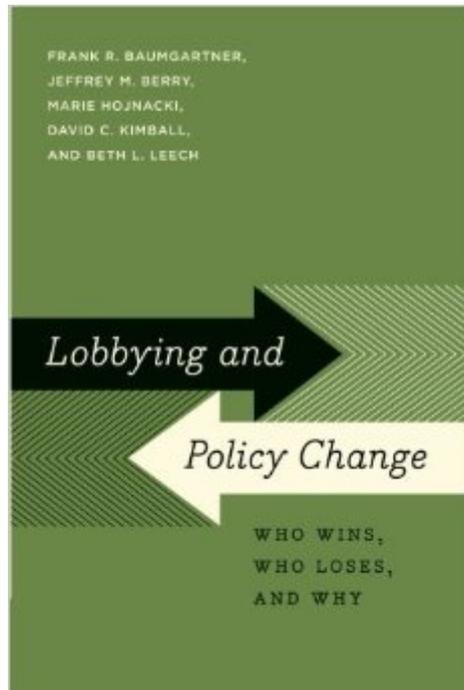


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Lobbying And Policy Change: Who Wins, Who Loses, And Why



Synopsis

During the 2008 election season, politicians from both sides of the aisle promised to rid government of lobbyists'™ undue influence. For the authors of *Lobbying and Policy Change*, the most extensive study ever done on the topic, these promises ring hollowâ ”not because politicians fail to keep them but because lobbies are far less influential than political rhetoric suggests. Based on a comprehensive examination of ninety-eight issues, this volume demonstrates that sixty percent of recent lobbying campaigns failed to change policy despite millions of dollars spent trying. Why? The authors find that resources explain less than five percent of the difference between successful and unsuccessful efforts. Moreover, they show, these attempts must overcome an entrenched Washington system with a tremendous bias in favor of the status quo. Though elected officials and existing policies carry more weight, lobbies have an impact too, and when advocates for a given issue finally succeed, policy tends to change significantly. The authors argue, however, that the lobbying community so strongly reflects elite interests that it will not fundamentally alter the balance of power unless its makeup shifts dramatically in favor of average Americans'™ concerns.

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Customer Reviews

This book is important for a number of reasons, and I'll mention 3. First, it is an important addition to Baumgartner's work with Bryon Jones, as it shows how difficult it is to shift policy frames. B&J's Punctuated Equilibrium model of policy change hinges on challengers reframing issues along previously excluded dimensions. This book shows such frame shifts are rare, and thus American politics is more closed and conservative than the B&J model might suggest. Second, money isn't everything. This book shows that the coalitions that form on either side of any policy issue are almost always well financed. There's money to be made on both sides of every issue (i.e. tighter regs on dirty coal means a huge competitive advantage for cleaner western coal plants). So money rarely buys policy, as many progressives lament, however, this situation further entrenches the status quo. Third, poor people have few, if any, lobbyists. While citizen groups are well represented on environmental and health care (i.e. every disease has a strong presence lobbying for \$) issues, the poor have few advocates on issues like welfare and medicaid reform. That's a problem, as money and lobbyists matter most when the other side doesn't show. The entire book is worth reading, and political scientists should note the methodological strength of the study. Best book on lobbying in a long time (maybe ever).

The other reviews pro and con don't give a sense of what makes this book so special. Many a book has been written about the considerable influence of lobbyists. None of them, however, have been terribly systematic, preferring instead to focus on dramatic cases. The authors of this book take a different and shockingly laborious approach to come up with a more accurate approach. They take a random sample of issues that lobbyists working the halls of Congress for the last two years of Clinton and the first two years of George W. Bush. This gives them a vastly more accurate snapshot of what lobbyists actually do than focusing on the big cases. But what's more, it's not actually a snapshot but a motion picture. The authors follow up two and four years later to see how successful lobbyists actually were. This gives them a much more vivid and deeper picture of the actions of lobbyists than almost any other study. And their conclusions overturn left and right common sense understandings of the power of lobbyists. For instance, they argue that in only five percent of their cases were issues even partially reframed (so much for the emphasis on framing issues). Even more dramatically, they argue that lobbyists attempting to change the status quo usually fail, regardless of how many resources they have behind them. Plus there are a few great stand alone

chapters, like the one that looks at the rhetoric that advocates for and against change make and the arguments are remarkably consistent regardless of the topic. This book really should make it on the list of great political science books. It's extraordinary, but it's not perfect. There are places where the prose feels very redundant, and the tables are curiously difficult to understand (and the text doesn't necessarily help). So, yeah, it's a slog, but if you're serious about politics, you'll ultimately be rewarded.

This book is truly a fascinating, new look at how policies change (or not), and what goes into the process. It is a fabulous look at lobbying for scholars and lay people alike. Anyone interested in how things work in Washington should read this!

I got to the book so far up to chapter three, fascinating book to read even though it's standard of writing is beyond my comprehension but I still read couple of times to make out of sense. I would recommend anyone who is interesting Lobbies and public policy.

The information in this book may be good, but it is so excruciatingly hard to read, only the most determined person will ever get to it. I have never encountered a book so full of information about the research and with so little useful information. Shouldn't this have been an academic paper rather than published as a book? Why do people publish books that are so difficult? These people are spending years doing research on issues important to the public, and yet they don't have the sense to make it readily available to the public. Why!?! To be fair, I downloaded the Kindle ebook and read that and nothing else. Yikes!

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