

Beyond pluralism and elitism: How much influence do special interests have on the content of congressional legislation?

By: Kyle Johnson

Introduction

Interest groups in society
How is power exercised?



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Why it matters?

Democracy

Individual voice



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Previous Research (classics)

Pluralism

- Robert Dahl *Who Governs: Democracy and power in an American City*
- David Truman *The Governmental process: Political Interests and Public Opinion*
- Seymour Lipset *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*

Elitism

- C Wright Mills *The Power Elite*
- E E Schattschneider *The Semisovereign People: A realist's view of democracy in America*
- G William Domhoff *Who Rules America Now?*

Previous Research (recent)

Contributions matter

- Elections and congressional votes. Brunell, T. L. (2005) and Stratmann, T. (1998)
- Roll Call votes. Constant, L. M. (2006), Brooks, J., Cameron, A., & Carter, C. (1998), and Mallinson, D. J. (2014)
- Legislative involvement and committee. Hall, R., & Wayman, F. (1990)

Contributions do not matter

- Constituent influence. Smith, J. (2015), Bianco, W. (1994)
- Tenuous link between contributions and votes. Milyo, J. (1997)

Money matters, not contributions

- Lobbyists improve odds. McKay, A. (2012)
- Resources and knowledge. Hojnacki, M., & Kimball, D. C. (1998)

Case studies



- Remove provision from Dodd-Frank



- Energy Task Force sponsored by fossil fuel industry



- Exempted from new regulations for coal power plants

Results and implications

Disproportionate influence among interest group.

Understanding interest group's complex nature



Thanks for listening!

Any questions?