


Interest Groups

I. Interest Group Formation

II. Types and Functions

III. Influence

IV. A Flawed System?





Interest Group Formation

A. Pluralist Theory: Groups form spontaneously whenever shared interests are threatened or could be enhanced by political action

EX: Industrialization = Labor Unions

B. Logic of Collective Action: 'Free riders' hinders collective action (individual v. group rationality)

Overcome with SELECTIVE INCENTIVES

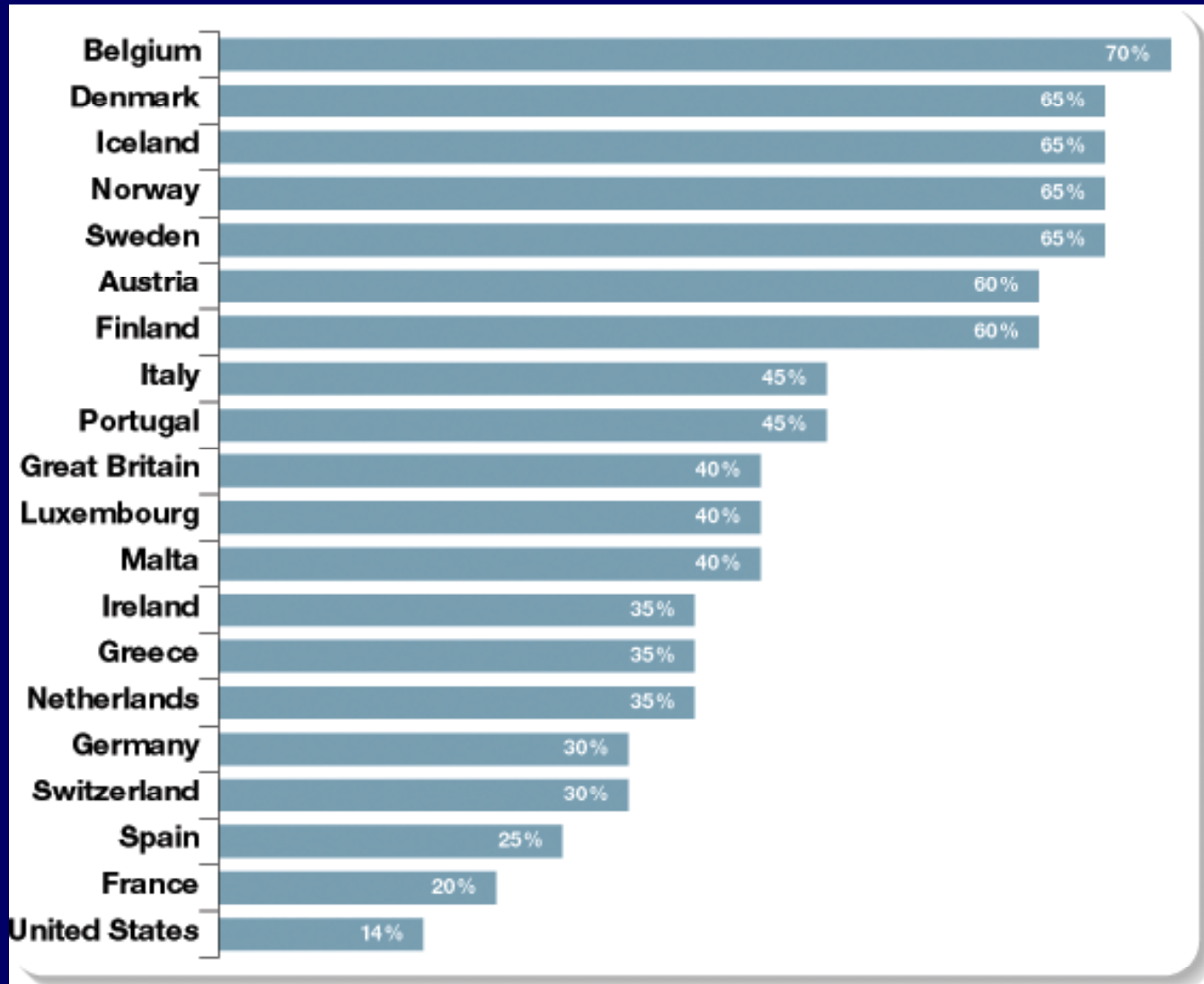
C. Interest Group Entrepreneurs

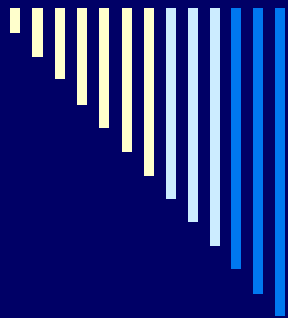


Types of Interest Groups

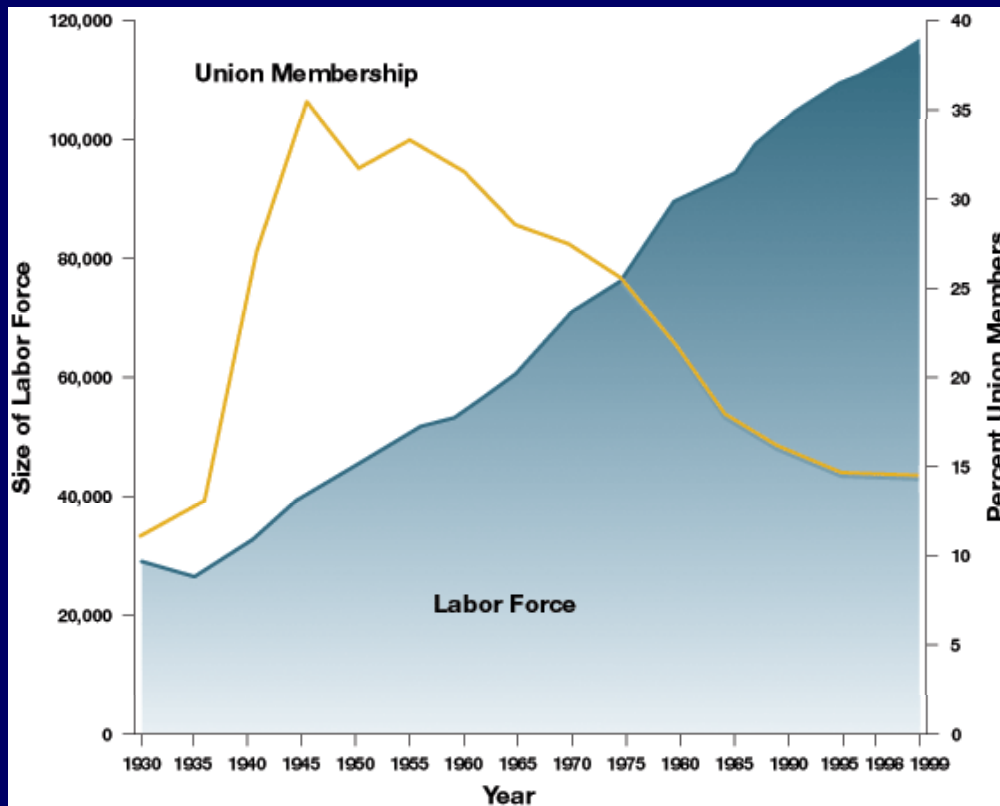
- **Economic** (Phillip Morris, NAM, AFL-CIO)
 - **Ideological or single-issue** (Move-On, NRA, NARAL)
 - **Foreign policy** (Council on Foreign Relations, AIPAC)
 - **Governmental** (State and Local governments)
-

Comparative Labor Union Membership



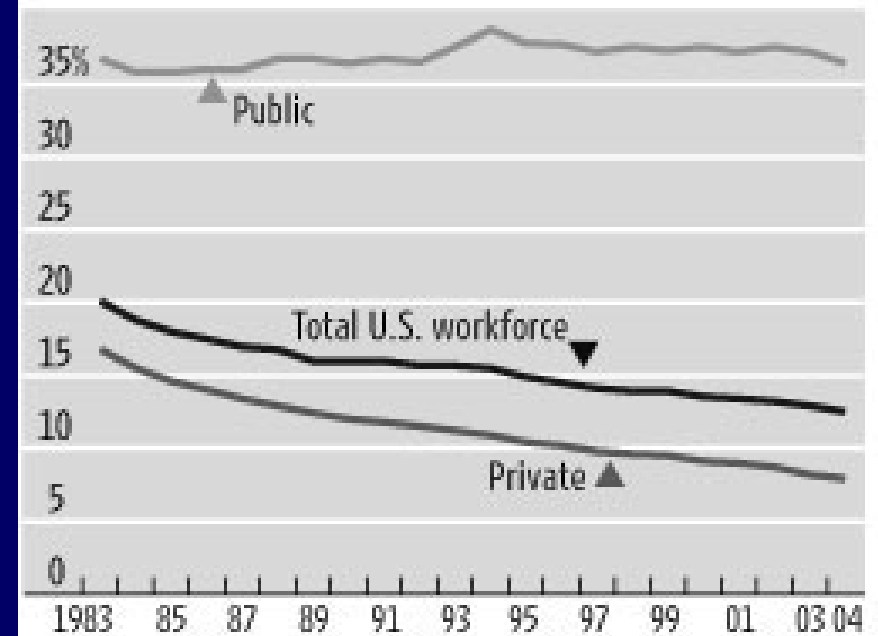


Labor Union Membership over Time



Lack of Organization

Percentage of union workers, 1983-2004



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

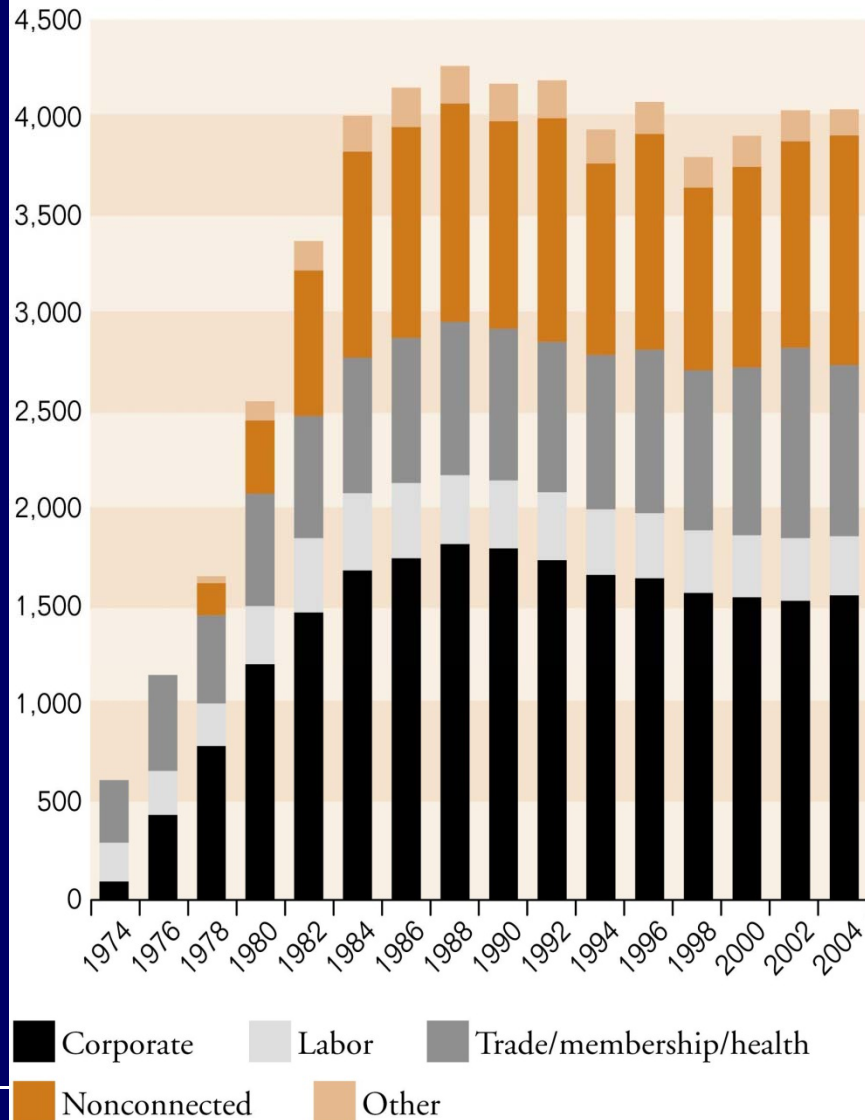


Functions of Interest Groups

- General: Represent Members & Agenda Building
 - Insider Tactics
 - Provide Information (Technical and Political)
 - Lobby Government
 - Outsider Tactics
 - Shape Public Opinion (Information campaigns and grassroots lobbying)
 - Litigation
 - Organized Protest
 - Influence Elections (PACs)
-

Figure 13-1 The Growth of PACs

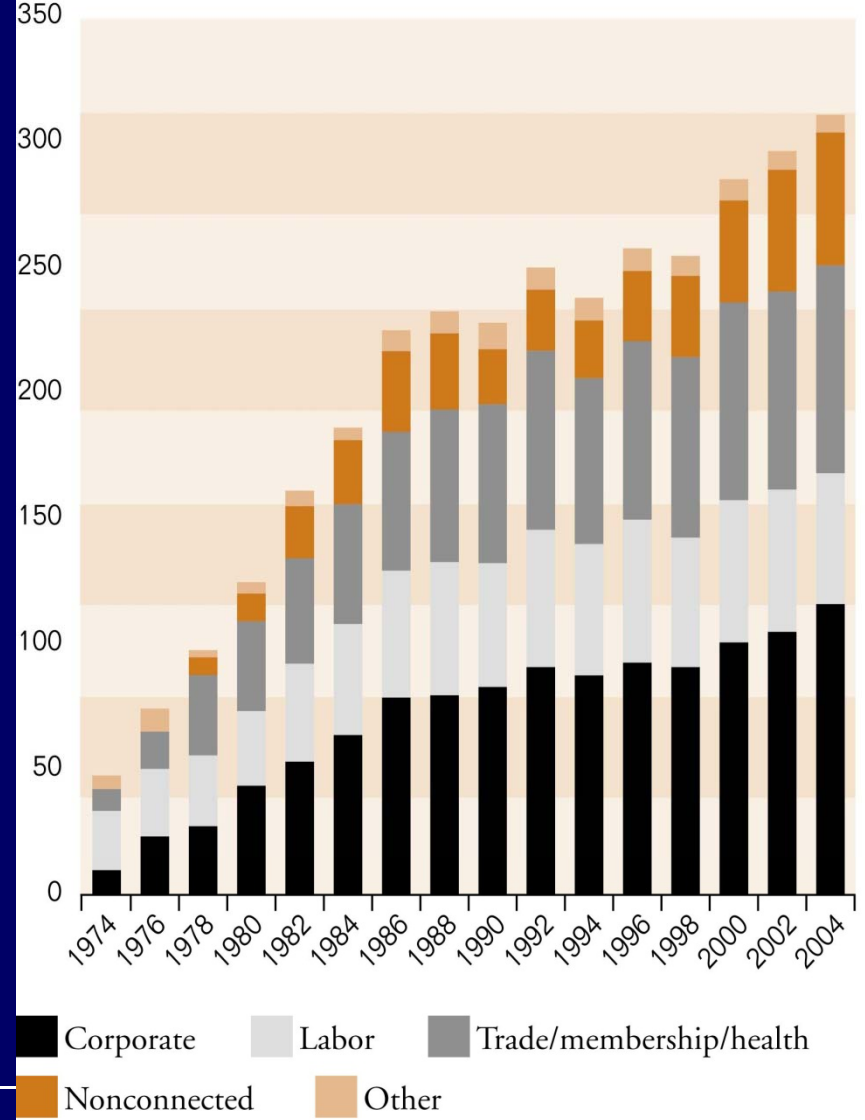
Number of PACs



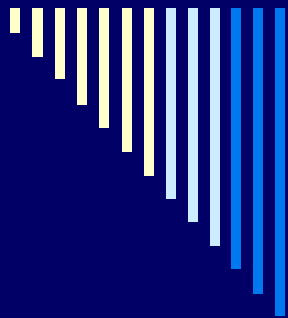
Source: Federal Election Commission.

Figure 13-2 The Increase in PAC Contributions

Millions of dollars, adjusted for inflation (2004 = 1.00)



Source: Federal Election Commission.

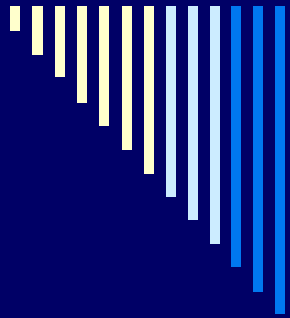


Top PAC's for 2007-08

| PAC | Total Amount | Party* |
|--|---------------------|---------------|
| National Association of Realtors | \$3,122,000 | Both |
| Intl Brotherhood of Electrical Workers | \$2,666,300 | Dem. |
| American Bankers Association | \$2,631,850 | Both |
| Operating Engineers Union | \$2,612,957 | Dem. |
| National Beer Wholesalers Association | \$2,426,500 | Both |
| AT&T | \$2,415,200 | Both |
| Airline Pilot's Association | \$2,309,500 | Dem. |
| National Auto Dealers Association | \$2,280,000 | Rep. |
| American Association for Justice (Trial Lawyers) | \$2,277,500 | Dem. |
| International Association of Fire Fighters | \$2,149,900 | Dem. |

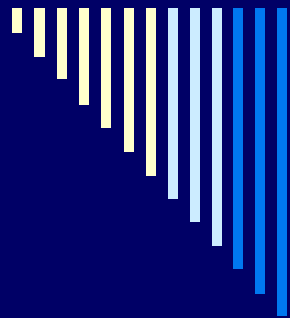
SOURCE: Center for Responsive Government (www.opensecrets.org)

* Denotes main party receiving contributions (i.e., greater than 2/3)



Factors in the Influence of Interest Groups

- Leadership**
 - Resources**
 - Membership**
 - Cohesiveness**
-



Washington “Power Interest Groups” 2001

1. National Rifle Association of America
2. American Association of Retired People
3. National Federation of Independent Business
4. American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)
5. Association of Trial Lawyers of America
6. AFL-CIO
7. Chamber of Commerce of the United States of America
8. National Beer Wholesalers Association
9. National Association of Realtors
10. National Association of Manufacturers

Source: ***Fortune***
