



Interest Groups: Lesson Plan

Topic	
<p>Interest groups consist of people that support a particular political interest or area of interest. They exist at all levels of government, from the U.S. Congress to town councils. Part of their function is lobbying, where they lawfully seek to influence a public official on an issue. Interest groups may also try to influence elections through endorsing, funding, or sending members to support a campaign.</p>	
Possible subjects/classes	Time needed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government • History • Politics 	30-45 minutes
Video link:	
https://academy4sc.org/topic/interest-groups-influencing-politics/	
Objective: <i>What will students know/be able to do at the end of class?</i>	
<p>Students will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain what an interest group does. • Identify the different types of interest groups and name a few examples. • Discuss the negative effects of interest groups and potential methods of limiting those effects. 	
Key Concepts & Vocabulary	
Lobbying, corporate personhood	
Materials Needed	
Worksheets, pieces of paper with "\$5" written on them, computers	
Before you watch	
Think-pair-share: What is a political issue you are especially passionate about?	

How could you and others who support this issue get legislators to pass policies that favor this issue?

While you watch

Complete questions 1-6 on the Worksheet.

After you watch/discussion questions

1. If you were to form or join an interest group, what would its focus be? Why are you interested in that specific issue?
2. Do interest groups do more harm than good? Why or why not?
3. What are some ways to mitigate the negative effects of interest groups?

Activity Ideas

- Split students into two groups, one larger than the other so that the class is split into $\frac{1}{3}$ and $\frac{2}{3}$. The smaller group will be politicians and the larger group will be interest groups. Each student in the larger group should get a piece of paper that represents \$5. Within the larger group, split students into three to five more groups. The students in each group should then decide on an interest they want to support. Once they've decided, they should announce their interest group to the class to write it on the board, so the politicians can think of their stances on the issues. The small groups should then go around to the different politicians and try to convince them to support their interest. After five to ten minutes, have the class reconvene, and go around to each group to see which tactics worked best. Then have the politicians describe which methods they felt were most persuasive.
- Have students research three different interest groups and answer questions 7-9 on the Worksheet. When they're done, have them discuss what they found in small groups.

Sources/places to learn more

1. "Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission." *Oyez*. www.oyez.org, <https://www.oyez.org/cases/2008/08-205>.
2. DeKieffer, Donald E. *The Citizen's Guide to Lobbying Congress*. Chicago Review Press, 1997, https://books.google.com/books?id=GmiYbMQg8hIC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false.



3. "Interest Group | Definition & Facts." *Encyclopedia Britannica*.
www.britannica.com, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/interest-group>.
4. "Lobbying Regulated to Prevent Abuse in US." *Voice of America*.
www.voanews.com,
<https://www.voanews.com/usa/lobbying-regulated-prevent-abuse-us>.
5. "National Special Interest Groups." *Vote Smart*. justfacts.votesmart.org,
<https://justfacts.votesmart.org/interest-groups>.