

Interest Groups

- Defined
 - Voluntary association of citizens who share a common economic or ideological interest
 - Attempt to influence gov't decision making
 - Participate in the electoral process
 - Try to influence “politicians”
 - Differences between interests and interest groups
 - Also known as lobbying or pressure groups
- The Framers views:
 - Different groups have different interests
 - Right to pursue interests = fundamental
 - Problems:
- Madison's views:
 - Groups who pursue gov't policies adverse to the rights of others or to the long-term interests of the community = factions
 - Factions must be rendered harmless

- Modern opinions on Madison
 - Madison = naïve
 - Interest groups power out of proportion to size
 - Small factions = just as dangerous as large
 - Groups pursue interests at the expense of the public
 - Challenge:
- Modern Views of Interest Groups
 - Pluralism
 - Pluralist theorists:
 - Pluralism favors “elites”, who believe:
- Types of Interest Groups
 - Profit Sector Groups
 - Nonprofit and Public Sector Groups
 - Mixed Sector Groups
 - Citizens' Groups

- What Do Interest Groups Do?
 - The Power of Information
 - Lobbying Congress and the Executive
 - Participate in the decision making process
 - Muster broad-based coalitions
 - Going to Court
 - Money and PACs
 - The Power to Protest