Interest Groups
Private organizations that try to persuade public officials to respond to the shared attitudes of its members.
One of the most effective methods used by Americans to get govt. to respond to their wants and needs.

Political Parties vs. Interest Groups

**Political Parties**
*Nominate candidates to run for office
*Focus = Control govt. by winning elections
*Concerned w/ a variety of issues
*Accountable to the people

**Interest Groups**
*Do not nominate candidates to office only work to affect the outcome of elections
*Focus = Influence the policies of govt.
*Concerned w/ only those issues that affect their members
*Private organizations - accountable to only their members

Positives of Interest Groups
Stimulate interest in public affairs
Membership is based on shared attitudes NOT geographic locations
Provide useful, detailed info to govt.
Vehicles for political participation
Part of the checks and balance system of govt
*Groups watching over what govt. does

Negatives of Interest Groups
Own special interest may not be what is in the best interest of all Americans
Influence not always determined by size, but by the better financed groups
Hard to determine who or how many people the group actually represents
Many groups don't represent the views of all the people that are a part of it
Some tactics are unethical and could undermine the political system
*Bribery
*Contributions
*Revenge

Why so many interest groups in the U.S?
U.S. is a diverse society = A lot of different interests

Rules of the Game
*1st Amendment = speak freely, petition, assemble
*Decisions made at all levels of govt.

Growth in Govt = Govt. affects all aspects of life
Disturbances = Usually form when interests are threatened in some way
Incentives = Join for a good cause, Companionship