



LOBBYING AND POLICYMAKING

The Public Pursuit of Private Interests

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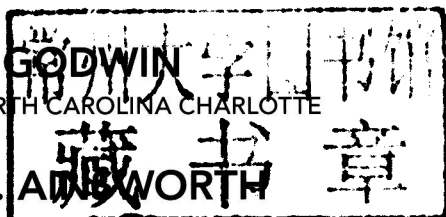
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LOBBYING AND POLICYMAKING

To Kenneth G. Ainsworth, Jennifer Godwin,
Sen. Marshall Rauch, D-NC, and Neal Tate

Ten years ago, two of the authors of this book were discussing lobbying. One of the participants was a lobbyist and the other participant taught a course on interest groups. The lobbyist observed that if he were to attend the professor's class he would be unlikely to recognize that it dealt with what lobbyists actually do. The dissimilarity between teaching and practice raised the following question: "Was political science missing some key aspects of the interactions between lobbyists and policymakers?" If so, what were the implications of these omissions? For the past decade, the authors of this book examined these questions.

Our research discovered that few scholars studied two of lobbyists' most important activities. First, previous research often ignored the lobbying of regulatory agencies. This oversight occurred despite evidence indicating that lobbying the rulemaking process constituted almost half of all lobbying.¹ Second, scholars had concentrated on issues involving such highly collective goods as universal health care and the appropriate tax rates for individuals and corporations. Our interviews with more than 100 lobbyists discovered, however, that lobbyists for producer organizations generally concentrated their efforts on obtaining goods that benefitted only their employer or their employer and a small number of other organizations. *Lobbying and Policymaking* demonstrates that paying greater attention to rulemaking institutions and to the public provision of private goods significantly changes the standard picture of lobbying and the policymaking process. More important, attention to these aspects of policymaking changes our understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of American democracy.

This book differs from most other textbooks concerning lobbying and policymaking in several ways. First, we examine what interest organizations actually seek from policymakers. This emphasis corrects the picture of lobbying as primarily a struggle among competing interests over highly collective goods. Second, this book gives more emphasis to the regulatory process. This greater emphasis accurately reflects the importance of regulatory agencies in policymaking. Third, the book takes advantage of the practical lobbying experience of one of the authors. We believe this makes the book more enjoyable to students and increases the verisimilitude between theory and practice. Fourth, unlike most other books on lobbying or policymaking, we present a formal model reflecting key aspects of the policymaking process. Critics of formal models of lobbying have argued that such models treat policymaking as an event that occurs at a single point in time while policymaking actually is a process that continues through time and requires multiple lobbying strategies.² One goal of our research project was to address this problem. The formal modeling in this book is kept within a single chapter, and we have summarized in prose all aspects of those models. The model, however, is essential to the theory of policymaking we present. Interested

readers can see the more formal presentations of the model in our journal articles.

We have attempted to write a book that is accessible to undergraduate students and is useful to scholars. The pedagogical approaches we employ reflect our belief that metaphors, case studies, models, and quantitative data are important to understanding the policy process. We use metaphors to assist readers in gaining intuitive insights into lobbying and policymaking. We use eight case studies to analyze, test, and illustrate concepts and hypotheses. We use two large datasets to compare competing explanations of lobbying influence and to test the formal model we develop.

The reader will discover that this book often is in a dialog with *Lobbying and Policy Change: Who Wins, Who Loses, and Why* by Frank Baumgartner, Jeffrey Berry, Marie Hojnacki, David Kimball, and Beth Leech. That work is a decade-long study that examines what interest groups want and how successful they are in achieving their goals.³ We believe that *Lobbying and Policy Change* constitutes the most comprehensive account of lobbying available to scholars of interest groups and public policy. We show, however, that their research design led them to ignore important lobbying activities and goals. We demonstrate how this problem affected their conclusions about interest-group influence on policy outcomes. We believe that our book provides a more balanced view of the influence process and outcomes. We hasten to add that it is not necessary to read *Lobbying and Policy Change* to appreciate the arguments we make in this book.

Lobbying and Policymaking is a product of ten years of research and writing. To have the time to devote to such a project required the support of external funding as well as our universities. The National Science Foundation (NSF) provided the external funding. UNC Charlotte received NSF grant SES-0752212, and the University of Georgia received the grant SES-0752245. Our thanks go to Brian Humes and NSF reviewers for their support of the project. Ken Godwin also received financial assistance from the Department of Political Science at the University of North Texas and the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of North Carolina Charlotte (UNCC). Scott Ainsworth and Erik Godwin received support from their departments at the University of Georgia and Texas A&M University.

We are grateful to our interviewees who provided us with numerous insights into the policy process and made us better political scientists. Their contributions made the book possible. We are grateful to Karen Godwin, who achieved an amazing 80-percent success rate in obtaining interviews with lobbyists and congressional staffers. On several occasions, interviewees commented that her determination and tact were the reasons that they ultimately granted an interview.

Our colleagues Austin Clemens, John Green, Ed Lopez, and Barry Seldon are not listed as coauthors, but they coauthored research that was essential to this book. We also are appreciative of the assistance of the late Robert Salisbury, who helped us conceptualize and measure lobbying for private goods. We are

grateful to the authors of *Lobbying and Policy Change* for generously making available much of the data from their project. Frank Baumgartner provided useful suggestions throughout the research process. Eric Heberlig of UNC Charlotte provided numerous useful comments and suggestions. Erik Godwin thanks Virginia Gray and David Lowery, his mentors at UNC-Chapel Hill. Although they and he are unlikely to agree on the degree of rationality in the lobbying and policymaking, their instruction greatly informed his contributions to this book.

Several students were intimately involved in the research and writing process. At UNC Charlotte, Lawson Seropian played an important editorial role. His most difficult task was to ensure that the authors wrote in a manner accessible to undergraduate students. Lawson also was a valuable research assistant in tracking bills and participants in the policies included in our analyses. Other students working on the project included Kathryn Clifford, Perry Joiner, Ruoxi Li, and Hongu Zhang at the University of Georgia and Amanda Rutherford and Jamie Smart at Texas A&M.

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ENDNOTES

1. Scott R. Furlong and Cornelius M. Kerwin, "Interest Group Participation in Rule Making: A Decade of Change," *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 15, no. 3 (2004): 353–370.
2. David Lowery and Virginia Gray, "A Neopluralist Perspective on Research on Organized Interests," *Political Research Quarterly* 57, no.1 (2004): 164–175.
3. Frank R. Baumgartner, Jeffrey M. Berry, Marie Hojnacki, David C. Kimball, and Beth L. Leech. *Lobbying and Policy Change: Who Wins, Who Loses, and Why* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

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Key Concepts and Ideas

One of the authors of this book invited a **lobbyist** for a major defense contractor to speak to his interest group class. After the lobbyist finished speaking, the instructor asked her, “What was the most important vote you influenced in the last Congress?” She¹ responded, “Do you mean, ‘What was the most important vote?’ or ‘What was the most important thing I did for my firm last year?’” The lobbyist went on to explain that her most significant achievement was obtaining a 25-percent price increase for the guided air-to-ground missile her firm produced for the **Department of Defense (DoD)**. This increase boosted her firm’s profits by more than \$50 million over a five-year period. No congressional vote ever took place on that specific price change. The 25-percent price increase occurred without any record of legislators’ yeas and nays. The price increase took place during a committee markup of an omnibus defense appropriations bill.

Omnibus bills typically are hundreds of pages long, address a wide range of programs, and frequently address budget issues. With such voluminous legislation, small changes often remain overlooked by all but the most attentive legislators. During a committee markup, committee members consider various proposed changes to a bill, but they never vote on the final bill in committee. Instead, the committee members vote on a motion to report the bill to the floor with the committee recommendations. The missile price increase was just a very small part of a much larger piece of legislation. There were no media campaigns or grassroots mobilization efforts. The lobbyist’s efforts were low-key, designed to raise little public or media scrutiny, and very effective.

The number of Americans who believe that money in politics presents a significant problem for democracy is growing. For fifty years, public opinion polls have asked the question, “Generally speaking, would you say that this country is run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or that it is run for the benefit of all the people?” In 1964, fewer than 30 percent of Americans believed that a few big interests ran the government.² By 2008, the figure rose to 80 percent.³ Books and newspaper articles with clever titles such as “The Best Congress Money Can Buy” and “Democracy on Drugs” claimed that special interest money undermines the American political process. Americans’ concerns about the influence of special interests reflect the rapid growth of **lobbying**. From 2000 to 2010, federal lobbying expenditures grew from *only* \$1.56 billion to more than \$3.5 billion.⁴ Certainly, the organizations spending