



Knowledge Organiser Pro-Forma Democracy and Participation Interest Groups

Subject Specific Vocabulary	Short-hand definitions
Single issue interest groups	IGs that focus on one issue – NRA, Emily’s List, Mom’s for Liberty
Policy interest groups	Like single issue but a broader area. Environment America, American Civil Liberties Union, US Chamber of Commerce
Professional Interest Groups	Like a UK sectional group. American Farm Bureau Federation Big Pharma – Opioids and current debate on Diabetes
Report cards	Voting records of members of Congress by PGs publicised to voters. Designed to ‘cost votes for representatives
Heritage Foundation	Conservative political think tank
Brookings Institute	Liberal political think tank
Electioneering	Endorsing and funding candidates for election. NARAL endorses pro choice candidates. 2018 NRA publicly criticised Manchin

Knowledge Dump 1:
What are examples of
single issue interest
groups

Knowledge Dump 3
What are examples of
policy interest group

Knowledge Dump 2.
What are examples of
professional interest
groups

Why does the US political system make it easy for US interest groups to influence politics?

Structure of US Politics gives multiple access points – Executive, Congress (House Senate, state level (governors, state legislatures) is productive (pro life groups_ Courts both state and federal

Legislative process works in favour of PGs who may succeed in blocking as well as creating legislation

Lack of party control over members of Congress means individual members are worth targeting in closely tied chambers,.

Money: Lack of regulation of Super PACs post Citizen’s United means wealthy IG can spend enormous sums on electioneering. Incumbency rates help

Cultural

What methods do interest groups use in the US?

Lobbying (Citigroup on repeal of Dodd’s Frank 2013

Campaign finance and electioneering

Report Cards

Grassroots activity and protests – emails – social media petitions etc

Legal redress (Citizens United) (Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action) NRA in DC v Heller They also make use of amicus curiae

Use of initiatives – Marijuana Policy Project

Funding candidate campaigns at both national and state and judicial level

Confirmation hearings

What are the strengths and weaknesses of interest group activity for democracy in the US?

Can represent minority groups that can be overlooked in winner takes all system created by FPTP v Atomisation of society as competing groups fracture US society

IGs can encourage electoral participation – getting the vote out. ACLU and American Federation of Labour in Georgia. V greater influence of well funded groups that create elitist rather than pluralist system . Big Pharma lobbying harmful to US as is arguably fossil fuel lobby and US Chamber of Commerce activity in weakening banking regulation. Free and fair elections can be undermined

They can increase accountability by monitoring programme delivery and report cards etc v Powerful groups actually writing legislation or INDEED Blocking it or because of the legislative process a minority group can have too much influence

Illegal methods can undermine rule of law.



Evaluate the view that interest groups harm democracy in the US?

Evaluate the view that interest groups rather than the SC are more effective at protecting rights in the US?