



Engaged Citizens: SS.7.CG.2.8
**Influencing and Monitoring
the Government**
READING #3

Name: _____

Date: _____



SS.7.CG.2.8 Benchmark Clarification 3: Students will identify methods used by interest groups to monitor and influence government.

Interest groups have a major impact on influencing the government. Interest groups use their **First Amendment** rights to peaceable assembly, free speech, and petition to monitor and influence the government. These groups form with the common goal of supporting a specific issue and work in large numbers to get their issue recognized by the government. A **political action committee** (PAC) is one type of interest group that works to raise money for a particular candidate who supports their issues by contributing to their campaign. Also, interest groups may hire **lobbyists**, who meet with lawmakers to try and get their support for a bill that would benefit issues that the PAC supports.

Interest groups can work with members of **Congress** or other elected legislators to get laws passed; this is usually referred to as **lobbying**. An interest group can also educate its members on issues it wants the group members to support. For example, interest groups ask their members to vote and give money to candidates that the interest group supports.

Interest groups may spend money on an expensive public information campaign that could influence how people vote and whether they will contribute money to the interest group. Government leaders usually pay more attention to groups with a higher voting rate than those who don't vote often. Also, interest groups that spend a lot of money through their political action committees usually strongly influence who gets elected.

Congress - the national legislative body of the U.S., consisting of the Senate, or upper house, and the House of Representatives, or lower house

First Amendment - an amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibiting Congress from establishing a religion, and from interfering with freedom of religious exercise, press, speech, peaceable assembly, or petition

interest group - a group of people who are concerned with a particular issue and who try to influence legislators to act in their favor, also known as a special interest group

lobbying - participating in activities in order to influence government officials

lobbyist - a person who participates in activities in order to influence government officials

political action committee - an independent political organization that promotes the cause of a particular interest group, usually through raising money and campaigning to elect candidates who support the group's views