

POLS 404
Interest Group Politics
30 October 2002

ISSUE ANALYSIS PAPER

Your assignment is to write an 8-page (double-spaced) paper describing and analyzing a the interest group politics surrounding a real-world political issue of your choosing. You are *required* to follow the format and style outlined in the course Style Guide. You must inform me via e-mail (Wolbrecht.1@nd.edu) as to what issue you will be examining by 5 p.m. on Wednesday, November 6th. Issue analysis papers are **due in my mailbox (217 O'Shaughnessy) by noon on Friday, December 6th**. E-mail attachments will *not* be accepted. *A quarter grade will be deducted for each day your paper is late.*

Your assignment is to **describe and MOST IMPORTANTLY, analyze** the debate over a particular issue. There are any number of issues you might choose to analyze; for example: gun control, smoking, abortion, health care reform, right-to-die, military procurement, environmental protection (specify/narrow), women's rights (specify/narrow), rights of the disabled, highway safety, civil rights (specify/narrow), minimum wage, telecommunications, narcotics and the drug war, or foreign aid (specify/narrow). The paper will be more do-able if you choose a fairly prominent issue about which you can expect to find sufficient information. You should also specify (that means, tell me in the paper) and narrow your time frame.

Your paper should consider the following sorts of questions: What is the debate about? Are there just two basic sides, or more? What is the basic background / history of this debate, particularly the major legislative struggles and accomplishments? What are the major organizations and actors involved? What resources do the different actors have? What resources do the different actors lack? What have been the major strategies of the different organizations? Why? How do different groups frame the issue? Why? How has the political context affected the tactics and successes of the different organizations? **The more you use ideas and concepts from class lecture and reading to discuss your issue, the better.**

This paper will require substantial research effort on your part; you will not be able to simply get information from a group's website. A few suggestions about sources: *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* (a weekly magazine available in the library) and the *Congressional Quarterly Almanac* (an annual compendium of information about Congress) contain stories about congressional debates and the major actors involved, as will other major news stories. The Thomas website (<http://thomas.loc.gov/>) contains basic descriptive information about legislative bills. Lexis-Nexis (<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>) lets you search for newspaper and magazine stories. From Lexis-Nexis you can click on "congressional" under Search for Other Information, and get access to the Congressional Information Service (CIS) as well as other useful links (check out the Hot Bills/Topics, for example). You could even enter the library itself—there are many, many books on various public policy issues. Finally, the course web site (<http://www.nd.edu/~cwolbrec/POLS404.html>) contains a link to a list of major legislative accomplishments of the postwar period; you might get ideas for issue topics from that list.

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.