**Interest Group Internet Scavenger Hunt**

**Directions:** In order to help you learn about the controversies of interest groups and their actions, utilize the following links to answer the questions that follow. For much of this activity, you will be utilizing the resources of [www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org/).

**I. Which Industry Supports Which Political Party?**

1. Based on the data in this chart, make a list of comparing the top 5 industries that gave the most to each of the following political parties in the 2012 election cycle. List the amount they donated to that party. *You’re encouraged to click on the different industries and read about their background.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Industries that Supported the [**Democrats**](http://www.opensecrets.org/industries/mems.php?party=D&cycle=2012) | Industries that Supported the [**Republicans**](http://www.opensecrets.org/industries/mems.php?party=R&cycle=2012) |
| 1.2.34.5. | 1.2.3.4. 5.  |

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2. Research the [Health Services/HMO (insurance) industry](http://www.opensecrets.org/industries/indus.php?ind=H03++&goButt2.x=8&goButt2.y=10&goButt2=Submit). Read the background information about the industry.
A. Who are the [top four members of Congress](http://www.opensecrets.org/industries/summary.php?ind=H03&recipdetail=M&sortorder=U&cycle=2012) that received contributions from this industry?

B. Who are the [top three contributors](http://www.opensecrets.org/industries/contrib.php?ind=H03&cycle=2012) to federal candidates and parties (2012)?

C. What [trends](http://www.opensecrets.org/lobby/indusclient.php?lname=H03&year=2012) do you observe about this industry’s spending on lobbyists?

**II. Lobbying**

3. What [trends](http://www.opensecrets.org/lobby/index.php) do you observe in the number of lobbyists **and** the amount of money spent on lobbying?

4. Make a list of the [top five interest group spenders](http://www.opensecrets.org/lobby/top.php?showYear=2013&indexType=s) so far in 2013—include the amount of money they have spent on lobbying so far.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Top 5 Interest Groups |  Amount of Money Spent (2013) |
| 1. |  |
| 2. |  |
| 3. |  |
| 4. |  |
| 5. |  |

5. Describe the function of the interest group that has spent the most money on lobbying thus far in 2012 (you will need to use outside resources)

6. Make a list of the [top three lobbying firms](http://www.opensecrets.org/lobby/top.php?showYear=2013&indexType=l) thus far in 2013 (based on money received for their services). Include how much money they have received thus far.

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| --- | --- |
| Top 3 Lobbying Firms |  Amount of Money Received (2013) |
| 1. |  |
| 2. |  |
| 3. |  |

7. Read this [article](http://www.opensecrets.org/news/2009/10/us-chamber-dominates-third-qua.html) analyzing and evaluating recent lobbying trends.
 A. Why have health industries been spending more on lobbying in recent months?

 B. Why have energy companies been spending more on lobbying in recent months?

**III. The Revolving Door:**
8. Explain the meaning of the phrase “[revolving door](http://www.opensecrets.org/revolving/index.php)”.

9. Look at the employment history of [Dean Aguillen](http://www.opensecrets.org/revolving/rev_summary.php?id=70414), why do you think he was hired by Ogilvy Government Relations to become a lobbyist?

10. Look at the employment history of [Harris Wofford](http://www.opensecrets.org/revolving/rev_summary.php?id=24035). How does he fit the profile of someone who has utilized the ‘revolving door’?

11. What are the pros & cons of the “revolving door”?

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| **PROS of Revolving Door**  |  **CONS of Revolving Door**  |
|  |  |

**IV. Political Action Committees (PACs):**

12. Briefly explain the function of [PACs](http://www.opensecrets.org/pacs/pacfaq.php)?

13. Make a list of the [top five PACS in 2012](http://www.opensecrets.org/pacs/toppacs.php?Type=C&cycle=2012) —include the amount of money the PAC spent.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Top 5 PACS |  Amount of Money Spent (2012) |
| 1. |  |
| 2. |  |
| 3. |  |
| 4. |  |
| 5. |  |

14. What are [Leadership PACS](http://www.opensecrets.org/pacs/industry.php?txt=Q03&cycle=2012)?

15. Make a list of the [top five Leadership PACS in 2012](http://www.opensecrets.org/pacs/industry.php?txt=Q03&cycle=2012) —include the amount of money the PAC spent.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Top 5 Leadership PACS & Their Affiliate (politician) |  Amount of Money Spent (2008) |
| 1. |  |
| 2. |  |
| 3. |  |
| 4. |  |
| 5. |  |

**V. 527 Groups:**
1. Describe the [functions](http://www.opensecrets.org/527s/types.php) of 527 groups.

2. [Why](http://www.opensecrets.org/527s/basics.php) are these groups called ‘527s’?

3. In 2012, in what two [categories](http://www.opensecrets.org/527s/527cmtes.php?level=E&cycle=2012) did 527s spend much of their money? Hypothesize why 527s spend much of their money in these two categories.

4. Watch this [video clip](http://pbs-newshour.onstreammedia.com/cgi-bin/visearch?user=pbs-newshour&template=play220asf.html&query=*&squery=%2BClipID:3+%2BVideoAsset:pbsnh082704&inputField=%20&ccstart=1324307&ccend=1544027&videoID=pbsnh082704).

A. How did the ‘McCain-Feinfold Law’ help increase the spending on 527s?

B. What types of ‘things’ can 527s say/advocate?

**Concluding Analysis**

A. Explain the benefits that interest groups provide to our political system.

B. Explain the detriments that interest groups provide to our political system.

Based on the information you have discovered about interest groups, do you feel that interest groups have an OVERALL positive or negative affect on the USA political system? Use details and examples to support your answer.