



The Not-So-Special Interests: Interest Groups, Public Representation, and American Governance

By Matt Grossmann

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"Lobbyist" tends to be used as a dirty word in politics. Indeed, during the 2008 presidential primary campaign, Hillary Clinton was derided for even suggesting that some lobbyists represent "real Americans." But although many popular commentators position interest groups as representatives of special?not "public"?interests, much organized advocacy is designed to advance public interests and ideas. Advocacy organizations?more than 1,600 of them?are now an important component of national political institutions. This book uses original data to explain why certain public groups, such as Jews, lawyers, and gun-owners, develop substantially more representation than others, and why certain organizations become the presumed spokespersons for these groups in government and media. In contrast to established theory and conventional wisdom, this book demonstrates that groups of all sizes and types generate advocates to speak on their behalf, though with varying levels of success. Matt Grossmann finds that the advantages of organized representation accrue to those public groups that are the most politically motivated and involved in their communities. Organizations that mobilize members and create a long-lasting presence in Washington become, in the minds of policymakers and reporters, the taken-for-granted surrogates for these public groups. In the face of perennial debates about the relative power of the people and the special interests, Grossmann offers an informed and nuanced view of the role of organizations in public representation and American governance.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Matt Grossman's excellent new book accomplishes a lot in under 200 pages: he challenges conventions, builds new theories (two, not just one!), and presents new data for scholars to puzzle over... Grossmann's work is a must read for a variety of political science subfields and for scholars in other disciplines who are seeking a robust new set of theories matched with cleverly analyzed original data." - Heath Brown, *Journal of Politics*

"Matt Grossmann is ambitious in his goal of revitalizing group theories of democratic politics..., meticulous in his collection and analysis of original data; unabashed in challenging the validity and utility of popular... approaches to the study of interest groups; and skeptical of much conventional wisdom about the role and power of lobbyists and "special interests" in American governance." - Thomas Mann, *Perspectives on Politics*

"*The Not-So-Special Interests* is an elegant and well-grounded study that will, I suspect, be widely cited by other accounts." - Edward Ashbee, *Journal of American Studies*

"*The Not-So-Special Interests* serves as an excellent reminder to social scientists not to take 'common knowledge' for granted. This research offers valuable insight on the dynamics of "special interests" and underscores the complex role they play in democratic processes. The book provides an examination of interest groups and public representation that would be useful for anyone interested in democracy in America." - *Contemporary Sociology*

"Tea Partyers and Occupiers alike think of "special interests" as shadowy cabals that subvert the people's will, but this stimulating academic study finds them a faithful mirror of the body politic... Grossman's clear-eyed analysis of who gets a seat at the table suggests that democracy's faults lie not in our lobbyists but in ourselves." - *Publishers Weekly*

"From its rigorous theoretical frameworks to its comprehensive and diverse data analysis, this book represents the gold standard to which interest group studies should aspire."

- Anne Baker, *Journal of Politics*

"Grossmann's work is a major contribution?breathtaking in its scope and innovative in its theories of American pluralism at the dawn of the twenty first century. The book should be read by everyone concerned about whose voices really count in Washington." (Kristin A. Goss, Assistant Professor of Public Policy and Political Science, Sanford School of Public Policy *Duke University*)

"*The Not-So-Special Interests* provides a refreshingly clear-eyed assessment of the landscape of interest group politics in Washington. . .Cutting through the folklore about interest groups is no small task, but

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