Interest Group Politics: The Role Lobbyists Play in US Policy and How to Work with Them

WASHINGTON, D.C. — On Capitol Hill, lobbyists seem to be everywhere, pushing for legislation on topics ranging from Arctic oil drilling and environmental conservation to regulating genetically modified foods, money laundering, and bankruptcy reform. The number of interest groups lobbying Congress has exploded in recent decades to the point where it is difficult to see how so many competing interests can be accommodated.

The new book by Thomas T. Holyoke, *Competitive Interests*, challenges the long-held belief that a small set of interests control large domains of the public policy making landscape. Called “the book on interest group competition in the United States” by Anthony J. Nownes of the University of Tennessee, Nownes argues that *Competitive Interests* “contributes to interest group scholarship in too many ways to count. It is an essential part of the interest group canon.”

Holyoke shows how the dramatic rise in the sheer number of new groups, and the broad range of ideological demands they advocate, have created a form of group politics emphasizing compromise as much as conflict. He goes on to offer answers about what kinds of policies are more likely to lead to intense competition and what kinds of interest groups have an advantage in protracted conflicts. Drawing from interviews with 83 lobbyists, the book discusses the negative consequences of group competition, such as legislative gridlock, and discusses what lawmakers can do to steer interest groups toward compromise.

*Competitive Interests* concludes with an exploration of greater group competition, conflict, and compromise and what consequences this could have for policymaking in a representation-based political system. Praised as “an innovative and robustly analytical, yet realistic, look at lobbying in the proper context” by Amy McKay of Georgia State University, Holyoke is also applauded for his “carefully drawn conclusions [that] are enlightening and important both for those who study interest group behavior and for those concerned about the effectiveness and legitimacy of American lawmakers.”

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