

POLS 404
Interest Group Politics
2 September 2002

INTEREST GROUP PAPER

Your assignment is to write a 10-page (double-spaced) paper describing and analyzing a real-world interest group of your choosing. You are *required* to follow the format and style outlined in the course Style Guide. The Interest Group Paper is **due in my mailbox (217 O'Shaughnessy) by noon on Friday, October 11th**. E-mail attachments will *not* be accepted. *A quarter grade will be deducted for each day your paper is late.* You should submit the name of the interest group you will be studying to me via e-mail by 5 p.m. on Monday, September 9th.

The goals of your paper are to **describe and, most importantly, analyze** the interest group. Some basic issues you might cover include when and how the group was formed, how it has developed, how it is organized, what kind of membership it has, what sort of activities it engages in, and so on. Seeking out this information may not always be easy, and you should take into account availability of information when you choose the group you will study. Possible sources include magazines, journals, newspapers, books, and internet web pages. You may want to contact the group's headquarters and request a packet of information on their organization—many (but certainly not all) have such information readily available. You might even ask if there is someone available (such as a public relations person) who might answer a few short questions for you.

The central goal of assignment is for you to *analyze* the interest group in light of the concepts we discuss in class and that are presented in the reading. Specifically, how would you categorize the interest group? What, specifically, is(are) the group's interest(s)? (This is not always as straightforward and clear as one might think). What are its public policy goals? What is the free rider problem your group faces and how does it overcome it? What sort of strategies does it engage in and why? What are the group's resources and what resources does it lack? How do those resources affect the tactics it employs? The answers to these questions (and the others you might address) require independent thought and analysis on your part. In other words, you will not find a section of any group's web page titled "Our Free Rider Problem and How We Solved It." This is where your own analysis comes in.

Links to a number of prominent interest groups are provided at the course web page:

<http://www.nd.edu/~cwolbrec/POLS404.html>

Your choice of groups is *not* limited to those linked on the web page; the purpose of the page is simply to give you ideas and point you in useful directions.

If you have any questions or need assistance with this assignment, please contact, e-mail, or arrange to see me or the TA (Annabella Espana-Najera, espana-najera.1@nd.edu) as soon as possible.