

Interest Groups in American Politics Research Project & Oral Presentation

Project Description

- 1)** Choose a politically-active interest group - one that interests you because of your ideological beliefs, your career plans, etc. (See the list online at <http://www.twyman-whitney.com/americancitizen/politics/lobbies.htm>)
- 2)** Research the group using the facilities in the library and on the World Wide Web (check out the links to Interest Groups on the Web), as well as conversations / interviews with members of the interest group, itself, then be prepared to share with the class what you have learned. Be certain you find the answers to the following questions:
 - What is the history of the group? Explain why it was founded, when, and by whom, etc.
 - What type of interest group is it? Is it a Social Action Interest Group, Economic Interest Group, Single Issue Interest Group, etc.? Explain why you have categorized it this way.
 - What are the group's current goals? How have their goals changed over the years?
 - Does the group contribute to democratic government? How?
 - Does the group support particular political candidates, does it hold to certain ideological/political beliefs? Would you classify it as "liberal," "conservative," or another ideological label?
 - Does the group support particular positions on public issues? Describe them briefly, making certain to include their stand on controversial issues, if any.
 - **HOW DOES THE GROUP TRY TO INFLUENCE GOVERNMENT AND THE MAKING OF PUBLIC POLICY?**
 - How effective is the group? (Describe, using examples from their activities, and be certain to model your answer on "Factors that Make an Interest Group Effective" in your text.) i) Does the group have organizations at the local, state, and/or national levels?
 - How is the organization staffed? Does it utilize volunteers, paid staff, or a combination of both?
 - How can your classmates who are interested in joining this group contact them? Include the group's telephone number, snail mail and e-mail addresses.
- 3)** Provide to your classmates at least 5 newspaper / news magazine articles that describe the interest group you chose - stories about their activities, their membership, their political leanings, etc. The obvious source for interest groups' pamphlets is the local, state, or national organizations of the group. Many of them have local branches, and almost all of them have national offices, so "let your fingers do the walking" -- use the phone, e-mail, etc., to contact them as soon as possible. Potential sources for news articles include the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature (an index to magazine articles in our library) and the electronic resources in the Library Media Center, and be sure to check out the Links to Interest Groups on the WWW at <http://www.twyman-whitney.com/americancitizen/politics/lobbies.htm> for information about dozens of interest groups with Web sites.
- 4)** Provide an oral report of your findings to the class. It must be a minimum of three minutes, no more than five minutes duration. During your presentation, include a Powerpoint slide show as a visual aid, and please refer to note cards -- 3" X 5" or 5" X 7" -- for clues as to what you are going to say. Please do not bring up regular-size paper to use as your notes, and DO NOT under any circumstances READ DIRECTLY OFF YOUR NOTES (borrrring!), but instead use them as reminders of you what you want to tell the class.
- 5) Before your presentation, turn in the written work below to your instructor.** After your presentation, make certain a copy of each pamphlet and news article is turned in to your instructor, neatly arranged in the following order (please paper clip these together before turning them in):
 - The **evaluation form** for the Interest Group project, with your NAME printed/signed neatly on top.
 - A **written outline** of the content of your oral report, in the format your instructor has given you below.
 - At least **5 news articles** that describe something newsworthy about your chosen group.
 - **Informational pamphlets** you obtained about your chosen interest group.

FOLLOW THE OUTLINE (below) WHEN YOU CREATE YOUR POWERPOINT SLIDESHOW AND MAKE YOUR PRESENTATION TO THE CLASS.

I. History

Why it was founded

When it was founded

Who founded the organization

Other interesting and pertinent information

II. Type of Interest Group

Determine if it is an Economic Interest Group, a Social Action Group, or a Single Issue Interest Group
Explain why you have categorized it as such (above)

III. Goals

How its goals have changed over the years
What are its current goals
What long-range plans the group might have made

IV. Contributions to Democratic Government (see your notes and/or the text for more information on this!)

V. Ideology

What ideological label applies to the group (liberal, conservative, etc.)
Identify the beliefs, mission statements, positions they have taken on issues, etc., that lead you to believe they are liberal, conservative, etc.
Identify the political candidates for whom they have expressed support, either through news releases, campaign contributions, or other

VI. Positions on Public Issues

Briefly discuss how they stand on controversial issues of the day.

VII. How The Group Influences Government and the Making of Public Policy (**see your notes or the text for more information on this**)

VIII. Effectiveness

Size
Geographic Distribution
Cohesion
Intensity
Organization and Resources
Leadership
Access to Government Officials
Finances (money issues)
Prestige

IX. Organization

National offices and/or leadership
State offices and/or leadership
Regional or local offices and/or leadership
The overall structure of their organization

X. Staff of the Organization

Volunteers
Paid staff
Both?

XI. Contacting and/or Joining this Group (local, state, national)

Telephone number
Snail mail addresses
Email addresses and/or URL for Web site