

1) Media as 'Watch Dog'

The press is a watchdog. Not an attack dog. Not a lapdog. A watchdog. Now, a watchdog can't be right all the time. He doesn't bark only when he sees or smells something that's dangerous. A good watchdog barks at things that are suspicious.

Dan Rather

QuoteAddict

In today's politics the media is essential to safeguarding the transparency of democratic processes. This is often called its 'watchdog' role. Transparency is required on many levels including for access to information; accountability and legitimacy of individuals, institutions and democratic processes such as voting or the workings of Congress; and for rightful participation and public debate. Basically transparency boils down to the question, are the actions of the government out in the open or is everything being kept secret.

The media as a 'watchdog' also acts as a mechanism for the prevention and investigation of

allegations and corruption. This watchdog role extends from accountability of officials and their actions while 'in office' or out.

For example, media presence at voting stations is critical to preventing electoral fraud.

There have been several instances in American History where the media has uncovered actions taken by the government that have been unconstitutional even illegal. For instance the Washington Post created the Watergate Scandal by reporting on a break-in at the Democratic Party

headquarters located in the Watergate building. The news articles led to a Supreme Court case, Nixon V. United States, where the court ordered the President to turn over evidence (audio tapes) that proved his administration was involved with the break-in. In turn the House of Representatives started the impeachment process, leading Nixon to resign as President.



Answer the Questions in Complete Sentences

- 1) What does transparency mean in connection to our government?
- 2) What does it mean that the media acts as a 'watchdog'?
- 3) Explain the role the media played in the resignation of President Nixon.
- 4) Provide and explain another case where the media has acted as a 'watchdog'.

2) Special Interest Groups.

An interest group is any organization that seeks to influence public policy. Interest groups are found in many societies, but there is an unusually large number of them in the United States. There are two reasons for this...



- The great number of social differences along income, occupational, religious, racial, and cultural lines.
- The American constitutional system, which stimulates political activity, including interest group activity. Because of federalism and the separation of powers, there exist many different centers in which important decisions are made. Therefore many different interest groups can exercise some power.

There are two kinds of interest groups: institutional and membership. Institutional interest



groups are business, governments, foundations, and universities. For example an organization that represents oil companies. Membership groups are supported by individual citizens. For example, AARP (American Association of Retired People) that represents, well retired Americans.

The purpose of interest groups is to influence both the people and the government. Interest groups attempt to influence policy by supplying public officials with things they want. As a result interest groups hold a lot of power and sway over our government. These things include:

- **Credible information.** This may include policy information to allow a legislator to take a position on an issue or technical information needed to implement a policy. When the Federal Energy Administration was trying to allocate scarce oil and gasoline supplies, it discovered that the information it needed was possessed only by the oil companies. An interest group is most powerful when the issue is narrow and technical and there are no competing interest groups to supply competing information.
- **Public support.** Special interest groups use their members and the media to draw even more support for their cause.
- **Money.** Interest groups can establish political action committees to finance political campaigns, they can lobby Congress to reduce or increase the appropriations (spending) for government agencies, and they can even provide jobs for former government officials (revolving door.)



Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. What is an interest group?
2. How did the constitutional system lead to the rise of interest groups?
3. What two types of interest groups are there?
4. How do interest groups influence the government?

3) Lobbyist

Members of the lobbying industry have the task of representing clients -- including corporations, trade groups and nonprofit organizations -- and advocating on their behalf in the nation's capital as well as at state capitals across the nation.

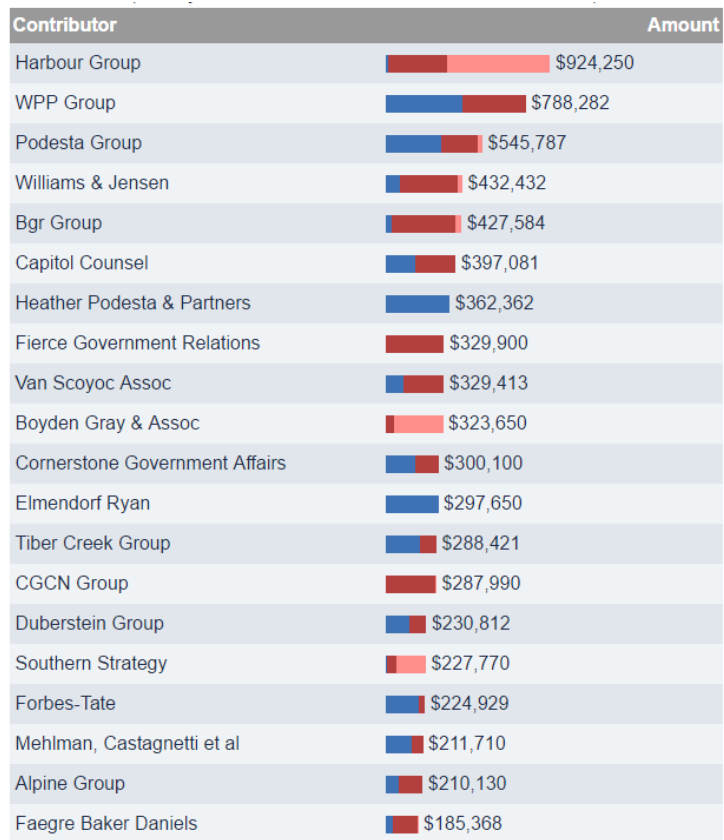
The relationship between lobbyists and lawmakers is complicated. On one hand, lobbyists pursue relationships with lawmakers in order to shape legislation so that it benefits clients who would be affected by new laws or regulations. On the other hand, lobbyists are frequently targeted by lawmakers as sources of campaign money, which the lobbyists feel beholden to give to improve their clients' prospects of success.

Upon his inauguration in January 2009, President Barack Obama issued a new rule barring federally registered lobbyists from serving in his administration.

Lobbyists frequently make contributions to federal candidates and political committees. These

Top Recipients, 2015-2016

Candidate	Office	Amount
Clinton, Hillary (D)		\$858,994
Bush, Jeb (R)		\$387,015
Rubio, Marco (R)	Senate	\$298,691
Schumer, Charles E (D-NY)	Senate	\$286,567
Burr, Richard (R-NC)	Senate	\$223,463



Contributions to:
 Democrats ■
 Republicans ■
 Liberal Groups ■
 Conservative Groups ■

contributions have steadily increased, reaching a peak of around \$41.6 million during the 2012 presidential cycle, before falling to around \$31.2 million in the 2014 midterms. For most election cycles since 1990, contributions have been roughly split evenly between Democrats and Republicans.

Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

- 1) What do lobbyist do?
- 2) What top was the top contributor according to the chart and how much did they contribute?
- 3) What policy did Obama instate when he was inaugurated regarding lobbyist? Why do you think he did that?
- 4) According to the second chart which politician received the most money from lobbyist? How much did they receive?

4. Super PACs (Political Action Committees)

Super PACs are a relatively new type of committee that arose following the 2010 ruling of the Supreme Court in the cases Citizens United v FEC and SpeechNOW.org v FEC.

Technically known as independent expenditure-only committees, super PACs may raise unlimited sums of money from corporations, unions, associations and individuals, then spend unlimited sums to overtly advocate for or against political candidates. The Supreme Court ruled that limiting spending would be a limit on freedom of speech. Unlike traditional PACs, super PACs are

Group	Supports/Opposes	Independent Expenditures	Viewpoint	Total Raised
Right To Rise USA	supports Bush	\$81,155,200	Conservative	\$118,864,488
Conservative Solutions PAC	supports Rubio	\$55,628,867	Conservative	\$57,933,414
Priorities USA Action	supports Clinton	\$5,648,679	Liberal	\$55,560,457
Unintimidated PAC	supports Walker	\$2,249,018	Conservative	\$24,127,172
America Leads	supports Christie	\$18,487,941	Conservative	\$20,276,834
NextGen Climate Action		\$0	Liberal	\$17,611,535
Keep the Promise III	supports Cruz	\$1,490,087	Conservative	\$16,456,888
Carly for America Cmte	supports Fiorina	\$3,837,170	Conservative	\$14,131,948
Senate Leadership Fund		\$0	Conservative	\$13,755,600
Freedom Partners Action Fund		\$1,892,898	Conservative	\$12,228,744
Keep the Promise I	supports Cruz	\$9,444,627	Conservative	\$11,907,020
American Bridge 21st Century		\$0	Liberal	\$10,456,077
House Majority PAC		\$327,893	Liberal	\$10,255,832
Keep the Promise II	supports Cruz	\$0	Conservative	\$10,000,000
Opportunity and Freedom I	supports Perry	\$0	Conservative	\$10,000,000
New Day For America	supports Kasich	\$10,384,430	Conservative	\$9,974,550
2016 Cmte	supports Carson	\$3,640,372	Conservative	\$9,968,830
Senate Majority PAC		\$2,339,858	Liberal	\$9,235,661
Stand For Truth	supports Cruz	\$9,023,814	Conservative	\$8,868,050
Club for Growth Action		\$9,040,490	Conservative	\$8,016,663
Our Principles PAC	opposes Trump	\$14,805,752	Conservative	\$7,783,943



prohibited from donating money directly to political candidates, and their spending must not be coordinated with that of the candidates they benefit. Most of the political commercials seen on TV during an election cycle are paid for by Super PACs. If you read the fine print at the end you will see the organization paying for the commercial. They do not work with the candidate to create the messages. Super PACs are required to report their donors to the Federal Election Commission on a monthly or semiannual basis – the super PAC's choice – in off-years, and monthly in the year of an election.

Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

- 1) What is a Super PAC?
- 2) How did the Supreme Court enable them to become so powerful?
- 3) How do Super PACs influence voters?
- 4) How much money did the Right to Rise USA raise in support of Jeb Bush?

5) Bias – Propaganda – Symbolism

When reading the news, looking at candidate websites or viewing election information, it is important to consider how persuasion techniques might be used to influence the viewer. Bias, symbolism, and propaganda are common techniques used to persuade people to think or feel a certain way.

Bias is a preference, opinion or attitude that favors one way of thinking or feeling over another. Bias affects how people see events and people around them. Many biases come from an individual's personal experiences or lack of experiences.

Bias in media or political communication can occur in various ways. A journalist or politician can choose to select or omit, leave out, certain information in order to persuade the reader to favor one opinion over another. Bias also occurs through the placement of information. If information is featured in large or bold type or in very small type, the author is sending a message about how the information should be viewed.



Symbolism is the technique of using images or pictures to convey a certain message. Symbols are commonly used in political communication, especially during campaigns. Symbols are often used to associate candidates with images that represent the United States. Common symbols used in political campaigns are the colors red, white, and blue, stars and stripes, the Statue of Liberty and the Liberty Bell. Symbols are also used in political cartoons to convey positive and negative images.

Propaganda is another method used in media and political communication to persuade the reader to think or feel a certain way. Propaganda is the method of spreading ideas, information or rumors for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause, or a person. Propaganda is similar to bias and symbolism in that they are all used to persuade; however propaganda uses more extreme measures to communicate a certain message. Propaganda relies on appealing to the viewer's emotion rather than reason to convey a message.



Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

- 1) What is the point of using bias, symbolism & propaganda?
- 2) How does the placement of information indicate bias?
- 3) Why would political candidates use symbols in their campaigns?
- 4) How is propaganda different than bias & symbolism?