

Interest from their  
staff to unionize.  
other



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Interest groups face many obstacles – including both barriers to their formation and threats to their survival – yet they have proliferated during certain periods in American politics.

Interest groups exist to cater to various social, economic and political needs and their size and influence depends on their ability to impact society.

Groups are different and might be formed to pursue individual interest or corporate interests. Largely, the main drive is to influence governmental actions if they feel that the government is either neglecting them or acting in a manner likely to be detrimental to their well being.

Recent times have seen a continued growth in interest groups especially lobby groups which exert considerable influence on legislation and the conduct of the executive. Interest groups have developed over a long period of time and have faced several obstacles in their progression and acceptance as vital components of our society. One form of interest group, unions, have faced several hurdles due to resistance by companies to have their members unionized based on the fear that it will drive up their costs.

This resistance still exists even in the 21st century as evidenced by practices from retail giants like Wal-Mart to frustrate efforts from their staff to unionize. Other interest groups especially lobby groups use political advocacy to attain their objectives and rely on certain freedoms guaranteed to individuals and entities to do so. The 20th century and 21st century has seen increased governmental regulation on contributions made to political parties and the relation of interest groups with government officials. This has

limited the effectiveness of interest groups to pursue their collective interests and this trend is likely to continue.

## **The Development of Congress**

The United States Congress is one of the three arms of the federal government charged with enacting laws and executive oversight.

Provided for in the constitution, the bicameral chamber has undergone tremendous changes to become what it is today. The founding fathers created an institution with the lower House of Representative having directly elected members and the upper Senate drawing its members from State Assembly nominated senators. Increased bipartisanship led to a deadlock in formulation of policies and this occasioned the need to amend the constitution and have senators elected through popular vote by the populace. One thing is clear, the current congress as it is constituted is very different with the one envisioned by the founding fathers in the original constitution. Representatives were traditionally elected to represent populations of around 30, 000 but the current ones represent over 500, 000 in some congressional districts. Congress have created and continued to enforce a ceiling on the number of representatives despite the continued growth in population. This shows that Congress lacks the ability to approach the issue of representation without partisanship.

In addition, most people agree that partisanship have increased in the 21st century and threatens to derail the enactment and implementation of necessary reforms. Representatives and senators vote largely along party lines as they fear breaking rank and potentially losing their reelection bids.

A partisan Congress has continued to exert itself over the executive and this poses a danger for our society since disharmony among government branches is bad for growth. Congress must rise above partisanship and put the welfare of their people first and the interests of their parties a distant second.

## **The Constitution and Modern Presidencies**

Although the constitution has always exercised a powerful influence on the American presidency, the office has also developed in ways the framers could not anticipate and might not applaud. The provisions of Article II of the US constitution grant several powers to the President of the United States as head of the Executive and the leader of the nation. These include the right to command the military, nominate and appoint officials among the cabinet members, ambassadors and judges, make treaties and be involved in enacting legislations necessary for the carrying out of his mandate.

Nonetheless, there are other inherent powers that presidents derive from the constitution which are not directly articulated by the constitution.

This means that a president exercises power as directly granted by the constitution or assuming powers implied by the constitution in accordance to emerging needs of the nation. This raises the question whether the presidency today operate in a manner that the framers would support? The answer is both negative and positive and depends on the circumstance a sitting president invokes certain powers beyond those clearly stipulated by the constitution. Congress has oversight over the Executive but president's have used situations like terror attacks to override this oversight and take drastic and costly actions.

While the president has a responsibility to protect the nation, some have called into question some of the wars which president's continue to drag America into. When the cost is bigger than the reward, it is time to restrict presidential power to what the constitution spells out and increase oversight over the presidency. Where such is not applicable, the president should seek Congressional approval first to safeguard the interest of the nation.