

Should we make lobbying in government illegal

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The argument to make lobbying illegal ignores several key points and realities. First, the argument rests on erroneous assumptions about what lobbying actually is. Second, the argument ignores the constitutional basis of lobbying, which is free speech in the United States. Third, the argument ignores the double-sided reality of lobbying, which affects both major parties.

The thought that lobbying to the Federal government ought to be illegal rests on the notion that lobbying is done solely by large corporations in order to rake in benefits from themselves. This is not the case. The most powerful lobby in the United States is the American Association of Retired Persons, which serves the interests of the aging population (McCarter). Removing lobbying would leave segments of the population without a unified voice for expressing their concerns. Other lobbyists look after education, Jewish people, and minority groups. Lobbying is not solely the practice of corporations; they also perform very necessary and important services.

The constitutional basis of lobbying is the First Amendment, which guarantees the right to free speech. Lobbying is a form of free speech, albeit very structured, very closely tied to government, and quite expensive. Every individual person has the right to express his grievance with his government; this is fundamental to the American democracy. However, some recognize that this is a laborious and tricky process, which is why they contract that responsibility to experts, just as one would contract computer repair to a technician. Lobbying is free speech made on behalf of someone; to attack lobbying is the exact same threat as attacking free speech.

Lastly, lobbyists (whether from for-profit or non-profit organizations) contribute to the offices of Federal representatives from both major parties—
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Democrats and Republicans (Ronayne). They are not unfairly boosting one party at the expense of another. Therefore, there is no way one lobbyist can change Federal policy single-handedly, since there is always competing interests in Congress. Given all of these reasons, there is no need (or basis) to ban lobbying.

References

McCarter, Joan. " GOP takes on the most powerful citizens lobby, AARP." 28 March 2011. Daily Kos. 29 September 2011 .

Ronayne, Kathleen. " Dueling Donations: Lobbyists Lining Pockets of Both Democratic and Republican Party Committees." 22 June 2011. Open Secrets. 28 September 2011 .