

# **INFLUENCE IN POLITICS: MEDIA AND INTEREST GROUPS**

# The Free Press is vital to an informed citizenry.

---

*“A press that is free to investigate and criticize the government is absolutely essential in a nation that practices self-government and is therefore dependent on an educated and enlightened citizenry.”*



- Thomas Jefferson

# There are 3 main **roles** of the mass media:

## **GATEKEEPER**

Determines which stories and issues are important enough to receive public attention based on a variety of factors

## **WATCHDOG**

Keeps watch on government and other positions of power and influence to ensure that people are aware of abuse

## **AGENDA-SETTER**

Decides what issues society discusses in the public sphere by focusing on a topic of interest

# Factors that control the mass media can create **Bias.**

Independent control of the media is rare as only a few are publicly owned.



Reporting from organizations like National Public Radio is independent due to not receiving revenue from advertisements.

Private control of the media relies on revenue streams from advertisement.

Advertisement space is dependent on viewership.

News agencies need to entice viewers with liberal and conservative viewpoints.

The internet has the potential to inform the masses but it is also a forum for bias, misinformation, and baseless opinions.

There are 3 main tactics that **politicians** and government **officials** use with the media to promote their own agenda:

Press conferences and interviews allow more a controlled message

Staging provides a controlled forum for political spin

Staging of an event to control the timing of leaks

ALL used to promote their own agenda

Spin  
Persuades the public to perceive an issue in a certain way

Spin the direction of an event

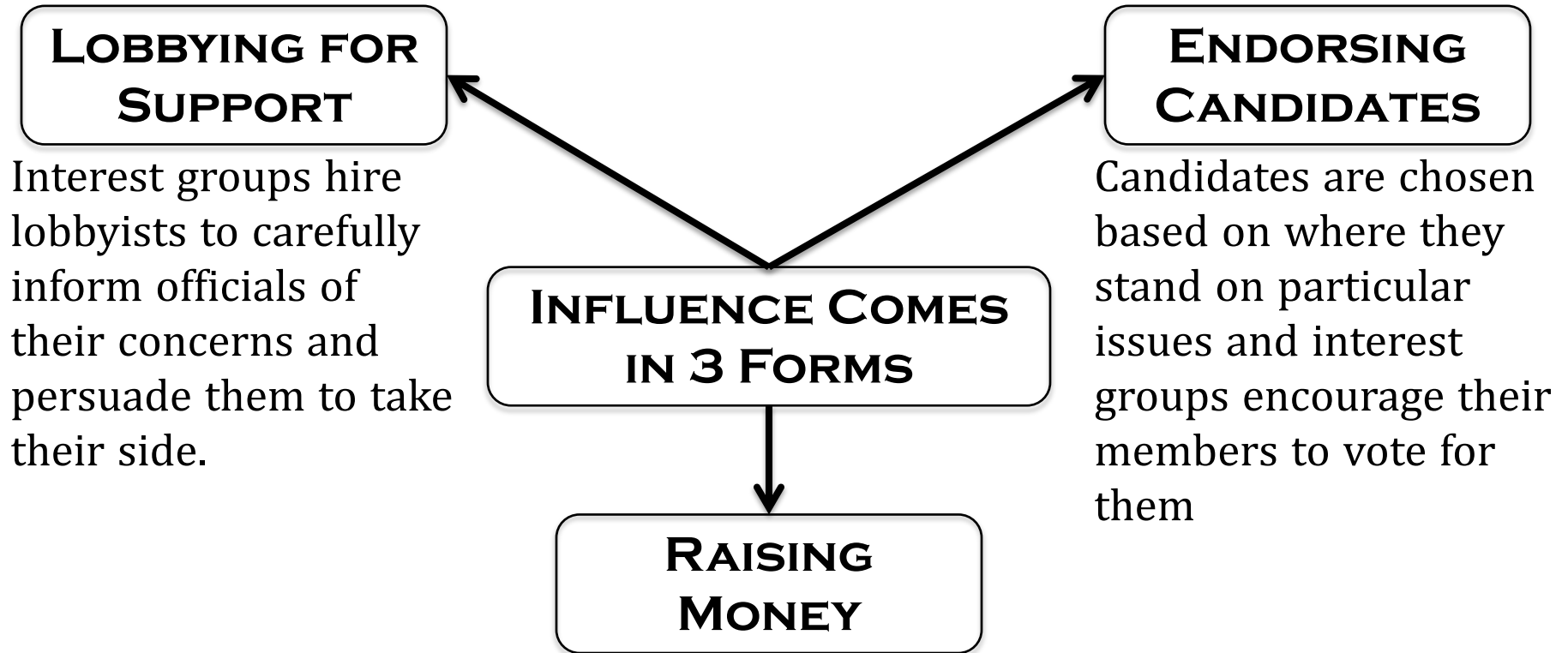
Leaks  
Release of confidential information that exposes corruption or stir up support

# Interest Groups act as the collective voice for specific issues.

## 5 TYPES AND SOME EXAMPLES OF INTEREST GROUPS

<b>Public Interests</b>	<b>Economic Interests</b>	<b>Professional Groups</b>	<b>Ideological Groups</b>	<b>Single-Issue Groups</b>
Education Environment Government	Business Labor Trade org.	Doctors Lawyers Teachers	Promotes policies that are religious or political in nature	Focused on narrow topics such as immigration and drunk driving

There are 3 tactics that interest groups use to **influence** how government is run in support of their agenda.

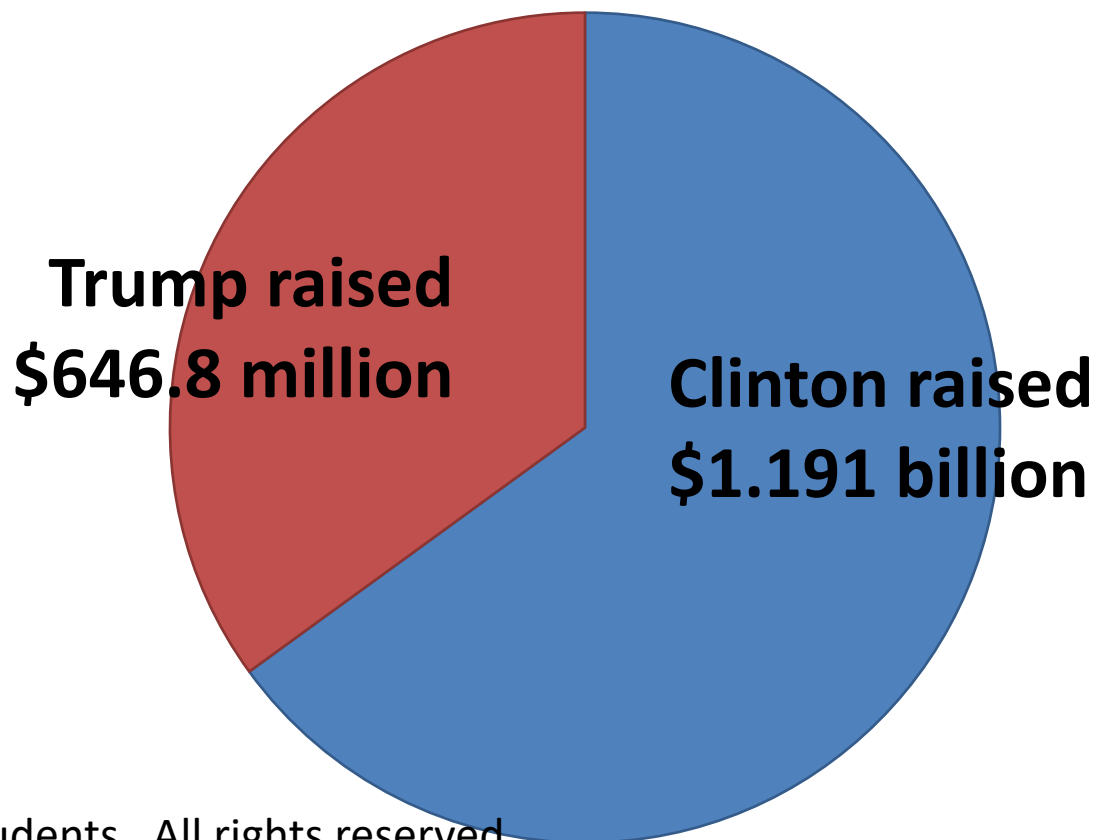


Interest groups raise money in support of a candidate but there are legitimate concerns that candidates can be biased in favor of the interest group due to the funding of campaigns.

It costs an enormous amount of **Money** to run for national office.

---

Almost **\$1.9 BILLION** was raised in the 2016 presidential election.

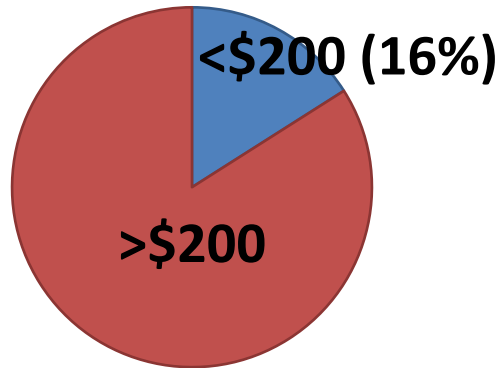




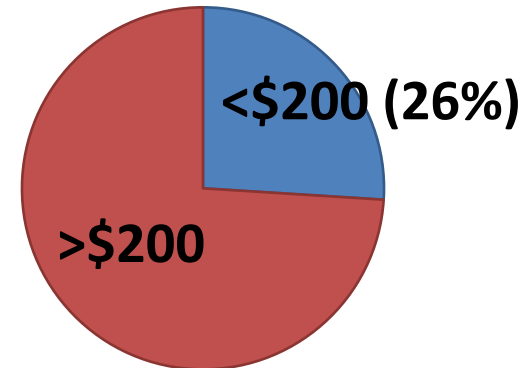
# Can the amount of **donors** contributing less than \$200 to campaigns be a sign?

---

## Clinton Donations



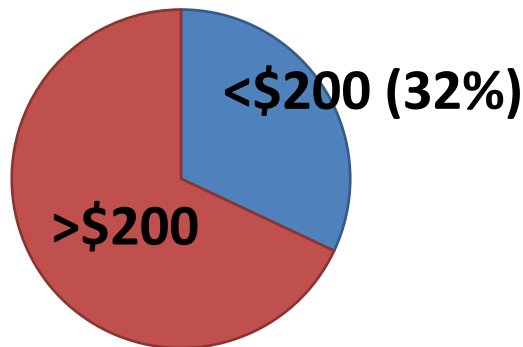
## Trump Donations



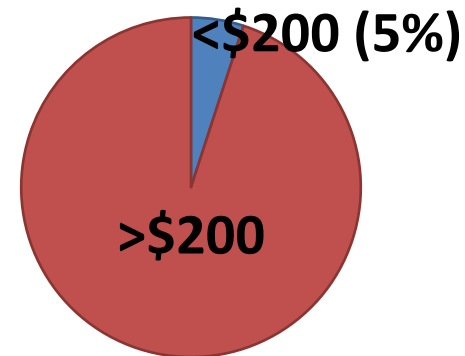
2016 Presidential Election

---

## Obama Donations



## Romney Donations



2012 Presidential Election

# Campaign finance is a hotly contested subject due to the influence that money can buy.

---

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the ***CITIZENS UNITED V. FEDERAL ELECTIONS COMMISSION*** case that most restrictions on campaign spending amount to restrictions on free speech and determined that the government cannot restrict:

- Candidates spending from their own pockets
  - Overall level of spending
  - Corporate spending on independent ads for a candidate
  - Only limits on direct contributions to candidates but there are ways around it
- 

## **CONSEQUENCES OF THE *CITIZENS UNITED* DECISION:**

- Candidates without strong financial networks or personal fortunes will have a hard time competing with other candidates
- Candidates get the majority of their money from corporations, interest groups, and wealthy individuals.
- There is a strong correlation of the votes of politicians and their sources of funding (i.e. Members of Congress who voted to spend almost \$500 million more on stealth bombers received on average 20 times more from the contractor than those members that voted no.)

# There are a few proposals that could provide campaign finance reform.

## Clean Elections Act

- Candidates who participate agree to accept only public funding
- Need a specified number of minimal contributions
- Special provisions for start-up funds
- All clean election candidates get the same amount of money
- Clean election candidates get money if outspent by privately funded candidates

## The Democracy Card

- Every registered voter gets (for example) a \$25 political credit card
- This card can be used to make contributions to any political candidate
- 130 million registered voters could donate more than \$3 billion to elections
- If a candidate gets any private donations they forfeit any democracy money

## The Patchwork Option

- There is no limit for candidates
- Keep adding targeted restrictions and provisions on campaign financing until there is consensus that spending is under control and elections are determined by the qualifications of candidates instead of amounts spent.