

TEXT SUMMARY

Many Americans belong to several organizations that meet the definition of an interest group. Such groups may be very large or quite small. Most interest groups represent economic—that is, income-earning—interests, such as business, labor, agriculture, and professionals.

A **trade association** is an interest group formed by one segment of the business community, such as banking. A **labor union** is an interest group

whose members are workers who hold similar jobs or work in the same industry, such as police officers.

An influential set of interest groups focuses on agriculture. These groups may

represent farmers who raise particular commodities. Some professional interest groups also carry weight in American politics. The largest of these are organizations of physicians, lawyers, and teachers.

Other interest groups are devoted to specific political and social causes. They promote groups such as veterans and elderly people, or political causes such as protection of the environment. Still other interest groups promote certain religious interests. **Public-interest groups** work for “the public good”—that is, they try to represent all the people in the country on particular issues, such as voting rights. They usually focus on issues that affect the roles that all Americans share, such as citizen, consumer, or drinker of water.

THE BIG IDEA

Interest groups are formed around many issues, such as public interest and economics.

GRAPHIC SUMMARY: Types of Interest Groups

Purpose	Example
to promote business	American Bankers Association
to organize labor	Fraternal Order of Police
to protect agricultural interests	National Farmers Union
to promote professions	American Medical Association
to promote social programs	Veterans of Foreign Wars
for religious purposes	American Jewish Congress
for the public good	League of Women Voters

Interest groups work for an array of public policies that benefit their members.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Who do labor unions represent?

2. **Chart Skills** What is the purpose of the National Farmers Union?