AFL-CIO.** Among the many unions in the AFL-CIO are the United Auto Workers (UAW), United Mine Workers (UMW), and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. A separate organization called The Committee on Political Education (COPE) directs the AFL-CIO's political activities. COPE's major goals include fund-raising, voter registration drives, and support for political candidates.

Agricultural Groups

Three major interest groups represent almost 6 million American farmers. The largest of these groups is the American Farm Bureau Federation, which speaks for the larger, more successful farmers and is closely associated with the federal Department of Agriculture.

The National Farmers' Union (NFU) draws its membership from smaller farmers and favors higher price supports for crops and livestock. The group has also supported laws protecting migrant farm workers. The oldest farm group is the Patrons of Husbandry, known as the Grange. Although this group is more of a social organization than an interest group, it has been very outspoken in advocating price supports for crops.

Just as important are commodity associations representing groups such as dairy farmers and potato growers. Congressional subcommittees dealing with agriculture are organized around commodity lines.

Other Interest Groups

Besides purely economic interest groups, there are countless other kinds of interest groups. These range from professional and environmental organizations to governmental and public interest groups.

Professional Associations The American Bar Association (ABA) and the American Medical Association (AMA) are two examples of interest groups that include members of specific professions. Basically, these two groups influence the licensing and training of lawyers and doctors. Professional associations also represent bankers, teachers, college professors, police officers, and hundreds of other professions. While these associations are concerned primarily with the standards of their professions, they also seek to influence government policy on issues that are important to them.

Environmental Interest Groups Concerns about the environment and the impact of environmental regulation of private property have led to the founding of several hundred interest groups, both liberal and conservative. Their goals range from conserving resources to protecting wildlife to helping farmers and ranchers manage their land. These groups include the American Farm Bureau, the Sierra Club, the National Wildlife Federation, the Paragon Foundation, and Friends of the Earth.

Public-Interest Groups Groups concerned about the public interest seek policy goals that they believe will benefit American society. These **public-interest groups** are not concerned with furthering the interests of a narrow group of people. Instead, they claim to work for the interests of all Americans. For example, Ralph Nader's Public Citizen, Inc., devotes itself to consumer and public safety issues affecting the general population. Common Cause, founded in 1970, is a public-interest group that has tried to reform various aspects of the American political system.

Interest Groups in Government Organizations and leaders within American government may also act as interest groups. Two powerful organizations today are the **National Conference of**

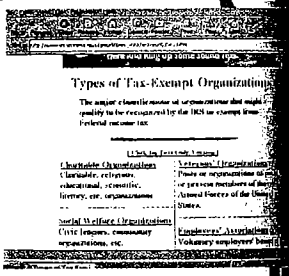
GOVERNMENT *and You*

Contributing to Interest Groups

Membership dues to labor organizations, trade and professional associations, and certain other groups that influence government may be deductible expenses on your federal income tax return. To a lesser extent, contributions made by you to such organizations may also be tax deductible. In addition, some expenses that result from volunteer work you do for such groups may be tax deductible.

The federal tax code allows deduction of cash contributions and other donations to groups that are tax-exempt organizations. Generally, these are nonprofit organizations that exist primarily for educational, charitable, scientific, or religious purposes. However, such groups are allowed to do a limited amount of lobbying.

On the other hand, groups that devote a substantial portion of their activities to influencing the government do not qualify as tax-exempt organizations, and contributions to such groups usually are not tax deductible. If you want to know the tax status of a group, the Internal Revenue Service Publication 78 lists all tax-exempt organizations.


Types of Tax-Exempt Organizations

***IRS Publication 78* on the Web**

Participating IN GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY

Research Find out the tax status of a nonprofit organization in your community. Is the organization tax exempt? Why do you think it qualifies or does not qualify as a tax-exempt organization?

State Legislators and the National Governors' Association. State and local government officials may seek to influence members of Congress or the executive branch because they want a greater share of federal aid. Interest groups such as the National Association of Counties, the Council of State Governments, or the National League of Cities seek support for policies to benefit cities and states.

Civic Participation Ralph Nader's Public Citizen, Inc., is a consumer advocacy group. Its activities have resulted in a number of consumer protection laws. ***What difficulties might an activist like Nader face in influencing lawmakers?***

Additional Groups Thousands of interest groups have been formed for other reasons. Any list would be inadequate to illustrate the diverse interests. Some are formed to promote a particular cause. Some groups seek to influence public policy while others organize into groups to support the aims of large segments of the population and to protect civil rights.

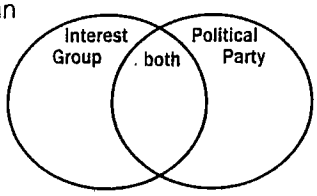
Foreign governments and private interests of foreign nations also seek to influence government in the United States. Foreign-interest groups may seek military aid, economic aid, or favorable trade agreements. They may make political donations in an effort to sway political decisions. All foreign agents must register with the United States government.

The possible influence of foreign donations on the 1996 presidential election was one target of congressional hearings on campaign finance in 1997. Committee members, led by committee chairperson Senator Fred Thompson, heard allegations concerning instances of individuals buying access to top leaders, money laundering of campaign donations, and attempts by foreign nationals to influence the 1996 elections. Both the Democratic National Committee and the Republican National Committee returned some questionable donations—most of them solicited by agents who had connections to interests in Asia.

Section 1 Assessment

Checking for Understanding

1. **Main Idea** Use a Venn diagram like the one to the right to compare the goals of an interest group and a political party.



2. **Define** interest group, public-interest group.
3. **Identify** factions.
4. Why are interest groups more effective in influencing the government than are individual citizens?
5. List six categories of interest groups.
6. What are three reasons why citizens join interest groups?

Critical Thinking

7. **Analyzing Information** Do interest groups help make representative government truly "government by the people"? Explain.

Concepts IN ACTION

Civic Participation Create a promotional brochure describing an interest group that you would like to see formed to address some interest or concern that you have. Include a description of the concern or interest, goals of the group, the kinds of people likely to be members of the group, and the methods your group would use to attain its goals.

Section 2

Affecting Public Policy

Reader's Guide

Key Terms
lobbying, lobbyist

Find Out
- By what methods do interest groups' lobbyists influence policymakers?
- How do political action committees influence elections?

Understanding Concepts
Public Policy Why do members of Congress rely on lobbyists to provide them with information?

COVER STORY

Too Many Amendments?

NEW YORK, NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 26, 1996

The present practice of turning causes into constitutional amendments is a troubling development, says political analyst John Leo. The Framers established a difficult amendment process, Leo notes, because they wanted amendments to be well-founded, necessary, and rare. However, an explosion of proposals to change the Constitution has come from interest groups who use the process to call attention to their cause, he says. Proposed amendments on school prayer, the budget, an official language, term limits, flag burning, abortion, victims' rights, and campaign finance are currently before Congress. These are all important issues, but few are legitimate constitutional necessities, Leo observes.

Balancing the budget

Most interest groups use a variety of methods to try to influence public policy. Representatives of the group contact government officials directly in Washington, D.C., or a state capital. Interest or pressure groups may also use television, radio, magazine, and newspaper advertising to create public support for their policies. They may even resort to court action or seek a constitutional amendment to achieve their goals.

The Work of Lobbyists

Most interest groups try to influence government policy by making direct contact with lawmakers or other government leaders. This process of direct contact is called **lobbying** because of the practice of approaching senators and representatives in the outer room or lobby of a capitol. The representatives of interest groups who do this kind of work are called **lobbyists.** Lobbying is one of the most widely used and effective techniques available to interest groups.

Who Are Lobbyists? In 1995 Congress redefined lobbyists to mean anyone who was employed or retained by a client, made more than one contact on behalf of the client, and spent more than 20 percent of his or her time serving the client. Why was such a specific definition necessary? The new Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 was intended to close loopholes in the 1946 Federal Regulation of Lobbying Act that had enabled most lobbyists to avoid registering with Congress. Before the new legislation only about 6,000 of the more than 13,600 lobbyists were registered. Unregistered lobbyists avoided the close scrutiny needed to prevent illegal influence upon members of Congress.

Currently registered lobbyists must file semiannual reports with the Clerk of the House and the Secretary of the Senate. These reports must disclose the issues or legislation

being addressed, the government branches and agencies contacted, and an estimate of the amount of money paid by the client.

What kinds of people are lobbyists? Many lobbyists are former government officials. They usually have friends in Congress and the executive branch and know the intricacies of Washington politics. Lobbying has indeed been attractive to members of Congress:

> *"Tempted by the staggering fees that lobbyists can command, lawmakers and their aides are quitting in droves to cash in on their connections. For many, public service has become a mere internship for a lucrative career as a hired gun for special interests."*
> —*Time*, March 3, 1986

Congress did ban former senators and representatives from becoming lobbyists within one year of leaving office.

Many other lobbyists are lawyers or public relations experts. Understanding the government and how it works is vital for a lobbyist to be successful and effective.

Providing Useful Information One of a lobbyist's most important methods of persuasion is to provide policymakers with useful information that supports an interest group's position. Lobbyists often try to meet personally with members of Congress or other government officials. Meetings may occur in a lawmaker's office or home, or in a more casual location such as at a favorite restaurant or on a golf course.

In order to gain support from members of Congress, lobbyists provide legislators with pamphlets, reports, statistics, and other kinds of information. House and Senate rules, however, restrict the gifts lobbyists may give lawmakers. Senators and their staff cannot accept any gift (including meals and entertainment) of more than $50 from a lobbyist. The Senate and House also have $100 limits on gifts from any single source.

How much do members of Congress rely on information presented by lobbyists? Legislators realize that lobbyists can be biased in presenting their cases. A lobbyist who intentionally misrepresents the facts, however, may lose access to the lawmaker permanently.

TIME For the Record

Perception Is Everything When Lynne Cheney, wife of Vice President Dick Cheney, decided to work for American Express, she was criticized by some for creating a potential conflict of interest: she was being paid by a corporation that would be lobbying her husband's administration to vote in its favor on tax and banking issues. Charles Lewis of Washington's Center for Public Integrity commented, "It's a perception issue, not a legal one. It doesn't look so good if she is out there [chatting] with the captains of industry who are benefiting from her stature while her husband is deciding policy that might affect these companies."

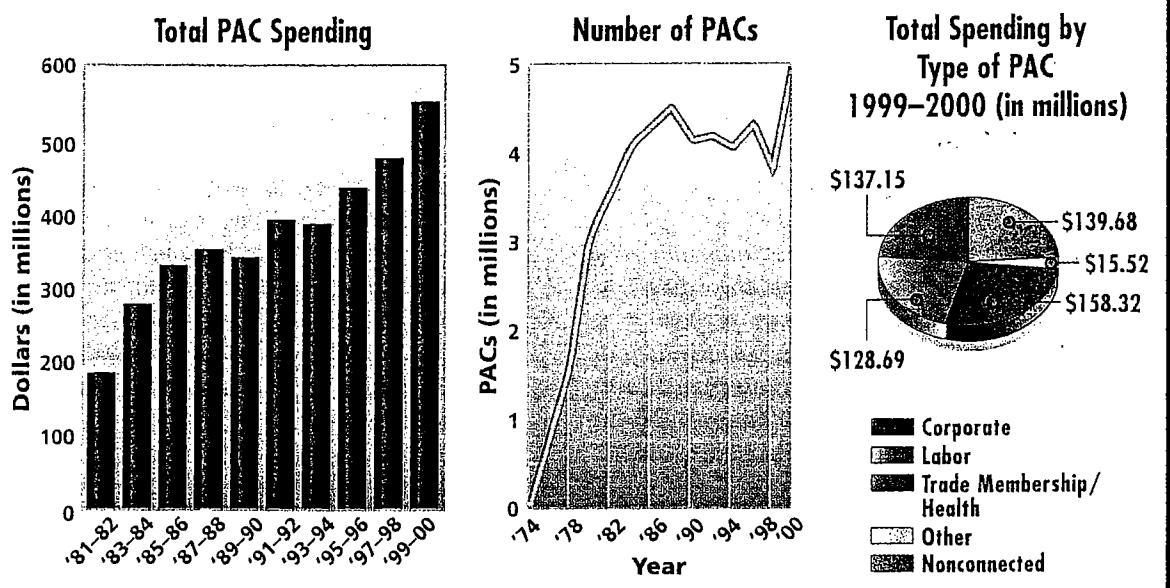
Lobbyists also provide information by testifying before congressional committees. Usually when Congress is considering a bill, lobbyists are invited to testify. For example, lobbyists representing the oil industry may testify before a committee considering legislation to tax oil profits. Finally, when a bill comes to the floor in either house of Congress, lobbyists continue to work hard to influence lawmakers' votes.

Drafting Bills Besides providing information to lawmakers, lobbyists and interest groups may actually help write bills. Many well-organized interest groups have research staffs that help members of Congress draft proposed laws. Studies have shown that interest groups and their lobbyists draft parts of or entire bills for almost 50 percent of all legislation.

Interest Groups Seek Support

Interest groups run publicity campaigns to win support for their policies. A wide range of techniques is available to interest groups in their effort to influence policy makers.

Contributions by PACs



Sources: Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2002; Federal Election Commission, 2001.

Critical Thinking **The number of PACs has grown tremendously since the early 1970s when campaign reforms were passed, but it has leveled off in recent years.** ***How many PACs existed in 1974? In 1994?***

Media Campaigns Interest or pressure groups use the mass media—television, newspapers, magazines, and radio—to inform the public and to create support for their views. For example, when Congress considered changes to the nation's health-care system in the 1990s, the American College of Surgeons used advertising to explain its position on patient choice. Environmentalists have run television and magazine ads to dramatize pollution and the hazards it poses.

Letter Writing Many interest groups urge their members to write letters or e-mails to government officials to demonstrate broad support for or against a public policy. For example, the National Rifle Association can deliver hundreds of thousands of letters from its members. While members of Congress know that the NRA is a powerful organization representing many voters, they must also take into account the views of other groups. These campaigns make officials aware of an issue, but they do not always produce results.

Limitations The public's perception of interest groups is that they are financially and politically powerful. How important are these groups in determining public policy?

Interest groups do provide representation for Americans in addition to the representation they have in Congress. They allow Americans to be represented according to their economic, social, or occupational interests. Pressure groups also act as watchdogs and protest government policies that harm their members.

Several factors limit the effectiveness of interest groups. Different interest groups compete for power and influence, keeping any single group from controlling lawmakers and other public officials. Generally, the larger the group, the more diverse are the interests of its members. This diversity has meant that nationally organized interest groups may be unable to adopt broad policy goals. As a result, smaller interest groups or those that unite people who have narrower aims have been most effective in shaping policy.

While large interest groups have membership that provides an impressive financial base, most organizations struggle to pay small staffs. In recent years, however, the greatest concern about the power of interest groups has been their financial contributions to political campaigns.

The Rise of Political Action Committees

Lobbying is just one method interest groups use to influence lawmakers. These groups also provide a large percentage of the funds used in candidates' election campaigns. Most of these funds come from **political action committees** (PACs), or organizations specifically designed to collect money and provide financial support for a political candidate. A Washington lobbyist admitted, "I won't even take a client now unless he's willing to set up a political action committee and participate in the [campaign contribution] process."

How PACs Began Before 1974, wealthy individuals gave large sums to finance political campaigns. Then the federal government passed laws to reform campaign finance. The new laws limited the amounts that individuals could contribute to federal candidates. While federal law prevented corporations and labor unions from making direct contributions to any federal candidate, it permitted their political action committees to do so.

Laws Governing PACs At the beginning of this period the government set rules regulating political action committees. The main federal laws governing PACs are the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) of 1971; the amendments to it passed in 1974, 1976, and 1979; and the Revenue Act of 1971. Under these laws a PAC must register with the government 6 months before an election. It must raise money from at least 50 contributors and give to at least 5 candidates in a federal election. PACs must also follow strict accounting rules.

PACs can give $5,000 directly to each candidate per election. The government, however, has not limited the total amount a PAC can spend on a candidate's campaign as long as the PAC does not work directly with the candidate.

In 1976 the Supreme Court ruled that any independent group may give money to a political candidate as long as the group does not have legal ties to that candidate. PAC spending climbed from $52.9 million in the 1975–76 election cycle to about $579 million in 1999–2000. PACs provided about $42 million to Senate candidates and $123 million to House candidates.

Federal Election Commission The Federal Election Commission (FEC) issues regulations and advisory opinions that control PAC activities. In 1975, for example, the FEC ruled that corporations can use their own money to administer their PACs and may also use payroll deductions to raise money from employees of a PAC. The FEC's decision stimulated the growth of PACs among business interests.

The Power of Money

Influence of PACs Recently Americans have questioned the implications of huge financial contributions by PACs to legislators. ***According to the cartoonist, where do legislators' loyalties lie?***

We the People
Making a Difference

David Laughery

Pennsylvania teacher David Laughery believes that people of any age can make a difference if they make their voices heard. "My students first made their voices heard when they decided to . . . lobby for the adoption of a citywide helmet ordinance," Laughery said.

The students in Laughery's class joined five other classes to develop a plan to lobby their township's Board of Supervisors. Students gathered statistics on bike-related injuries and deaths.

Armed with their research data and a prepared speech, the students presented their recommendation to their local township board. The board agreed to review their request for a helmet law in the Hershey, Pennsylvania, community.

Just a few weeks later, Pennsylvania state legislators passed a statewide helmet law. Students' efforts at a local level were no longer needed. However, the students believed they had performed a valuable service by educating the people of their community about the importance of a bike helmet law. "For the first time in their lives, these kids realized that they, too, are citizens who not only have rights, but also responsibilities," Laughery said.

In the decade after the ruling, the number of corporate PACs increased by more than 1,000 percent.

Supreme Court Decisions The Supreme Court has also affected the growth and operation of PACs. For example, in the case of *Buckley* v. *Valeo*[1] (1976) the Court ruled that different divisions of a corporation or different union locals can set up as many PACs as they wish. In 1996 the Court held that national, state, and local committee spending in support of federal candidates was a form of free speech. There could be no spending limit. Spending for federal campaigns soared to more than $1.6 billion.

PACs and the Groups They Serve

PACs can be classified into two categories, according to the groups they serve. They are either affiliated or independent.

Affiliated PACs PACs tied to corporations, labor unions, trade groups, or health organizations are called affiliated PACs. Comprising about 70 percent of all PACs, they raise funds through voluntary contributions from corporate executives, union officials, workers, and stockholders. Examples of affiliated PACs are the Sun Oil Corporation's SunPAC, the Realtors' Political Action Committee, and the Cattlemen's Action Legislative Fund (CALF).

Nonconnected PACs Groups interested in a particular cause such as free trade may set up PACs that are not connected to any existing interest group. Some nonconnected PACs are organized primarily to participate in elections. These nonconnected or independent PACs make up about 25 percent of all PACs. Examples of such PACs and their varied interests include Americans for Free International Trade, Council for a Livable World, The House Leadership Fund, National Abortion Rights Action League PAC, National Right to Life PAC, and Republicans for Choice.

Nonconnected PACs raise money largely through direct-mail appeals to people across the nation. They are very successful and usually raise more money than business or labor PACs. Independent PACs, however, spend less on candidates and elections than do the affiliated PACs because massive direct-mail fund-raising is very costly.

See the following footnoted materials in the ***Reference Handbook:***
1. *Buckley* v. *Valeo* case summary, page 755.

Most of the money raised must be used to pay postage and staff workers and to buy mailing lists of potential contributors.

Strategies for Influence

Political action committees generally follow two strategies to influence public policy. They use their money to gain access to lawmakers and to directly influence election outcomes.

Trading Support for Access Interest groups can promise campaign support for legislators who favor their policies, or they can threaten to withhold support. (Campaign contributions were exempted from the 1995 Lobbying Disclosure Act restricting gifts to members of Congress.) Loss of a sizable contribution could affect a candidate's chances of winning. Other interest groups with comparable political strength who support opposite goals, however, might back the candidate.

Interest groups, especially PACs, raise much of the money used in political campaigns. They realize that making a campaign contribution does not guarantee that a candidate, if elected, will always vote the way they wish. Such groups, however, know that campaign contributions will at least assure access to the officials they help elect.

Busy lawmakers are more likely to set aside time in their crowded schedules to meet with a group that has given money than to meet with a group that has not. As a result, PACs may give donations to lawmakers who do not always support the views of the PACs.

PACs generally support incumbents, or those government officials already in office. In recent elections 88 percent of corporate and trade PAC donations went to incumbents in House campaigns and more than 65 percent to incumbents in Senate elections.

Influencing Elections The decision to support incumbents has the expected result. Incumbents in both the House and Senate have a good chance of winning reelection. In some cases the task of challenging an incumbent for a seat in Congress is so difficult that there are no challengers. Joan Claybrook, president of Public Citizen, Inc., an interest group Ralph Nader founded, said, "That these PACs feel compelled to contribute to lawmakers who have no opponent shows that what is being sought is access and influence."

How Much Influence Some members of Congress acknowledge the power of the PACs. Representative Barney Frank once said, "We are the only human beings in the world who are expected to take thousands of dollars from perfect strangers and not be affected by it." Other members of Congress disagree. Representative Dan Glickman has claimed, "I do not think any member of Congress votes because of how a PAC gives him money on El Salvador, or the MX missiles, or . . . broader, abstract national issues."

Section 2 Assessment

Checking for Understanding

1. **Main Idea** Use a graphic organizer like the one below to list two methods lobbyists and PACs use to influence public policy.

Lobbyists	PACs
1.	
2.	

2. **Define** lobbying, lobbyist.
3. **Identify** political action committee.
4. What kinds of backgrounds do people who become lobbyists often have?

Critical Thinking

5. **Making Generalizations** What qualities of a lobbyist would make that person successful in furthering the goals of democratic government?

Concepts IN ACTION

Public Policy Members of Congress rely on lobbyists to provide them with information. Write a job description for a professional lobbyist. Include the skills and experience required for the position and the list of duties the position will involve.

Section 3

Shaping Public Opinion

Reader's Guide

Key Terms

public opinion, peer group, mass media, political culture

Find Out

- What are the patterns of political ideology in the United States?
- Which of the forces in political socialization are most influential?

Understanding Concepts

Cultural Pluralism By what process does American democracy begin with diverse opinions and end with acceptable public policy?

COVER STORY

Channel One Is Big

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, JULY 2001

On the air for over a decade, Channel One News, owned by Primedia, provides 12,000 schools across America with televisions, video recorders, and satellite dishes. In exchange, each school contracts to show the 12 minute Channel One News program to students. Approximately eight million students view the show daily, roughly the same amount who watch ABC, CBS, CNN, and NBC news combined. The show is not without its detractors, however. Some parent organizations have argued that students are a captive audience and only 60 percent of the show's air time is devoted to news, with too much emphasis on commercials.

Channel One News correspondent

Every elected official wants to know what the public is thinking. "What I want," Abraham Lincoln once declared, "is to get done what the people desire to have done, and the question for me is how to find that out exactly." Lincoln did not have television. Today the president watches the same news as everyone else. To a large extent the media in the United States both reflect and direct what the American people are thinking about.

The Nature of Public Opinion

Most Americans have opinions or preferences about many matters that affect their lives. These range from preferences about the best baseball players to favorite television programs. Few such opinions, however, have much effect on government. Yet one form of opinion, public opinion, has an enormous influence on government. **Public opinion** includes the ideas and attitudes a significant number of Americans hold about government and political issues. Three factors characterize the nature of public opinion.

Diversity Public opinion is varied. In a nation as vast as the United States, it is unlikely that all citizens will think the same way about any political issue. Because of the diversity of American society, different groups of people hold different opinions on almost every issue.

Communication People's ideas and attitudes must in some way be expressed and communicated to government. Unless Americans make their opinions on important issues clear, public officials will not know what people are thinking. Accordingly, officials will not be able to weigh public opinion when making decisions. Interest groups communicate the opinions of many individuals. Officials also rely on opinion polls and private letters and e-mails to know what people are thinking.

Significant Numbers The phrase "a significant number of Americans" in the definition of public opinion means that enough people must hold a particular opinion to make government officials listen to them. For example, perhaps the most important reason why President Lyndon Johnson decided not to run for reelection in 1968 was that so many people opposed his conduct of the Vietnam War.

Political Socialization

Personal background and life experiences exert important influences on opinion formation. Individuals learn their political beliefs and attitudes from their family, school, friends, and coworkers in a process called **political socialization.** This process begins early in life and continues through adulthood.

Family and Home Influence Political socialization begins within the family. Children learn many of their early political opinions from their parents. In most cases, the political party of the parents becomes the party of their children. A study of high school seniors showed that only a small minority differed in party loyalty from their parents. As adults, more than two-thirds of all voters continue to favor the political party their parents supported.

Schools School also plays an important part in the political socialization process. In the United States, all students learn about their nation, its history, and its political system. Democratic values are also learned in school clubs and through school rules and regulations.

Peer Groups An individual's close friends, religious group, clubs, and work groups—called **peer groups**—are yet another factor in the political socialization process. A person's peer groups often influence and shape opinions. For example, a member of a labor union whose closest friends belong to the same union is likely to have political opinions similar to theirs.

Social Characteristics Economic and social status is another aspect of political socialization. Whether a person is young or old, rich or poor, rural or urban, Easterner or Southerner, African American or white, male or female may affect personal political opinions.

Polarity of Public Opinion

Diverse Opinions Americans' differing opinions on political issues spring from the diversity of Americans themselves. This diversity is reflected during a Native American festival in Delta, Utah. ***How do you think this diversity affects public opinion?***

The Mass Media Television, radio, newspapers, magazines, recordings, movies, and books—the mass media—play an important role in political socialization. The media, especially television, provide political information and images that can directly influence political attitudes. For example, broadcasts of a rally against a Supreme Court decision or a riot outside an American embassy can help shape viewers' opinions.

Movies, recordings, novels, and television entertainment can also affect opinions. Showing police as heroes or as criminals, for example, can shape attitudes toward authority. The way the media depict different groups of people such as women, African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanics, or immigrants can help discredit stereotypes—or create them.

Other Influences Government leaders also play an important role in political socialization. The president especially has a tremendous influence on

Influential Actions Students support the G.R.E.A.T. (Gang Resistance Education and Training) program in central Texas and rally against drugs and crime. ***How do rallies, such as this one, help shape public opinion?***

people's opinions. The news media provide almost continuous reports on the president's activities and policy proposals.

Like the president, members of Congress try to influence opinions. They frequently go back to their home states or home districts and talk to their constituents. Many legislators send newsletters or write personal letters to voters. They also appear on television programs and give newspaper interviews on timely issues. Lawmakers who come across as sincere, personable, and intelligent are particularly effective in influencing opinions on major issues. At state and local levels, lawmakers also use the media to gain public support for their views.

At the same time, interest groups try to shape public opinion. If an interest group can win enough support, public opinion may pressure legislators to accept the group's goals. Churches and other religious organizations also affect people's political opinions.

Political Efficacy Most individuals are unaware that political socialization occurs in their lives because it is a slow process that happens over their lifetimes. Simultaneously, many people do not realize that this socialization has a direct effect upon their feelings of political efficacy. **Political efficacy** refers to an individual's feelings of effectiveness in politics. Some people are socialized to believe that they cannot impact the "system." Other people are socialized to trust that their actions can be effective and lead to changes important to them. Feelings of political efficacy are vital in a democracy. Without citizen participation, democracies would be unable to realize the concept of government "of the people, by the people, and for the people."

Political Culture

Every nation in the world has a **political culture**, a set of basic values and beliefs about a nation and its government that most citizens share. For example, a belief in liberty and freedom is one of the key elements of American political culture. Ralph Waldo Emerson expressed this value when he wrote:

> *"The office of America is to liberate, to abolish kingcraft, priestcraft, castle, monopoly, to pull down the gallows, to burn up the bloody statute-book, to take in the immigrant, to open the doors of the sea and the fields of the earth."*
>
> —Ralph Waldo Emerson

Additional examples of widely shared political values include support for the Constitution and Bill of Rights, commitment to the idea of political equality, belief in the virtue of private property, and an emphasis on individual achievement. The American political culture helps shape public opinion in the United States in two ways.

A Context for Opinion The political culture sets the general boundaries within which citizens develop and express their opinions. Public opinion on any issue or problem almost always fits within

the limits the political culture sets. For example, Americans will disagree over just how much the federal government should regulate the airline industry. Very few Americans, however, would urge that government eliminate regulations altogether or that it take over and run the industry.

Screening Information A nation's political culture also influences how its citizens interpret what they see and hear every day. Put another way, an American and a Russian citizen might interpret the same event quite differently. If shown a photo of people in line outside a grocery store, the Russian might attribute it to a food shortage. The American citizen would likely think there was a sale.

Ideology and Public Policy

An **ideology** is a set of basic beliefs about life, culture, government, and society. One's political ideology provides the framework for looking at government and public policy. However, Americans tend to determine their positions issue by issue rather than follow a strict ideology. Polls show that many people express inconsistent opinions on issues. For example, most people favor lower taxes, but they also want better schools and increased government services. American political values tend to fall into two broad but distinct patterns of opinions toward government and public policies—liberal and conservative.

Liberal Ideology A **liberal** believes the government should actively promote health, education, and justice. Liberals are willing to curtail economic freedom to increase equality, for example, by regulating business to protect consumers. In social matters, however, liberals believe the government should not restrict most individual freedoms.

Conservative Ideology A **conservative** believes in limiting the role of government, except in supporting traditional moral values. Conservatives believe private individuals, not the government, should solve social problems. They oppose government limitations on businesses and believe free markets ensure the best economic outcomes.

Moderates and Libertarians **Moderates** fall somewhere between liberals and conservatives. For example, a moderate may want the government to regulate business and support traditional values. Libertarians support both economic and social freedoms—free markets and unrestricted speech.

GOVERNMENT Online

Student Web Activity Visit the *United States Government: Democracy in Action* Web site at gov.glencoe.com and click on ***Chapter 18–Student Web Activities*** for an activity about shaping public opinion.

Section 3 Assessment

Checking for Understanding

1. **Main Idea** Use a graphic organizer like the one below to contrast liberal and conservative ideologies.

	Social Policy	Economic Policy
Liberals		
Conservatives		

2. **Define** public opinion, peer group, mass media, political culture.
3. **Identify** political socialization, political efficacy, liberal, conservative, moderate.
4. What five social characteristics can influence the opinions a person holds?

Critical Thinking

5. **Demonstrating Reasoned Judgment** Do you think that the mass media have too much influence on American public opinion? Explain why or why not.

Concepts IN ACTION

Cultural Pluralism Use library resources or the Internet to find examples of situations in which public opinion has caused an elected official to change his or her position on an issue. Present your findings in the form of a poster to your classmates.

Supreme Court CASES TO DEBATE

Bennett et al. v. *Spear et al.*, 1996

Since the passage of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 1973, environmental groups have used the law to file suits to stop actions they believed threatened the environment. Would the ESA also allow lawsuits by those who believed the government was doing too much to protect the environment? The Supreme Court faced this issue in the case of Bennett et al. *v.* Spear et al.

Fish without water

Background of the Case

The ESA requires federal agencies to ensure that any action they undertake is not likely to hurt an endangered species or adversely modify the species' critical habitat. During a drought in 1992, the federal Fish and Wildlife Service decided to cut off irrigation water normally sent to farmers and ranchers in Oregon and California to protect two endangered species of fish, the Lost River Sucker and the Shortnose Sucker. The federal agencies had determined that lowering water levels in federal reservoirs to provide irrigation water used by farms and ranches could possibly hurt the fish. The lack of water for irrigation caused farmers' crops to die and forced ranchers to sell their cattle because they could not feed or water them, resulting in losses of $75 million. Two ranchers and irrigation districts filed suit under the ESA against the federal government. A court of appeals ruled that only people who wanted to preserve an endangered species fell within the "zone of interests" protected by the ESA, and therefore were allowed, or had "standing," to file suit under the ESA. The ranchers appealed to the Supreme Court.

The Constitutional Issue

The Supreme Court is sometimes called upon to interpret the meaning of federal laws such as the ESA. In this instance, a key argument centered on the meaning of the citizen suit provision of the ESA. The provision stated "any person may commence a civil suit" challenging the way the Secretary of the Interior carries out the law. Since the ESA was created to protect endangered species, did the phrase mean that only people who wanted to use the law to preserve endangered species came within the "zone of interest" protected by the law and could start lawsuits? Or did it mean people who had recreational or commercial interests also fell within the reach of the law and could therefore sue?

Debating the Case

Questions to Consider

1. What two requirements did the ESA put on federal agency actions?
2. On what grounds were ranchers using the ESA allowed to sue the federal government?
3. Why did the court of appeals rule that the ranchers could not sue under the ESA?
4. What specific question was the Supreme Court asked to resolve?

You Be the Judge

What could be the long-term consequences of letting the ranchers sue the government under the ESA? In your opinion, do all persons have an equal interest in the environment? Does the ESA permit lawsuits from those who say they have lost money or property because the government has gone too far in protecting endangered species? Explain your decision.

Section 4

Measuring Public Opinion

Reader's Guide

Key Terms

biased sample, universe, representative sample, random sampling, sampling error, cluster sample

Find Out

- By what methods is public opinion measured?
- Why is the phrasing of the questions in an opinion poll so important?

Understanding Concepts

Cultural Pluralism In conducting a national poll, why is it important to have a variety of racial, ethnic, and religious groups represented in the sample?

COVER STORY

What Do Polls Show?

WASHINGTON, D.C., JULY 2000

A poll is usually conducted by asking 1,000 or more people a question or series of questions. Their answers are compiled and assessed, providing insight into public attitudes and opinions. For example, a recent study by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press on issues of national importance revealed that the greatest concern among Americans was "crime/violence." This was cited by 15 percent of those surveyed (down from 32 percent in a similar 1994 poll). The second most important issue was "moral decline/decline of family values" at 14 percent. Such information can be used by elected officials to align legislation with public concerns.

Burglary in progress

Americans express their opinions at the ballot box. In between elections, officials want to know what the public is thinking. The methods of accessing and the technology for tabulating public opinion have changed and expanded over the years.

Traditional Methods

In the past elected officials relied on several methods of gauging public opinion. Reading newspapers, meeting leaders of interest groups, and talking with voters helped them to determine the public mood.

Political Party Organizations Through much of American history, local and state party organizations were a reliable source of information about the public's attitudes. Party leaders were in close touch with voters in their home towns, cities, counties, and states. National leaders, in turn, communicated regularly with Republican and Democratic Party bosses in such cities as New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Detroit. When the two major parties did not respond to issues quickly, support for third parties increased, registering public disapproval. In the early 1900s, however, political reforms designed to curb the abuses of the big city party organizations began to weaken the role of parties in daily political life. As a result, their ability to provide reliable information on voters' attitudes declined.

Interest Groups Elected officials have always tried to stay in touch with the leaders of various interest groups. These groups also seek such contact to make sure public officials know the opinions of their members. Interest groups, however, often represent the attitudes of a vocal minority concerned with specific issues such as gun control, health care, or auto safety. They are not a good measure of broader public opinion.

The Mass Media The mass media can be a measure of public attitudes because it speaks to a broad audience. The audience, by its response, helps determine the content of media information. For example, if a news program gets higher audience ratings because of coverage of a certain issue, it is an indication of public interest in that issue. To know what the public is thinking about, politicians keep an eye on newspaper headlines, magazine cover stories, editorials, radio talk shows, and television newscasts.

These sources of information, however, may give a distorted view of public opinion for several reasons. The mass media's focus on news that has visual appeal or shock value, such as stories about violent crime, distorts the public perception of reality. People who watch television news as their only source of news, for example, tend to be more pessimistic about the nation than those who also use other sources for information. People who write letters to the editor and call radio talk shows tend to have stronger opinions than those of the general audience.

Letter Writing One time-honored form of expressing opinion in a democracy is to write letters to elected officials. The first major letter-writing campaign convinced George Washington to seek a second term as president in 1792. Letter writing increases in times of national crisis or major government decisions. The president may even request letters from the public to indicate support for a new policy or to provide the White House with ammunition for a battle with Congress. In the same way, lawmakers may ask their supporters to write to the president.

Today interest groups often stage massive letter-writing campaigns using computerized mailings to generate thousands of letters on an issue. Officials, however, may give such letters much less attention than they do more personal ones from individual constituents.

Electronic Access Members of Congress and the White House may now be reached by e-mail or by fax. This allows citizens to react almost immediately to events and government decisions. Another way to respond quickly to speeches, press conferences, and other events is by telephone or telegram.

Straw Polls Unscientific attempts to measure public opinion are made through **straw polls.** Some newspapers, as well as radio and television stations, still use straw polls. Newspapers may print "ballots" in the paper and ask people to "vote" and mail their "ballots" to the editor. Television and radio stations ask questions—"Should the mayor run for reelection?"—and give the audience telephone numbers to call for *yes* or *no* answers. Members of Congress often send their constituents questionnaires.

Straw polls are not very reliable indicators of public opinion because they do not ensure that the group, or **sample,** of people giving opinions accurately represents the larger population. Straw polls always have a **biased sample**—the people who respond to them are self-selected. They choose to respond.

Scientific Polling

Almost everyone involved in politics today uses scientific polls to measure public opinion. Scientific polling involves three basic steps: (1) selecting a sample of the group to be questioned; (2) presenting carefully worded questions to the individuals in the sample; and (3) interpreting the results.

Sample Populations In conducting polls, the group of people that are to be studied is called the **universe.** A universe might be all the seniors in a high school, all the people in the state of Texas, or all women in the United States. Since it is not possible to actually interview every person in Texas or every woman in the United States, pollsters question a **representative sample,** a small group of people typical of the universe.

Most pollsters are able to use samples of only 1,200 to 1,500 adults to accurately measure the opinions of all adults in the United States—over 208 million people. Such a small group is a representative sample because pollsters use **random sampling,** a technique in which everyone in the universe has an equal chance of being selected.

Sampling Error A sampling error is a measurement of how much the sample results may differ from the sample universe. Sampling error decreases as the sample size becomes larger. Most national polls use 1,200 to 1,500 people; this

number represents the characteristics of any size population, with an error of only plus or minus 3 percent. If a poll says that 65 percent of Americans favor tougher pollution laws, with a 3 percent sampling error, between 62 and 68 percent of the entire population favor such laws.

Knowing the sampling error is important when poll data is interpreted. During the 1976 presidential race, for example, one poll said Jimmy Carter was behind Gerald Ford 48 percent to 49 percent. With a sampling error of 3 percent, Carter could have been ahead. As it turned out, Carter won the election.

Sampling Procedures How do pollsters draw random samples of the whole nation? There are various ways that they accomplish this. One method, a **cluster sample**, organizes, or clusters, people by geographical divisions. The clusters may be counties, congressional districts, or census tracts (regions established by the Census Bureau).

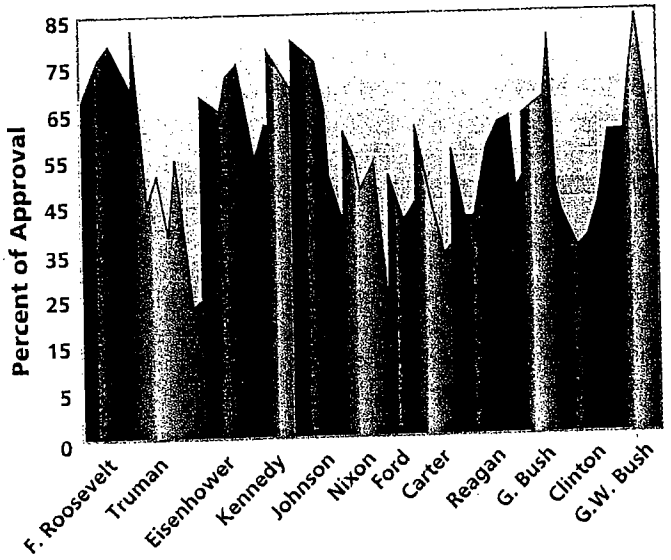
At times pollsters adjust or weight the results of a poll to overcome defects in sampling. Pollsters may adjust a poll to take into account variations in race, gender, age, or education. For example, if pollsters found that not enough Americans over the age of 65 had been interviewed, they might give extra weight to the opinions of the senior citizens who were interviewed.

Poll Questions The way a question is phrased can greatly influence people's responses and, in turn, poll results. In 1971 the Gallup Poll asked whether people favored a proposal "to bring home all American troops from Vietnam before the end of the year." Two-thirds of those polled answered *yes*. Then the Gallup Poll asked the question differently: "Do you agree or disagree with a proposal to withdraw all U.S. troops by the end of the year regardless of what happens there [in Vietnam] after U.S. troops leave?" When the question was worded this way, less than half of the respondants agreed with the proposal, a significant difference from the first response.

Mail and Phone Polls In recent years many public opinion polls have been conducted by mail or by telephone, largely because interviewing people in their homes is expensive. Although the mail questionnaire method is cheaper and more convenient than personal interviews, it has two disadvantages. One is that relatively few questionnaires are returned—usually only about 10 to 15 percent. Second, pollsters cannot control respondents' careless or confusing replies.

Telephone interviews are now used in many national polls. To be reliable a telephone poll, like other polls, should select a representative sample of the population. Most pollsters use a method called random digit dialing. They select an area code and

Presidential Approval Ratings Since 1940



Sources: The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research; Gallup Poll, 2004.

Critical Thinking **Public opinion of the United States president can change very quickly, both positively and negatively. *Which presidents had higher approval ratings at the end of their terms than at the beginning?***

the first three local digits. Then a computer randomly chooses and dials the last four digits. Although telephone polls are more reliable than mail questionnaires, problems do exist. Pollsters may fail to reach the person being called. In addition, some people refuse to answer the questions or are confused by or are inattentive to the interviewer.

Interpreting Results Scientific polling has improved since its first use in the 1930s. Polling is never completely accurate, however, because pollsters can never be sure that the people they are interviewing are being honest. Still, major polling organizations have learned how to take polls that are usually reliable within a few percentage points.

Serious problems occurred, however, during the elections of 2000 and 2002. In these election years, the Voter News Service (VNS), a polling service created by six major news organizations, experienced a great deal of difficulty forecasting accurate election results. The flawed data gathered by the VNS during exit polling for the 2000 presidential election resulted in extensive confusion about whether Al Gore or George W. Bush had won the state of Florida on Election Day. The VNS tried to redesign its data collection technique for the 2002 congressional elections, but it again failed to provide accurate exit polling data for the media services tracking the results of the election.

Public Opinion and Democracy

The Framers of the Constitution sought to create a representative democracy that would meet two goals. The first was to provide for popular rule—to give the people an active voice in government. The people were to have control over the lawmakers who represented them.

The Framers' second goal was to insulate government from the shifting whims of ill-informed public opinion. The Framers would have understood modern journalist Walter Lippmann, who said that the people

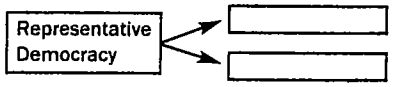
> "*. . . can elect the government. They can remove it. They can approve or disapprove its performance. But they cannot administer the government. They cannot themselves perform. . . . A mass cannot govern.*"
>
> —Walter Lippmann

The system the Framers created has worked well. Research shows that the government is responsive to public opinion—to the wishes of the people. At the same time, public opinion is not the only influence on public policy. Interest groups, political parties, the mass media, other institutions of government, and the ideas of activists and public officials themselves also help shape public policy.

Section 4 Assessment

Checking for Understanding

1. **Main Idea** Use a graphic organizer like the one below to identify two goals the Framers of the Constitution wanted to meet by creating a representative democracy.



2. **Define** biased sample, universe, representative sample, random sampling, sampling error, cluster sample.
3. **Identify** straw poll, sample.
4. Identify seven sources that public officials use to determine public opinion.
5. List reasons that poll results may not accurately reflect public opinion.

Critical Thinking

6. **Demonstrating Reasoned Judgment** Why do politicians pay closer attention to the results of polls conducted through personal interviews rather than through the mail?

Concepts IN ACTION

Cultural Pluralism Find a public opinion poll in a newspaper or newsmagazine. Analyze the poll by focusing on the following questions: How many people were contacted? Does the poll include a random or representative sampling? What is the sampling error? Are the questions presented in an unbiased, effective way? Present your answers in an analytical report.

Skills
Social Studies

Interpreting Opinion Polls

Well-designed public opinion polls give us accurate "snapshots" of how Americans are thinking at a given time. Knowing how to read data from a public opinion poll will help you to understand what your fellow citizens are thinking.

Learning the Skill

To analyze a poll, follow these steps:

- Look at the title and the date of the poll to determine a context for what you read.
- Note who was interviewed. Ask: How large was the sample? Sample sizes should be as large as possible for higher reliability.
- Ask: What was the sampling error? Margins of error are critically important for determining whether differences shown in the poll are significant.
- Note what questions were asked and whether they are phrased in an unbiased way.
- State the results in sentence form.

A Balanced Budget

In your opinion, if the federal budget is balanced in five years, will this help you and your family financially, hurt you and your family financially, or not affect you and your family too much?

Help	33%
Hurt	19%
Not much affect	40%
Don't know	8%

This poll was conducted in February 1997. The sample was 1,228 Americans, with a margin of error of plus or minus 4.5 percent. We can therefore assume that the poll is fairly accurate.

It is important that questions be phrased neither to encourage nor discourage a given answer. Note that by giving interviewees options (help, hurt, or not affect your family financially), the pollsters avoid suggesting an answer.

When you state the results of the poll in sentence form, indicate how the poll data reflects Americans' thoughts about the poll topic.

Practicing the Skill

Use what you have learned about analyzing poll data to examine the data about the poll results above and to answer the questions that follow.

1. What is this poll about?
2. What was the size of the polling sample and what was the margin of error?
3. State the results of the poll in sentence form.
4. Compose a nonbiased question to poll Americans on their approval or disapproval of Congress's work.

Application Activity

Select an issue of concern to you and decide what you want to know about it. Develop a nonbiased question to poll opinions on that issue. Randomly select a sample group from the population you have decided to poll. Record your answers. Present your results in a chart. Include your sample size and a brief summary.

The Glencoe Skillbuilder Interactive Workbook, Level 2 provides instruction and practice in key social studies skills.

Chapter 18

Assessment and Activities

GOVERNMENT Online

Self-Check Quiz Visit the *United States Government: Democracy in Action* Web site at **gov.glencoe.com** and click on ***Chapter 18–Self-Check Quizzes*** to prepare for the chapter test.

Reviewing Key Terms

Match the following terms with each of the descriptions provided:

interest group	political culture
peer group	universe
lobbyist	sampling error
random sampling	mass media
public opinion	representative sample

1. representative of an interest group
2. everyone in the group sampled has an equal chance of being selected
3. close friends, church, social, or work groups
4. people who share common policy goals and organize to influence government
5. basic values and beliefs about a nation and its government that most citizens share
6. small group of people typical of the universe
7. the ideas and attitudes a significant number of Americans hold about certain issues
8. television, radio, newspapers, movies, books
9. measurement of how much the sample results may differ from the universe being sampled
10. group of people from which samples are taken for polls or statistical measurements

Chapter Summary

Interest Groups

- **Who** Groups of people who share common goals and organize to influence government.
- **What** Major categories of interest groups include business and labor groups, agricultural groups, environmental groups, public-interest groups, government groups, and professional associations.
- **How** Most groups try to influence government policy by lobbying lawmakers, running publicity campaigns, and providing funds for candidates' election campaigns.

Public Opinion

- **What** The ideas and attitudes a significant number of Americans hold about government and politics; factors such as family, schools, peer groups, economic and social status, the mass media, and government leaders shape one's political beliefs.
- **Who** In America, most people fall into the categories of liberal, conservative, or moderate, depending on their basic beliefs about government and society.
- **How** Officials measure public opinion by meeting with leaders of interest groups and talking with voters, as well as through scientific polling methods.

Recalling Facts

1. Identify three reasons or concerns that cause people to join interest groups.
2. How do interest groups try to influence public opinion to support their policies?
3. What seven forces influence a person's political socialization?
4. What is the relationship between political culture and public opinion?
5. For what reasons may the results of scientific polls not be accurate?

Understanding Concepts

1. **Civic Participation** Analyze how an interest group can influence local government.
2. **Cultural Pluralism** Explain the relationship between voting, public opinion, and public policy.

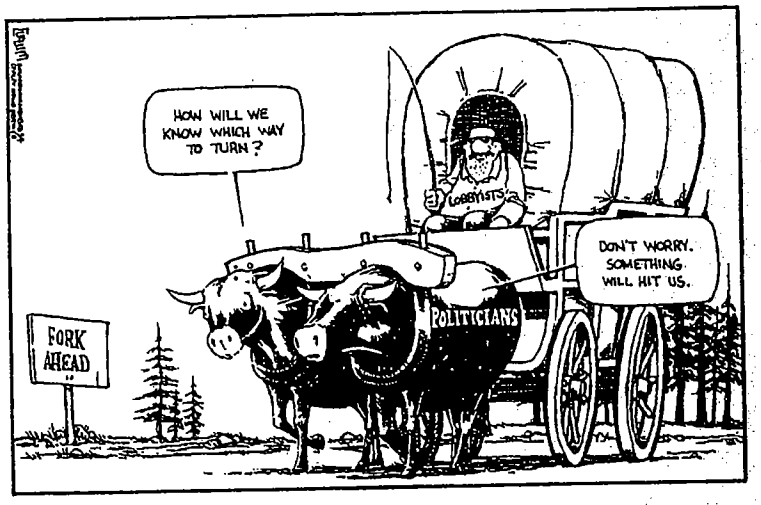
Critical Thinking

1. **Understanding Cause and Effect** Studies have shown that people in lower socioeconomic levels are less likely to contribute to, lead in, or even join special-interest groups. Why do you think that this is so?

2. **Making Comparisons** Use a graphic organizer like the one below to compare the AFL-CIO with an environmental interest group in the areas of size, composition of membership, and methods used to accomplish their goals.

	AFL-CIO	Other
Size		
Members		
Methods		

Interpreting Political Cartoons Activity



1. What do the oxen's words suggest about politicians?
2. What is about to happen in the cartoon?
3. What does the choice of a wagon and oxen suggest about the cartoonist's viewpoint?

Analyzing Primary Sources

The National Grange, also known as the Patrons of Husbandry, is the oldest agricultural interest group in the United States. The excerpt below is from the 2004 National Grange Blueprint for Rural America, the organization's political issues platform. Read the excerpt and answer the questions that follow.

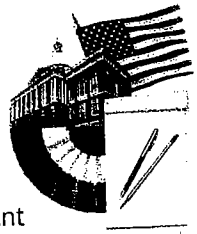
"America's family farmers and ranchers face challenges regarding food security, contract agriculture, agribusiness consolidations, trade negotiations and low prices. Federal farm programs should encourage increased participation in the agricultural sector by the largest number of individuals and families. . . . Instead, federal farm policies discourage innovative farm practices. . . . The government depresses farm income by selling surplus agricultural products and allowing imports of milk protein concentrates. All dairy farmers and all consumers deserve to benefit from regional dairy programs and continued financial assistance for moderate-sized dairy farms. The U.S. faces hostile multilateral trade negotiations where the goal of our trading partners is to decrease U.S. farm income."

1. Based on this excerpt, how is a farming interest group like the National Grange different from a political party?
2. What are the key issues the Grange promotes? Do you think their membership is based only in certain regions, or nationwide?

Applying Technology Skills

Using E-mail Use library or Internet resources to research an interest group that you might like to join. Locate an e-mail address for the group and compose a letter requesting information about the group—its purpose, activities, dues, and number of members. Produce a class pamphlet titled "Interest Groups to Join."

Participating in Local Government



Arrange an interview with a public official in your local government. Ask how that official finds out what issues are important to the public, and how he or she measures public opinion on those issues. Present your findings in class.