CHAPTER 11

Interest Groups

REVIEWING THE CHAPTER

CHAPTER FOCUS

The purpose of this chapter is to survey the wide variety of interest groups or lobbies that operate in the United States and to assess the effect they have on the political system of the country. After reading and reviewing the material in this chapter, you should be able to do each of the following:

1. Explain why the characteristics of American society and government encourage a multiplicity of interest groups, and compare the American and British experiences in this regard.

2. Describe the historical conditions under which interest groups are likely to form, and specify the kinds of organizations Americans are most likely to join.

3. Describe relations between leaders and rank-and-file members of groups, including why the sentiments of members may not determine the actions of leaders.

4. Describe several methods that interest groups use to formulate and carry out their political objectives, especially the lobbying techniques used to gain public support. Explain why courts have become an important forum for public-interest groups.

5. List the laws regulating conflict of interest, and describe the problems involved with “revolving door” government employment. Describe the provisions of the 1978 conflict-of-interest law. Explain the suggestions that have been made for stricter laws. Describe the balance between the First Amendment’s freedom of expression and the need to prevent corruption in the political system.

STUDY OUTLINE

I. Explaining proliferation: why interest groups are common in the United States
   A. Many kinds of cleavage in the country
   B. Constitution makes for many access points
   C. Public laws favor the non-profit sector
   D. Political parties are weak

II. The birth of interest groups
   A. Periods of rapid growth
      1. Since 1960, 70 percent have established an office in Washington, D.C.
      2. 1770s, independence groups
      3. 1830s and 1840s, religious, antislavery groups
      4. 1860s, craft unions
      5. 1880s and 1890s, business associations
      6. 1900s and 1910, most major lobbies of today
B. Factors explaining the rise of interest groups
   1. Broad economic developments create new interests
      a) Farmers produce cash crops
      b) Mass production industries begin
   2. Government policy itself
      a) Created veterans’ groups—wars
      b) Encouraged formation of Farm Bureau
      c) Launched Chamber of Commerce
      d) Favored growth of unions
   3. Emergence of strong leaders, usually at certain times
   4. Expanding role of government

III. Kinds of organizations
A. Institutional interests
   1. Defined: individuals or organizations representing other organizations
   2. Types
      a) Businesses: example, General Motors
      b) Trade or governmental associations
   3. Concerns—bread-and-butter issues of concern to their clients
      a) Clearly defined, with homogeneous groups
      b) Diffuse, with diversified groups
   4. Other interests—governments, foundations, universities
B. Membership interests
   1. Americans join some groups more frequently than people in other nations
      a) Social, business, and so on, same rate as elsewhere
      b) Unions, less likely to join
      c) Religious or civic groups, more likely to join
      d) Greater sense of efficacy and duty explains the tendency to join civic groups
   2. Most sympathizers do not join because
      a) Individuals not that significant
      b) Benefits flow to nonmembers too
C. Incentives to join
   1. Solidary incentives—pleasure, companionship (League of Women Voters, AARP, NAACP, Rotary, etc.)
   2. Material incentives—money, things, services (farm organizations, retired persons, etc.)
   3. Purpose of the organization itself—public-interest organizations
      a) Ideological interest groups’ appeal is controversial principles
      b) Engage in research and bring lawsuits
D. Influence of the staff
   1. Many issues affect different members differently
   2. Issues may be irrelevant to those joining for solidary or material benefits
   3. Group efforts may reflect opinion of staff more than general membership

IV. Interest groups and social movements
A. Social movement is a widely shared demand for change
B. Environmental movement
C. Feminist movement: three kinds
   1. Solidary—LWV and others (widest support)
   2. Purposive—NOW, NARAL (strong position on divisive issues)
   3. Caucus—WEAL (material benefits)
D. Union movement
   1. Major movement occurred in the 1930s
2. Peak around 1945
3. Steady decline since, today about 10 percent of all workers
4. Explanations for the decline
   a) Shift from industrial production to service delivery
   b) Decline in popular approval of unions
5. Growth in unions composed of government workers

V. Funds for interest groups
   A. Expansion and cutbacks in federal grants affect interest groups
   1. Support for projects undertaken
      a) Larger non-profits benefit when grants are awarded for services they provide
      b) Performance audits of independent research evaluations rarely follow
      c) Recipients rarely change
   2. Efforts by Reagan and Bush to cut back and increase funds
   3. Business and federal contracts
   B. Direct mail
      1. Unique to modern interest groups through use of computers
      2. Common cause a classic example
      3. Techniques
         a) Teaser
         b) Emotional arousal
         c) Celebrity endorsement
         d) Personalization of letter

VI. Problem of bias
   A. Reasons for belief in upper-class bias
      1. More affluent more likely to join
      2. Business or professional groups more numerous; better financed
   B. Why these facts do not decide the issue
      1. Describe inputs but not outputs
      2. Business groups often divided among themselves
   C. Important to ask what the bias is
      1. Many conflicts are within upper middle class
      2. Resource differentials are clues, not conclusions

VII. Activities of interest groups
   A. Information
      1. Single most important tactic
         a) Nonpolitical sources insufficient
         b) Provide detailed, current information
      2. Most effective on narrow, technical issues
      3. Officials also need cues; ratings systems
      4. Dissemination of information and cues via fax
   B. Public support: rise of new politics
      1. Outsider strategy replacing insider strategy
      2. New strategy leads to controversy that politicians dislike
      3. Key targets: the undecided
      4. Some groups attack their likely allies to embarrass them
      5. Legislators sometimes buck public opinion, unless issue important
      6. Some groups try for grassroots support
         a) Saccharin issue
         b) “Dirty Dozen” environmental polluters
      7. Few large, well-funded interests are all-powerful (e.g., NRA)
C. Money and PACs
1. Money is least effective way to influence politicians
2. Campaign finance reform law of 1973 had two effects
   a) Restricted amount interest groups can give to candidates
   b) Made it legal for corporations and unions to create PACs
3. Rapid growth in PACs has not led to vote buying
   a) More money is available on all sides
   b) Members of Congress take money but still decide how to vote
4. Almost any organization can create a PAC
   a) More than half of all PACs sponsored by corporations
   b) Recent increase in ideological PACs; one-third liberal, two-thirds conservative
5. Ideological PACs raise more but spend less because of cost of raising money
6. In 2000 unions and business organizations gave most
7. Incumbents get most PAC money
   a) Business PACs split money between Democrats and Republicans
   b) Democrats get most PAC money
8. PAC contributions small
9. No evidence PAC money influences votes in Congress
   a) Most members vote their ideology
   b) When issue of little concern to voters, slight correlation but may be misleading
   c) PAC money may influence in other ways, such as access
   d) PAC money most likely to influence on client politics

D. The revolving door
1. Individuals leave important jobs in the federal government and go into lucrative positions in private industry
2. Some become lobbyists and there are concerns
   a) Improper influence
   b) Promise of positions upon leaving government
3. Some prominent examples, especially in the procurement process

E. Trouble
1. Disruption always part of American politics
2. Used by groups of varying ideologies
3. Better accepted since 1960s
4. History of proper persons using disruption: suffrage, civil rights, antiwar movements
5. Officials dread no-win situation

VIII. Regulating interest groups
A. Protection by First Amendment
B. 1946 law accomplished little in requiring registration
C. 1995 lobby act enacted by Congress
1. Broadens definition of a lobbyist
2. Lobbyists must report twice annually
   a) The names of clients
   b) Their income and expenditures
   c) The issues on which they worked
3. Exempts grassroots organizations
4. No enforcement organization created
D. 2007 reforms by Democrats
1. Gifts from registered lobbyists or firms that employ them
2. Reimbursement for travel costs from registered lobbyists or forms that employ them
3. Reimbursements for travel for trips organized or requested by registered lobbyists or firms that employ them

E. Impact of reforms?
1. Rules will probably be enforced “strictly speaking”
2. Exceptions, loopholes and need for clarification
3. Still room for evasion and abuse

F. Significant restraints prior to 1995 still in effect
1. Tax code: threat of losing tax exempt status
2. Campaign finance laws

**KEY TERMS MATCH**

Match the following terms and descriptions.

1. Any group that seeks to influence public policy
   a. “beltway bandits”

2. Interest groups made up of those who join voluntarily
   b. client politics

3. Large not-for-profit firms with trade representatives or lobbyists in Washington who win federal grants and contracts
   c. cue (political)

4. The sense of pleasure, status, or companionship arising from group membership
   d. direct mail

5. Money, things, or services obtainable from interest group membership
   e. “Dirty Dozen”

6. The goals of an organization that, if attained, would benefit primarily nongroup members
   f. Federal Regulation of Lobbying Act of 1946

7. Organizations that attract members mostly by the appeal of their broad, controversial principles
   g. Federalist 10

8. Organizations that gather information on consumer topics (first organized by Ralph Nader)
   h. Section 501(c)(3) organizations

9. The solicitation of funding through letter campaigns
   i. Section 501 (c)(4) organizations

10. The situation that arises when a government agency services as well as regulates a distinct group
    j. grassroots support

11. Argued the latent causes of faction are sown in the nature of man
    k. ideological interest groups

12. Nonprofit group that lobbies, campaigns and received non-tax deductible donations
    l. incentive (political)

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13. Backing for a public policy that arises or is created in public opinion
14. A list, compiled by an environmental interest group, of those legislators who voted most frequently against its measures
15. The part of the public that is directly affected by or deeply concerned with a governmental policy
16. Groups that can collect political donations and make campaign contributions to candidates for office
17. The practice of lobbying officials with such promises as employment after their government service
18. Its application restricted to lobbying efforts involving direct contacts with members of Congress
19. A signal to a member of Congress that identifies which values are at stake in a vote
20. Nonprofit group that addresses political matters but cannot lobby or campaign
21. A valued benefit obtained by joining a political organization
22. A person attempting to influence government decisions on behalf of an interest group
23. The sense of satisfaction derived from serving a cause from which one does not benefit personally
24. An assessment of a representative’s voting record on issues important to an interest group
25. A widely shared demand for change in some aspect of the social or political order
26. Lobbyists working closely with a few key members of Congress, meeting them privately to exchange information and sometimes favors
27. Plan increasingly used by lobbyists with advent of modern technology and employing grassroots lobbying

y. ratings
z. revolving-door influence
aa. social movement
bb. solidary incentives
### PRACTICING FOR EXAMS

**TRUE/FALSE QUESTIONS**

Read each statement carefully. Mark true statements T. If any part of the statement is false, mark it F, and write in the space provided a concise explanation of why the statement is false.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>T/F</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. James Madison considered the latent causes of “faction” to be sown in “human nature.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. The American system features more interest groups than that of Great Britain because there are more points of access and opportunities to influence policy.</td>
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<td>3. Section 501(c)(3) organizations are forbidden to lobby government officials or contribute to political campaigns.</td>
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<td>4. The number of interest groups has grown rapidly since the 1960s.</td>
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<td>5. Political interest groups tend to arise inevitably out of natural social processes.</td>
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<td>6. Governmental policies have generally been a roadblock to the creation of interest groups.</td>
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<td>7. Europeans are more likely than Americans to think that organized activity is an effective way to influence the national government.</td>
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<td>8. The League of Women Voters represents an organization based on solidary incentives.</td>
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<td>9. It is probably easier for organizations to form small local chapters in the United States because of the importance of local government.</td>
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<td>10. The provision of money and services would constitute solidary incentives for membership.</td>
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<td>11. Conservatives have been slow to adopt the public-interest organizational strategy.</td>
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<td>12. The text suggests that public-interest lobbies often do best when the government is in the hands of an administration that is hostile to their views.</td>
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<td>13. The larger organizations that are spawned by social movements tend to be more passionate and extreme in their position taking than smaller organizations.</td>
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14. T F The League of Women Voters was founded to educate women and organize women to effectively use their newly gained right to vote.

15. T F Women’s organizations that rely chiefly on solidary incentives take controversial stands and are constantly embroiled in internal quarrels.

16. T F Membership in unions is steadily increasing.

17. T F Membership in unions composed of government workers is decreasing.

18. T F Businesses receive far more money in federal contracts than non-profit groups.

19. T F The text suggests business-oriented interest groups are rarely divided among themselves.

20. T F Interest groups are an accurate reflection of the high degree of unity that exists among politically active elites.

21. T F When an issue is broad and highly visible, the value of information provided by lobbyists is reduced.

22. T F Interest groups produce “ratings” in order to generate support for, or opposition to, legislators.

23. T F Ratings can be biased by arbitrary determination of what constitutes a liberal or conservative vote.

24. T F Republican activist William Kristol is given credit for creative use of billboards in an effort to defeat President Clinton’s education programs.

25. T F Increasingly, interest groups and lobbyists have turned to an “insider strategy.”

26. T F Most legislators tend to work with interest groups with whom they agree.

27. T F Members of interest groups tend to work primarily with legislators with whom they agree.
28. T F The text suggests money is probably one of the least effective ways for interest groups to advance their causes.

29. T F Some members of Congress tell PACs what to do rather than take orders from them.

30. T F Members of Congress are not allowed to set up their own PACs.

31. T F Almost 80 percent of all PACs are sponsored by corporations.

32. T F In recent years, there has been little interest in the creation of ideological PACs.

33. T F Ideological PACs tend to raise more money and to contribute more to candidates.

34. T F Both parties are dependent upon PAC money.

35. T F Even with all of the loopholes, the laws regulating lobbying are tighter than ever.

36. T F The Sierra Club lost its tax exempt status because of its extensive lobbying activities.

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Circle the letter of the response that best answers the question or completes the statement.

1. In the *Federalist* papers, Madison took the position that the causes of faction can be found in
   a. constitutional arrangements.
   b. self-serving interest groups.
   c. ambitious politicians.
   d. the nature of man.
   e. notions of rights and responsibilities.

2. Where political parties are strong, interest groups are likely to be
   a. stronger.
   b. independent.
   c. weak.
   d. more numerous.
   e. nonideological.

3. The “great era of organization building” in America occurred during the years
   a. 1830–1840.
   b. 1900–1920.
   c. 1883–1896.
   e. 1940–1960.
4. Large labor unions had no reason to exist until the era of
   a. mass-production industry.
   b. “ill feeling.”
   c. “goodwill.”
   d. anti-federalism.
   e. consumerism.

5. Professional societies of doctors and lawyers first gained in importance because
   a. their numbers increased more than those of other professions.
   b. more and more legislators came from those professions.
   c. the Supreme Court made several decisions favorable toward their interests.
   d. state governments gave them authority to decide qualifications for their professions.
   e. the Tenth Amendment was ignored by most state governments.

6. The great majority of “public-interest” lobbies were established
   a. after 1960.
   b. after 1970.
   c. after 1980.
   d. after 1990.
   e. after 1995.

7. In the landmark case *U.S. v. Harris* (1954), the Supreme Court ruled the government can
   a. require information from groups that try to influence legislation.
   b. limit the number of groups that try to influence government.
   c. prohibit interest groups from lobbying on government property.
   d. prohibit government officials from contributing to interest groups.
   e. declare some interest groups more “qualified” than others.

8. It is often said that Americans are a nation of
   a. linkers.
   b. combinationists.
   c. relaters.
   d. joiners.
   e. aggregationists.

9. Americans are less likely than the British to join
   a. labor unions.
   b. social organizations.
   c. business organizations.
   d. veteran organizations.
   e. professional organizations.

10. Americans have an unusually high rate of membership in
    a. religious organizations.
    b. civic organizations.
    c. business organizations.
    d. political associations.
    e. A, B and D.

11. Solidary incentives involve
    a. employment opportunities in government agencies.
    b. the appeal of a stated goal.
    c. a sense of pleasure, status or companionship.
    d. money, or things and services readily valued in monetary terms.
    e. assurances that partisanship will play no part in an organization’s decision-making.
12. When the Illinois Farm Bureau offers its members discount prices and the chance to purchase low-cost insurance, it is providing ________ incentives.
   a. solidary
   b. material
   c. purposive
   d. both solidary and purposive
   e. ideological

13. Purposive incentives involve
   a. employment opportunities in government agencies.
   b. the appeal of a stated goal.
   c. a sense of pleasure, status or companionship.
   d. money, or things and services readily valued in monetary terms.
   e. assurances that partisanship will play no part in an organization’s decision-making.

14. Ralph Nader rose to national prominence on the issue of
   a. school busing.
   b. abortion.
   c. auto safety.
   d. nuclear power.
   e. discrimination.

15. Membership organizations that rely on purposive incentives tend to be shaped by
   a. economic trends.
   b. social policy.
   c. the mood of the times.
   d. legal developments.
   e. demographic shifts.

16. All of the following are examples of liberal public-interest law firms except the
   a. American Civil Liberties Union.
   c. NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund.
   d. Criminal Justice Legal Foundation.
   e. Women’s Legal Defense Fund.

17. The Center for Defense Information, the Children’s Defense Fund, and the Economic Policy Institute are examples of
   a. liberal public-interest law firms.
   b. nonideological public-interest think tanks.
   c. conservative public-interest law firms.
   d. liberal think tanks.
   e. conservative think tanks.

18. The National Organization for Women and the National Abortion Rights Action League are examples of organizations that feature
   a. solidary incentives.
   b. purposive incentives.
   c. material incentives.
   d. non-partisan incentives.
   e. all of the above.
19. The major union movement in America occurred in the
   a. 1920s.
   b. 1930s.
   c. 1950s.
   d. 1960s.
   e. 1970s.
20. The shift in the nation’s economic life toward _______ has contributed to the decline in unions.
   a. industrial production
   b. the development of infrastructure
   c. international trade
   d. service delivery
   e. A and B
21. “Beltway bandits” are
   a. interest groups who actively oppose increases in federal grants.
   b. large national for-profit firms with trade representatives or lobbyists in Washington.
   c. coalitions of interest groups who lobby against applications for federal contracts.
   d. Washington-based lobbyists who obtain grants for small, not-for-profit organizations.
   e. federal employees who oversee the application process for grants and contracts.
22. Which statement is incorrect?
   a. Nobody really knows whether the groups that win federal grants and contracts are doing a good job or not.
   b. The organizations that receive the lion’s share of grants and contracts are frequently audited and evaluated.
   c. The list of top discretionary grant recipients generally looks the same from year to year.
   d. The organizations that administer social services funded by Washington are typically large.
   e. Ronald Reagan attempted to cut back on federal funds going to nonprofit groups that supposedly lobbied for liberal causes.
23. About _______ percent of the interest groups represented in Washington, D.C., are public-interest groups.
   a. 4
   b. 12
   c. 15
   d. 20
   e. 40
24. Although farmers today have difficulty getting Congress to pass bills in their favor, they are still able to
   a. block bills that they don’t like.
   b. appeal to public sentiment.
   c. win court cases.
   d. manipulate prices by withholding their produce.
   e. affect collective bargaining agreements and discourage strikes.
25. Probably the best measure of an interest group’s ability to influence legislators and bureaucrats is
   a. the size of the membership.
   b. the dollar amount of its contributions.
   c. the occupational sketch of its members.
   d. its organizational skill.
   e. its contacts.
26. The single most important “tactic” of an interest group is the ability to
   a. provide credible information.
   b. smooth over ideological differences.
   c. mask partisan loyalties.
   d. publicize the decision-making process.
   e. persuade through the use of litigation.

27. Interest-group ratings can be helpful sources of information but can be problematic because of
   a. the costs of obtaining the results.
   b. constant change in group membership.
   c. a lack of participation by members of Congress.
   d. bias in arbitrary measurement and assessment.
   e. lack of public interest.

28. The “Dirty Dozen” refers to members of Congress who one interest group deemed to be
   a. corrupt.
   b. anti-environment.
   c. beleaguered.
   d. free-thinking.
   e. parlor “pinks.”

29. The passage of the campaign finance reform law in 1973 led to the rapid growth in
   a. political parties.
   b. interest groups.
   c. PACs.
   d. voter registration.
   e. revenue sharing.

30. Senator Kennedy’s observation that we may have “the finest Congress that money can buy” is
    probably off mark because
   a. individual contributions have never been a major source of congressional campaign funds.
   b. campaign finance reform laws have decreased the influence of money in elections.
   c. large corporations rarely contribute the full amount allowed by law.
   d. incumbents are well funded and do not need money from interest groups.
   e. PACs are so numerous and easy to form.

31. Over half of all PACs are sponsored by
   a. public-interest lobbies.
   b. citizens groups.
   c. ideological groups.
   d. labor unions.
   e. corporations.

32. Scholars have found a “slight statistical correlation” between PAC contributions and
    congressional votes when votes involve
   a. racial discrimination.
   b. issues which do not interest constituents.
   c. abortion and affirmative action.
   d. issues where positions are not driven by ideology.
   e. B and D.
33. The revolving door between government and business raises the possibility of
   a. poor communications.
   b. revenue sharing.
   c. conflicts of interest.
   d. duplication.
   e. ticket splitting.

34. Former executive-branch employees may not appear before an agency for ____ after leaving
government service on matters that came before the former employees’ official sphere of
responsibility.
   a. six months
   b. eight months
   c. one year
   d. two years
   e. five years

35. Laws which restrict the activity of interest groups are always in potential conflict with
   a. the Due Process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.
   b. the Equal Protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.
   c. the Privileges and Immunities clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.
   d. the First Amendment.
   e. the Tenth Amendment.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Practice writing extended answers to the following questions. These test your ability to integrate and
express the ideas that you have been studying in this chapter.

1. Discuss the four reasons identified by the authors for why interest groups are so common in this
country.

2. Explain how government policy contributed to the rise of interest groups since the 1960s.

3. Identify some of the defining characteristics of institutional and membership interests.

4. Identify and explain the three types of incentives which mass-membership organizations offer.

5. Describe the three types of feminist organizations.

6. Discuss the rise and fall of the union movement with attention given to causes of decline and
   recent trends in union membership.

7. Why are federal grants and contracts a topic of interest in relation to interest groups and how have
   recent administrations attempted to affect the relationship between them?

8. How do interest groups employ “ratings?” What are some examples of groups who employ such
devices and why are they also problematic?

9. Summarize what political scientists know about trends in PAC activity and what we know about
   the influence of PACs on congressional voting.

10. Identify three restrictions on former executive branch employees who want to represent clients
    before government agencies.

11. What three regulations were placed on lobbyists and lobbying activity in March of 2007?
ANSWERS TO KEY TERMS MATCH QUESTIONS

1. o
2. s
3. a
4. bb
5. r
6. w
7. k
8. v
9. d
10. b
11. g
12. i
13. j
14. e
15. p
16. u
17. z
18. f
19. c
20. h
21. l
22. q
23. x
24. y
25. aa
26. m
27. t

ANSWERS TO TRUE/FALSE QUESTIONS

1. T
2. T
3. T
4. T
5. F  In fact, they are created more rapidly in some time periods than in others.
6. F Government policy has helped create interest groups.
7. F Americans are much more likely to hold this opinion.
8. T
9. T
10. F Those would be examples of material incentives. Solidary incentives are derived from a sense of pleasure, status or companionship that arise out of meeting together in groups.
11. T
12. T
13. F As Madison predicted, larger groups tend to be more moderate.
14. T
15. F They tend to support those causes that command the widest support among women generally.
16. F Membership in unions has fallen steadily since 1945.
17. F Unions of this type are becoming the most important part of the union movement.
18. T
19. F Business-oriented groups do not speak with a unified voice, so it is important to be careful about generalizing with respect to the “influence” of the business lobby.
20. F Interest groups are an accurate reflection of the distribution of opinion among political active elites, but that opinion is quite diverse.
21. T
22. T
23. T
24. F Kristol distinguished himself via the use of the fax machine.
25. T
26. T
27. T
28. T
29. T
30. F Members of Congress are allowed to set up PACs and often do, especially the leadership.
31. F It would be more accurate to say “over half” are sponsored by corporations.
32. F The rise of ideological PACs in recent years is the most remarkable development in interest group activity.
33. F They raise more money, but they spend less on campaigns and give less to candidates.
34. T
35. T
36. T
ANSWERS TO MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. d
2. c
3. b
4. a
5. d
6. a
7. a
8. d
9. a
10. e
11. c
12. b
13. b
14. c
15. c
16. d
17. d
18. b
19. b
20. d
21. b
22. b
23. a
24. a
25. d
26. a
27. d
28. b
29. c
30. e
31. e
32. e
33. c
34. d
35. d