Lobbying and Other Interest-Group Tactics

Lobbying
Interest groups seek to influence government policy by contacting lawmakers or other government leaders. The people who make such contacts are lobbyists. They work at the federal, state, and local levels.

Most large and important interest groups have lobbyists on their payrolls in Washington, D.C.

Many lobbyists are former government officials who have friends in Congress and the executive branch. Lawyers and public relations specialists may also become lobbyists.

The Job of a Lobbyist
They spend most of their time trying to influence members of Congress, but also seek out members of the executive and judicial branches.

They supply lawmakers with information that supports the position of the interest group on a particular issue. (Members of Congress realize that lobbyists may be biased, but a lobbyist who purposely misrepresents the facts may lose access to the legislator.)

They help to draft bills. Many large interest groups retain legal and research staffs for this purpose.

Election Support
Interest groups can promise campaign contributions to lawmakers who favor their policies or threaten to withhold support from those who do not. The elected official may not always vote the way the interest group would like, but the contribution assures the group access.

Interest groups also conduct “get out the vote” campaigns urging members and people who share their views to vote for particular candidates.

Interest groups may also encourage their own members to seek public office.

Court Action
Interest groups may take their concerns to the courts. For example, business groups may sue the government to protest federal regulations.

Public Support
Interest groups may run campaigns to gain public support for their policies, using television, radio, newspapers, and magazines.