

## Types of Interest Groups

Corporations and Business Groups: While these might not seem the most obvious candidates when we think about “interest groups,” the role of corporations and trade associations in terms of influencing politics through elections, litigation and lobbying clearly fits the definition. Examples of business groups include the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and trade associations that represent specific categories of firms (the American Bankers Association)

Labor Unions: On the other side of the aisle from corporations and business groups for many issues are labor unions, either as individuals or in associations such as the AFL-CIO. Unions have traditionally been closer to the Democratic Party than the Republican, but may break with parties if they side with other interests. Issues such as employment protection, stopping outsourcing, and the minimum wage are common topics that these groups push for in politics.

Professional Associations: Groups such as the American Bar Association and the American Medical Association represent specific sectors of the professional workforce that advocate for specific issues tied to their fields; for example, the Bar Association often pushes against litigation regulation to limit the types and size of lawsuits, while the AMA argues for it in cases of malpractice.

Ethnic and Gender Rights Groups: The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is a long-standing group that has represented African-American interests socially and politically; League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) does this for Latino interests, and the American Indian Movement (AIM) for Native Americans. These groups differ slightly in terms of issues (AIM looks at its representation as one of a nation within the country), but all try to push for equality in de jure and de facto forms. The National Organization for Women (NOW) is one of the largest women’s rights groups, although membership in specific issues such as pro-abortion groups may rival it at this point.

Religious Groups: In the 1980s, the Moral Majority rose up as an example of the “religious right,” an organized force of Protestants and (sometimes) Catholics with the objective of preserving traditional values and furthering religion in areas of public life. The Christian Coalition has continued to pursue these goals. But there is also a “religious left,” pushing for social and economic justice issues (Interfaith Worker Justice is an example).

Issue Advocacy and Cause Groups may seem like the most obvious interest groups, but they are actually narrower in scope than most people think. These groups formally represent interests that cannot speak for themselves, such as children, the homeless, animals, and the environment (Greenpeace, Sierra Club), or particular single-issue causes such as abortion and drunk driving (Mothers Against Drunk Drivers).