Georgia Standards of Excellence

- SSCG8 Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative branch of government.
- 8g. Analyze the positive and negative role lobbyists play in the legislative process.
What are “lobbying” & interest groups?

- Lobbying is the process by which organized interests attempt to affect the decisions and actions of public officials.
- Lobbyists are those people who try to persuade public officials to do those things that interest groups want them to do.
- More than 30,000 lobbyists in Washington; most are professional.
- Interest groups: collection of people who share certain views on public matters & work to shape public policy to their benefit; they try to influence public officials to respond to their positions favorably.
What organizations, companies, etc. that you are a part of or are familiar with that would want to influence government policy?
Lobbying: The Direct Approach

• Lobbying Congress: benefits of relationships with Congress are obvious since it is the main place where public policy is made

• most lobbying efforts are aimed at standing committees

• Lobbyists testify before committees and prepare statements to explain their views on proposed legislation
Lobbying: The Direct Approach

- Congress can learn all the arguments from both sides of an issue by hearing from lobbyists with opposing views.
- If lobbyists fail in one house, they often try the other.
• What did we learn about standing committees that would make lobbyists focus their efforts on them?
• Do you think it is positive or negative that Congress can listen to lobbyists from both sides of an issue?
Lobbying: The Direct Approach

- Lobbying the executive branch:

Lobbyists focus on influencing the president’s appointments of top officials in various executive agencies (FCC, IRS, etc.)
Lobbying: The Direct Approach

- Lobbying the courts:
- Lobbyists/interest groups can realize their goals by using the courts (ex. Brown v. Board was taken to the Supreme Courts by NAACP)
- Interest groups file “Amicus Curiae” (“friend of the court”) briefs with the court for cases in which they have a stake
Lobbying: The Direct Approach

- Lobbyists/interests also try to influence selection of federal judges and Supreme Court Justices who will support their interests
How does it help a lobbyist’s cause to influence presidential appointments to executive & judicial branch positions?
Lobbying: The Indirect Approach

- **Grass roots Lobbying:**
  - campaigns to send letters, postcards, phone calls, faxes, emails from supporters
  - Internet helps interest groups: quicker, less expensive, web sites, blogs, email lists
  - Demonstrations, protest marches (tractorHCades, “die-ins”) get news coverage
  - Some groups publish ratings of members of Congress based on their level of support for certain issues
Lobbying: The Indirect Approach

- **Shaping Public Opinion:**
  - Advertisements attempt to cast sponsors in a favorable light (good citizens, defending family values, environmental protection)
  - A group’s membership can shape public opinion (Example: AMA doctors against national health insurance)
  - Use of well regarded personalities or trusted public figures (Charlton Heston & the NRA)
  - Mass Media: people are more likely to regard a group’s position favorably if it is covered by the news rather than presented in paid ads.
Lobbying: The Indirect Approach

- Propaganda: a technique of persuasion aimed at influencing individual or group behaviors
- Begins with a conclusion & brings together all evidence to support that conclusion
- Propagandists are advertisers, persuaders, even brainwashers
- Propaganda must be presented in simple, interesting, & credible terms
- Propagandists attack opposing policies with name-calling (even if its not exactly accurate) or by card stacking (telling only one side of an issues)
Lobbying: The Indirect Approach

- **Propaganda cont:**
  - Glittering generalities: “American”, “sound”, “fair”, “just”
  - Symbols: Uncle Sam, American flag
  - Testimonials or endorsements
  - Bandwagon approach: urge people to follow the crowd
  - Plain-folks approach: pretending to be one of the common people
  - Spread through newspapers, radio, tv, internet, movies, billboards, books, magazines, pamphlets, posters, speeches
Lobbying: The Indirect Approach

- **Electioneering:** the best thing an interest group can do for a public official is help him/her get elected to public office.
- For the interest group, getting policymakers sympathetic to their interests elected is one of the most effective things it can do. Once elected, these policymakers can shape legislation and help allocate money for the cause of the interest group.
• How have you used one of the propaganda methods to get what you want or influence a decision?
The Role of Interest Groups

- Interest groups (also called “pressure groups”, “organized interests”, or “special interests”) seek to influence public policy in their favor.

- Public policy: all the goals that a government pursues in the areas of human affairs in which it is involved (includes seat belts, speed limits, pensions, etc).
Valuable Functions of Interest Groups

1. Stimulate awareness/interest in public affairs (issues/events that concern the people at large)

2. Represent members based on shared attitudes not geography (ex.: people in a labor union have the same issues regardless of where they live)

3. Provide useful information to the government (price levels, employment, sales, etc.)
Valuable Functions of Interest Groups

4. Provide opportunities for political participation

5. Keep tabs on public agencies & officials to make sure they do what they are supposed to do

6. Competing interests balance each other out to keep one from going too far
The Negative Side of Interest Groups

- Many groups push their interest which are often not in the best interest of most Americans
- More wealthy, better-organized groups get what they want even though they represent a small number of people
- Some appear to have millions of members but only represent the interest of a few
The Negative Side of Interest Groups

• Many groups do not really represent the views of all the people for whom they claim to speak
• Some use heavy-handed (& illegal) tactics such as bribery, intimidation and threats of revenge
Types of Interest Groups

- Business groups: Chamber of Commerce, trade associations like National Restaurant Association
- Labor Unions (AFL-CIO, UAW): organization of workers who share the same type of job or work in the same industry; press for government policies that benefit members
Types of Interest Groups

• Agricultural Groups (The Grange, Farm Bureau): influence the government in the interest of farmers & farming related businesses (John Deere)

• Professional Associations: represent those in professions such as medicine, law, & education which require extensive formal training (AMA, ABA, NEA)
Types of Interest Groups

- Issue oriented groups: exist to promote a particular cause (National Wildlife Federation, NRA, etc.)
- Specific groups: promote the welfare of certain segments of the population (American Legion, VFW, AARP, etc.)
- Religious organizations: National Council of Churches, Christian Coalition
- Public interest Groups: work for the best interests of the overall community rather than the narrow interests of one segment (League of Women Voters)
Rules and Laws that Govern Lobbyists

- All persons who try to influence Congress, staffers or any policy-making officer must register with the clerk of the House or Senate Secretary.
- They must provide basic information (name, address, place of business, etc.) & a general description of their activities.
- Must describe work in detail & report quarterly income.
- Senators & top executive branch officers must wait 2 years & Representatives 1 year before becoming lobbyists.
- Members of Congress cannot receive any gifts from lobbyists or their clients.
1. If you were a lobbyist, what would be your main purpose & function?
2. What is the difference in the direct approach and the indirect approach to lobbying?
3. What is the purpose for the laws and rules that govern lobbyists/interest groups?
Scenario- The Party of the Year is happening this Saturday. You want to go but are fairly sure your parents will not give you permission as they are concerned about alcohol/drugs and/or the influence of other students who may be there. List three strategies or statements that you might use to convince your parents to allow you to attend the party. List a possible positive & negative function of your lobbying tactics. Discuss with your partner and share with the class.