

# LOBBIES AND POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEES

Most people have ideas about what the government should be doing for its citizens. As individual, we can influence Congress and the President by voting for candidates who think the way we do, by working in election campaigns, and by writing letters and e-mail to our elected officials. However, we can have an even greater effect on our government's decisions if we join together in large groups that work for the same cause. That is what lobbies and political action committees are all about.

A lobby is a special interest group. Such a group might be interested in changing the way health insurance companies treat their customers, in preventing Congress from putting greater restrictions on gun ownership, or how the government protects the environment. A lobby hires a person - a lobbyist - to communicate its point of view to Congress and to try to convince Congress to vote a certain way.

Political action committees (PACs) are a more recent development in politics. These organizations are the political branch of a special interest group. For instance, churches are not allowed to try to influence political decisions, but individuals with similar religious beliefs can form a PAC and work to change laws. PACs raise voluntary donations of money from people who agree with their cause. They give this money to election campaigns of people they support and to the political party that will work for their goals. PACs control large amounts of money. The influence this has on all our laws and our lives make it important to understand lobbies and PACs.

I. Match the issue with the PAC or lobby that is most likely to support it.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. American Association of Retired Persons
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. National Wildlife Federation
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Consumer Confederation of America
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. National Organization for Women
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. American Federation of Labor - Congress of Industrial Organizations

- A. increase the number of African Americans who have jobs on television shows
- B. discourage manufacturers from moving factories to countries with cheaper labor
- C. reduce prices for medicine required for older people
- D. an end to the testing of household chemicals and beauty products on animals
- E. stricter laws against toys dangerous to children
- F. protection of wolves in Yellowstone Park and several western states
- G. equal pay for men and women doing similar jobs

II. List four positive changes that you would like to lobby your principal or school board to adopt.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_