

Interest Groups

Standard 12.6.4

Explain how civil society makes it possible for people, individually or in association with others, to bring their influence to bear on government in ways other than voting and elections.

Standard 12.3.2

Explain how civil society makes it possible for people, individually or in association with others, to bring their influence to bear on government in ways other than voting and elections.

The Role of Interest Groups

- Interest groups are private organizations whose members share certain views and work to shape public policy.
- **Public policy includes all of the goals a** government sets and the various courses of action it pursues as it attempts to realize these goals.
- Interest groups exist to shape public policy.

Valuable Functions of Interest Groups

- Interest groups raise awareness of **public affairs, or** issues that concern the people at large.
- Interest groups represent people who share attitudes rather than those who share geography.
- Interest groups provide specialized information to government agencies and legislators.
- Interest groups are vehicles for political participation.
- Interest groups keep tabs on various public agencies and officials.
- Interest groups compete.

Membership in Labor Unions



Note: Statistics are for nonfarm employees.

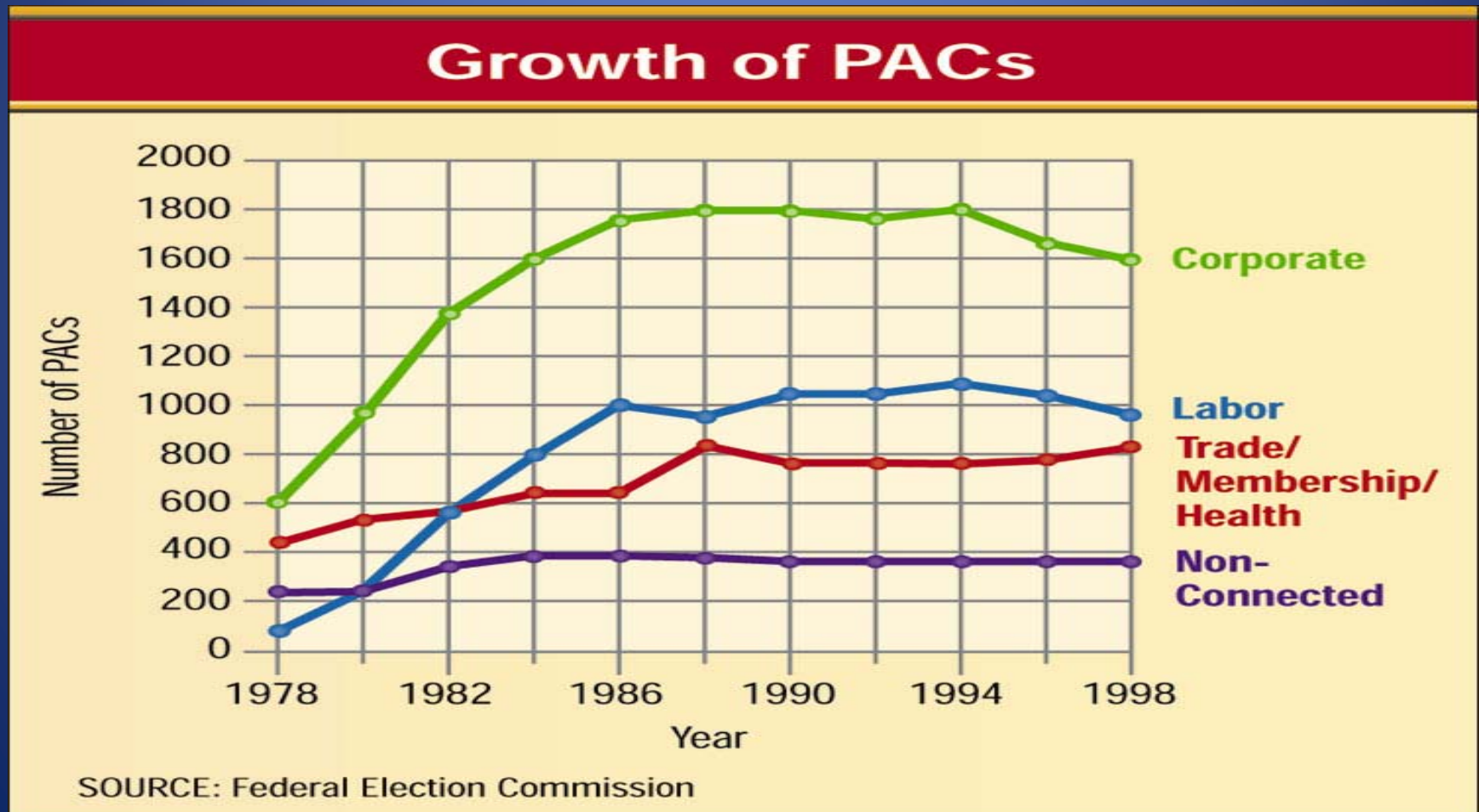
SOURCE: AFL-CIO

Influencing Public Opinion

- Interest groups reach out to the public for these reasons:
 1. To supply information in support of the group's interests
 2. To build a positive image for the group
 3. To promote a particular public policy

Influencing Parties and Elections

- **Political Action Committees (PACs)** raise and distribute money to candidates who will further their goals.



Lobbying

- **Lobbying is any activity by which a group pressures legislators and influences the legislative process.**
- Lobbying carries beyond the legislature. It is brought into government agencies, the executive branch, and even the courts.
- Nearly all important organized interest groups maintain lobbyists in Washington, D.C.