

# The American Citizen

## Chapter 9: Interest Groups And Their Influence

### Vocabulary and Definitions



Learning these terms and concepts is necessary to understand the basic principles of government. In this course, you must be able to recognize definitions of these terms for classroom lecture/discussions and (eventually) quizzes and tests.

**amicus curiae:** Legal arguments that are delivered voluntarily to a court (by a "third party" or "friend of the court" who is not part of the lawsuit) to give testimony for or against a particular decision.

**class action suit:** A lawsuit brought by a person or group on behalf of all people who would benefit directly from the court's decision in a case

**craft union:** A labor union made up of workers with a similar skill, such as plumbers, electricians, or carpenters

**electioneering:** Publicly supporting a candidate for office (often through passing out literature to voters)

**grassroots:** Political activities that are started and carried out by people at a local level, not by professional politicians

**gross national product:** The total value of all goods and services produced by a nation in a year

**industrial union:** A labor union that includes both skilled and unskilled workers in the same industry, such as the United Auto Workers and United Steel Workers.

**initiative/initiative petition:** A process of direct legislation that voters start by signing a petition proposing a law or constitutional amendment

**interest group:** An organization of people with shared ideas and attitudes who attempt to influence public policy

**litigation:** When interest groups fail to change public policy in the legislative or executive branches of government, they frequently turn to this – bringing a lawsuit, to get what they want.

**lobbying:** Organized efforts to influence legislation or public policy, whether aimed at the legislative or executive branches

**political action committee:** A group that is set up legally by an interest group to collect and spend funds for political purposes

**propaganda:** Any persuasive communication (such as advertising) designed to influence people's beliefs, opinions, emotions, or actions

**public-interest group:** An interest group working for the common good, rather than for benefits for specific individuals

**referendum:** A form of direct legislation allowing voters to approve or disapprove a proposed amendment to the state constitution or a law already passed by the state legislature

**single-issue group:** Interest groups that focus their attention almost entirely on one issue, such as abortion, gun control, prohibition of alcoholic beverages, etc.