

**Lobbying Alone or In a Crowd:  
The Distribution of Lobbying in a Sample of Issues**

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## **Lobbying Alone or In a Crowd:**

### **The Distribution of Lobbying Activities Across a Sample of Issues**

#### **Abstract**

We analyze the structure of interest group activity across a random sample of national policy issues, drawn from a universe of 29,892 issue-mentions in the 1996 Lobbying Disclosure Reports. The results show a tremendous skewness to the distribution of lobbying in Washington. The median issue saw only fifteen lobbyists; however, a small proportion of issues was the object of veritable lobbying frenzies: seven of the 142 issues we studied were mentioned by more than 200 lobbyists. We combine this finding about the distribution of interest group activity with an analysis of how the type of participant varies across issues of varying scopes. Although business interests are, not surprisingly, the most common type of interest represented in the lobbying reports, we find that businesses are particularly over-represented on issues in which there are few or no competing interests involved. We discuss the implications of this representational bias.

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Political scientists writing since the turn of the century have repeatedly noted the vast proliferation of interest groups in Washington, and particularly in recent decades it has become common to refer to the interest group “explosion” of the late 1960s and early 1970s (e.g. Schlozman and Tierney 1986, Walker 1991, Berry 1997, and for a discussion of earlier interest group booms, Petracca 1992, 11–13). One result of this proliferation, many scholars have argued, is that any single interest group wields much less power (see, e.g., Salisbury 1990). So many interest groups exist in Washington that competition must be greater. And if interest group competition exists, we may be closer to the pluralist ideal.

At the same time, other political scientists (notably Browne 1990) have noted that despite the proliferation of groups, on some issues there is much less interest group activity—indeed, that interest groups may gravitate toward issue niches in which no other organized interests are active. This finding has significant implications. An interest group that is active on an issue involving hundreds of other organized interests may find it difficult to have a noticeable impact on that issue. On the other hand, an interest group that finds a quiet policy corner in which to request the insertion of a few lines of legislative language may find that its influence is quite substantial.

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(Coding for this project is ongoing, but when it is completed we intend to make these data available for other researchers.)

Unfortunately, to date we have little indication of what the interest group issue universe looks like. Although many people have surveyed random samples of interest groups (for example, Schlozman and Tierney 1986, Walker 1991, Heinz et al. 1993, Leech 1998), collecting a random sample of issues on which organized interests are active has proved much more difficult. As a result, we have little idea of what proportion of overall interest group activity is characterized by competition or what proportion involves niche issues. It becomes tremendously hard to generalize about interest group influence when the distribution of issues is not only so varied but also unknown.

As far back as Pendleton (1936) and Key (1964), political scientists have argued that competition among groups may actually free those in positions of authority to make the decisions that those officials think best, minimizing any potentially improper influence from lobbyists. Key also noted the that this pluralist ideal of group competition does not always take place:

To some extent, the outrageous demands of pressure groups are checked by the demands of other groups that may be equally outrageous. In situation after situation legislators and administrators are confronted by groups pushing in opposite directions, a state of affairs that permits government to balance one off against the other and to arrive more easily at a solution thought to represent the general interest.

Though the restraint of mutual antagonism is built into the group system, that check does not operate in many situations. Groups well disciplined and amply supplied with the matériel of political warfare often are countered by no organization of equal strength. The opposing interest may, in fact, be completely unorganized. The lobbyists for electrical utilities, for example, are eternally on the job; the lobbyists for the consumers of this monopolistic service are ordinarily conspicuous by their absence. The representation of these unorganized sectors of society becomes the task of politicians who, bedeviled by the group spokesmen on the ground, may succumb to the immediate and tangible pressures. In short, while group pressures often cancel each other out, this process restrains particularism erratically and uncertainly (Key 1964, 150).

This organizational advantage for some types of interest groups, pointed to by Key, is a central critique of pluralism as an ideological perspective (see Baumgartner and Leech 1998 for a detailed discussion of the various critiques of the pluralist ideal). Many interest group scholars

have documented that the interest group choir does indeed, as Schattschneider (1960) put it, sing with an upper-class accent. The idea that organized interests that represent businesses are far more prevalent than interest groups that represent citizens is well established. What is not well-established is how often issues do in fact involve interest group competition compared with how often the lack of competition noted by Key is the case.

Browne (1990) has addressed this issue in his studies of agricultural policy, and noted how frequently interest groups chose “niche” issues that are followed by few other interest groups and virtually none of the public. Browne challenged the assumption that a greater number of interest groups necessarily leads to any sort of pluralist equilibrium across issues. Instead, he found that the groups he studied chose issue niches in which they seldom were forced either to compete directly or to form coalitions with other groups. After interviewing representatives of 136 agricultural groups about their involvement in more than 400 issues and 180 congressional acts and USDA rulings, he concluded that only a handful of groups focused on issues that spanned the agricultural sector; the others chose to focus on narrow issues.

These findings are provocative, and prompt one to ask whether they may be generalized to other policy domains. Agriculture, after all, is a policy domain that, like defense, is unusual in that most of the participants share an basic ideological outlook—that is, that agricultural programs and payments are beneficial—rather than facing the more divisive ideological splits that one might find in labor or health policy. Perhaps interest groups in the agricultural domain seek niches to avoid open conflict with groups they essentially agree with. Or maybe labor and health policy are characterized by niches just as is agricultural policy. In any case, it remains an open question what proportion of interest group issues are essentially niche issues versus what proportion involve more widespread interest group activity.

This paper presents the first analysis of the distribution of lobbying activities in Washington across a random sample of issues. Data are taken from the 1996 Lobby Disclosure Reports. In these reports registrants must mention not only their expenditures and use of public relations firms in their lobbying efforts, but also the particular issues their lobbyists worked on. In all, more than 19,000 reports were filed mentioning nearly 30,000 issues (see Baumgartner and Leech 1999a for a full discussion of this data source). We chose a sample of 142 issues and coded each registrant by whether or not they lobbied on that particular issue.

The results show a tremendous skewness to the distribution of lobbying in Washington. The median issue saw only 15 lobbyists; however, a small proportion of issues was the object of veritable lobbying frenzies: seven of the 142 issues were mentioned by more than 200 lobbyists. The top 5 percent of the issues accounted for over 30 percent of the lobbying, whereas the bottom 50 percent of the issues accounted for only 3.5 percent of the total lobbying activity. In the pages that follow we discuss the implications of the tremendous skew in lobbying activities.

The findings make clear that lobbyists are active in an extremely broad range of circumstances. In some cases where lobbying occurs, there are almost no rival lobbyists active. In a small number of cases, however, literally hundreds of lobbyists descend on the Capitol. This state of affairs makes generalizing about lobbying activities very difficult and explains why many scholars have disagreed about the relative abilities of individual lobbyists or corporations to get what they want in Washington. Some have looked at the relatively obscure cases where only a few lobbyists are active; others have focused their attention on the relatively rare instances where massive lobbying campaigns take place. A complete picture must of course address both situations; however, up until now we have had little evidence about the relative commonality of both these situations. We hope that our new data set will provide this baseline.

## **Studying Groups through Lobbying Disclosure Reports**

The 1995 Lobbying Disclosure Act significantly expanded the reporting requirements for organizations active in Washington, D.C. For the first time, it required semi-annual reports from each firm or organization active in Washington lobbying activities. Lobbying firms must file a report for each client; organizations employing their own in-house lobbyists must report separately. All registrants must indicate the amount of money spent and the issues on which they were active, and they must file a separate report for each of 74 distinct issue-areas on which they lobbied. Reports must be filed semi-annually with the Clerk of the House of Representatives and with the Secretary of the Senate. As we reported one year ago (Baumgartner and Leech 1999a, also see Baumgartner and Leech 1999b), we obtained the complete set of records for the December 31, 1996, filing period — approximately 19,000 reports — and we present our findings here.

We have discussed in a previous paper (Baumgartner and Leech 1999a, also see Furlong 1998) the various values and drawbacks to the data collected as a result of the 1995 Lobby Disclosure Act. Very briefly, one of the principal advantages is that the law requires much more substantial reporting than previous legislation, allowing a much more accurate picture of the overall distribution of lobbying activities. Further, since registrants mention the actual issues on which they are active, researchers can explore the distribution of activities by issue and by issue-area (though, as we will show below, this is a very difficult process because of the way in which the data are reported). Both direct lobbying activities conducted by organizations with Washington lobbyists and indirect lobbying activities undertaken by public relations and lobbying firms on behalf of paying clients are covered by the law, so its reports are much more complete than any available previously.

Of course, as we have already noted, there are significant imperfections to the reporting requirements, enforcement procedures, and dissemination practices. Most importantly, many lobbying activities do not have to be reported: those directed at the general public (as are many media campaigns); those undertaken by groups that spend less than \$20,500 on lobbying in a six-month cycle; and those that are related to formal testimony before an official body such as a congressional committee. Although the law specifies a substantial civil penalty for noncompliance, little effort is made to enforce the law. Finally, the data collected by the House and Senate are not made easily accessible to the public, and registrants can use varying levels of specificity when mentioning their areas of legislative involvement. In sum, we are dealing with an imperfect data set here, but still the most complete ever assembled on the topic.

In our previous paper dealing with this data set we discussed the dominance of the business community in the lobbying process. Comparing levels of expenditures and the numbers of issues on which various types of groups were active, we showed that business, trade associations, and other profit-sector organizations predominate in these reports even more than had previously been found in the various surveys of interest groups that political scientists had conducted in the 1980s and 1990s. In this paper, we look at a slightly different question but we will return to our theme of business dominance as well.

We constructed a list of every issue mentioned by any lobbyist in each of the 19,692 reports that were filed for the December 31, 1996, reporting deadline; this produced a list of 29,892 issue-mentions. Of course, many of these were mentioned by more than one registrant (and sometimes even more than once by the same registrant, if for example, the registrant both lobbied directly and also hired a firm to assist them). We randomly selected a sample of 200 issues from this longer list.



Effectively, this sampling procedure ensured that we would have a sample of lobbying issues weighted by the amount of lobbying that took place on those issues. That is, an issue that was mentioned 100 times by many different groups would be in our sampling frame 100 times and would therefore have that many more chances of being included in our sample than an issue that was mentioned only once by a single group. Our sample, therefore, consists of a random selection of cases of lobbying activity.

For each issue that was chosen, we identified the nature of the issue by finding it in the *CQ Almanac* or through a legislative search in the Library of Congress' Thomas web site. This led to the creation of a list of keywords and search strings, including bill numbers and regulation numbers. We used these search strings to scan our database to identify all other registrants who mentioned the same issue. After deleting duplicate entries, we were left with a sample of 142 issues (see Appendix Table A-1 for the list of our issues). Of course, there are many ambiguities in the creation of our list of issues. While most lobbyists mentioned specific bill numbers (e.g., H.R. 3255), others were more general or more specific. Scanning through Table A-1, for example, one can see that some registrants mentioned such issues as defense reauthorizations, others mentioned such things as "juvenile justice issues" without specifying which ones. Similarly, while some would mention "defense reauthorizations," other registrants might mention only a particular part of the same bill—"reuse of the Fitzsimmons Army Medical Center" for example. All in all, one unavoidable difficulty in this research project stems from the fact that registrants can describe issues in slightly different ways. Some may mention broad topics or whole areas of interest, while others are extremely precise. The numbers of groups listed as active on each of these issues should therefore best be thought of as indicators of the numbers of groups participating in each given issue, not the exact numbers of groups participating on an

issue. This is true for two reasons. First, groups who spend or lobby less than the minimums required by the law do not need to report any lobbying activity. For this reason nonprofits and citizen groups especially will be under-counted. Second, some groups may indicate that they were involved in the overall issue (Department of Energy appropriations) but fail to mention their involvement in the subissue (funding for natural gas programs). Still, our search procedures were quite exhaustive and we are confident that we have identified the vast bulk of those registrants active on each of our 142 issues. Whenever a bill number was mentioned, and even when it was not but where there was a bill in that area that year, we searched not only for relevant descriptors of the bill but also the various bill numbers that were used. Most lobbyists refer to bill numbers in their registration reports.

Having discussed the difficulties of establishing a complete set of lobbyists who were active on each issue, we should mention the value of having done so. Although there are some limitations to our data set, these data represent the first random sample of issues involving national interest groups that we know of. As we mentioned above, and as can be seen in our previous paper (Baumgartner and Leech 1999), some 30,000 mentions were made of issues on which lobbying took place. Some of these issues were the subject of massive lobbying campaigns by hundreds of lobbyists, government officials, and guns-for-hire; others were the object of attention only by a single lobbyist. By randomly drawing a sample from this list, we can generalize for the first time about the distribution of lobbyists across issues.

### **The Distribution of Lobbying Across a Sample of Issues**

Disagreements and contradictions abound in the study of lobbying and policymaking in American politics. We have laid out many of these in previous work (Baumgartner and Leech 1998), but it is worth reviewing some of the simplest difficulties that scholars have had in

generalizing about “the” lobbying process. Do lobbyists typically need only to gain access to one or a few key legislators, perhaps through campaign contributions to key committee members, in order to have their allies insert or delete key provisions into amendments affecting them or their businesses? Certainly they do. Do lobbyists engage in large-scale public relations campaigns attempting to affect public opinion, votes in the next election, and the election of a new set of legislators? Sometimes. Is the policy process often characterized by small numbers of participants, each of whom has a vested interest in a similar outcome? Certainly policy monopolies, subsystems, and narrowly defined patterns of participation commonly occur. Is the policy process often dominated by large-scale conflict among well-funded opponents each of which has access to a range of powerful allies in and out of government? This is true as well. One of the problems with the literature on policy subsystems, policy networks, and lobbying in general has been that we have little feel for the distribution of these circumstances. Is high-conflict lobbying rare or common? Is secretive, low-conflict lobbying the modal category, with conflict only occasionally spilling out beyond the circle of those constantly involved in a routine treatment of the issue? Without some way to generalize about the distribution of lobbying across issues, we have no way of knowing which of many observed patterns of activity are common, which are uncommon, and which are unique.

Figure 1. The Number of Lobbyists in a Sample of Issues, 1996.

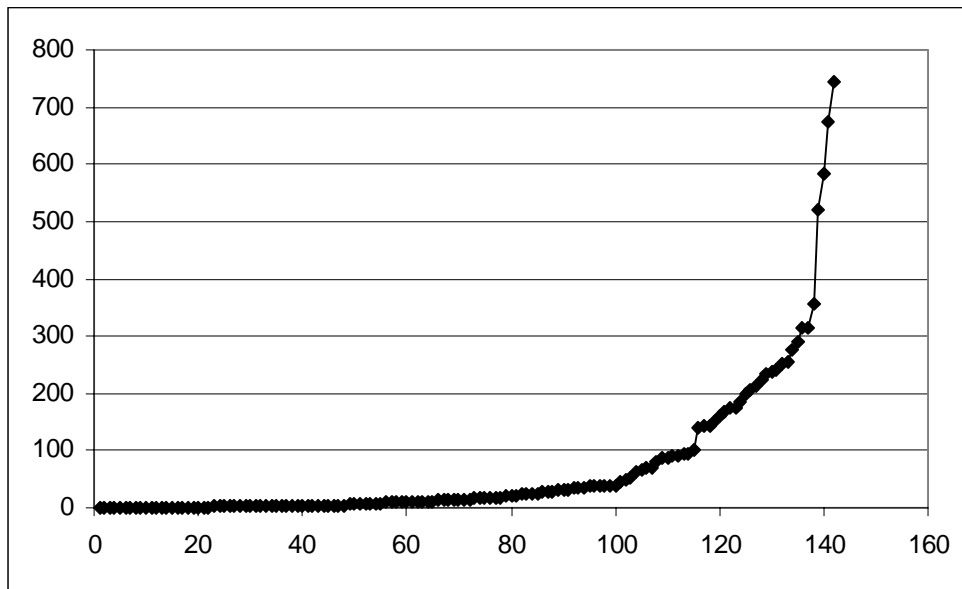


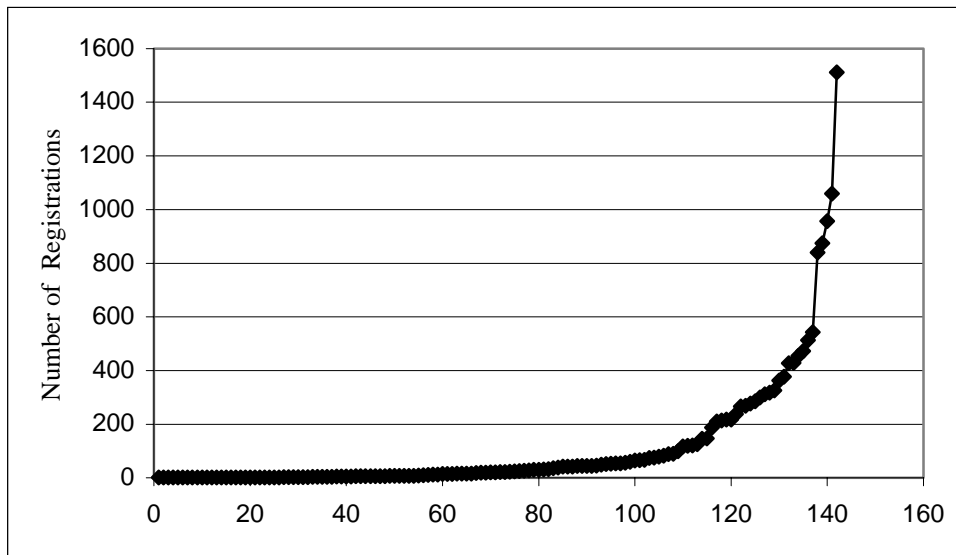
Figure 1 presents the distribution of lobbyists across our sample of 142 issues. The remarkable feature of the data is, of course, their explosive nature: the vast majority of issues generate only a very small amount of lobbying activity. A few issues, however, become the object of veritable lobbying extravaganzas. Four out of the 142 issues each attracted more than 500 lobbyists (these cases were, as shown in Table A-1, Defense Department Appropriations, the Balanced Budget Resolution, the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996, and Health Insurance Reform Issues). Similarly, an additional 14 issues attracted over 200 lobbyists, and ten more issues were of interest to 100 or more lobbyists. All in all, Figure 1 presents data on 9,854 lobbyists. The top four issues accounted for over one-quarter of all these lobbyists (2,520 lobbyists, or 26 percent); the 28 issues on which over 100 lobbyists were active accounted for 7,620 lobbyists, or fully 78 percent of the total number of lobbyists.

Of course, the logical counterpart to the concentration of so many lobbyists on a small number of issues is that our data show a very large number of issues on which only a few

lobbyists become involved. The median issue was the object of lobbying by 15 lobbyists. Only 3.5 percent of the lobbyists were active in the 71 issues with the fewest lobbyists involved; more than 96 percent of the lobbyists were active in the 71 issues with greater than the median activity. Twenty-two cases were mentioned only by a single lobbyist. In nine of those cases the issue could be characterized as particularistic—for example, obtaining permission for a client to do business in China. The remaining thirteen cases were significantly broader, however, including such relatively large-scale issues such as how to handle cesium waste and wildlife refuges for non-game animals.

The requirements of the Lobby Registration Act include that lobbyists must register in each issue-area in which they are active; further, if a firm lobbies directly and simultaneously retains outside lobbying support through a public relations or lobbying firm, both the client and the firm must register (if a client hires a firm but does not also lobby directly, only the firm must register). Therefore the number of lobbying registrations exceeds the number of interest groups active. Figure 2 shows the distribution of lobby registrations across our sample of 142 issues.

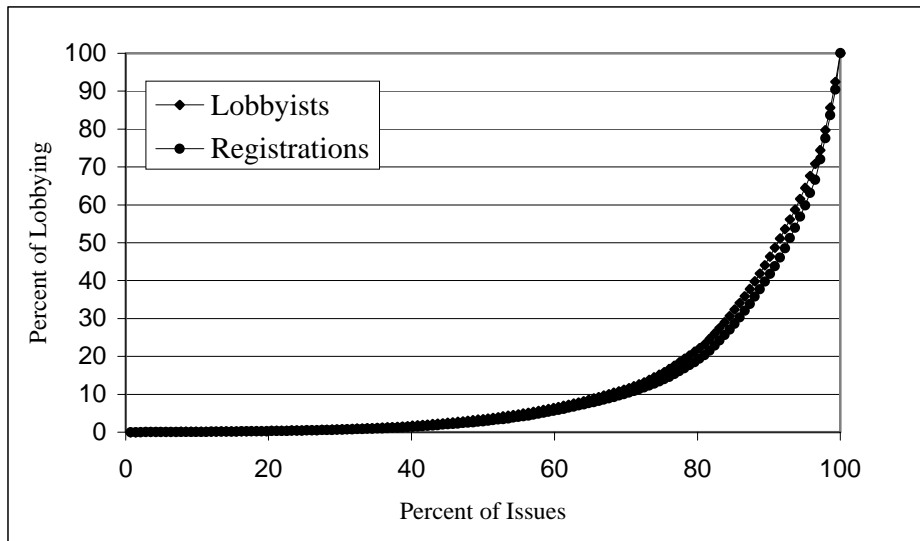
Figure 2. The Distribution of Lobbyist Registrations Across a Sample of Issues.



The degree of skewness that we saw in Figure 1 is even more pronounced in Figure 2, which allows a sort of weighting by level of activity. Though the measure is not perfect, in general those lobbyists with greater activities will be required to register more than once; those who are only directly involved in a simple lobbying activity will register only once. Therefore, these data can be seen as a rough indicator of lobbying activity; as we can see, they show the same, but slightly more pronounced, pattern of skewness that we noted already in Figure 1.

Figure 3 shows both the number of lobbyists and the number of registrations as a proportion of the total activity. It shows the cumulative proportion of lobbyists active by the cumulative proportion of issues. If the lobbyists were evenly distributed across the issues, the line would be at a straight 45-degree-angle from the origin to the top-right corner.

Figure 3. The Proportion of Lobbying by the Proportion of Issues



Clearly, the distribution of lobbyists across a sample of issues is quite skewed. The vast majority of the lobbying occurs in a tiny fraction of the issues. Conversely, in the vast bulk of the issues on which lobbyists are active, they have the grounds relatively to themselves. Even issues such as a proposal to lift export limitations on some types of Alaskan crude oil, changes to the student loan system, and a proposal to reorganize the federal home loan banking system attracted just three to five registered lobbyists in 1996 (see Table A-1, issues # 118, 120, and 114). Table 1 shows the skewed distribution of lobbying activity even more clearly. It presents data on the proportion of lobbying activity by the proportion of cases in our sample.

Table 1. The Proportion of Lobbying Activities by Case

Percent of Issues	Lobbyists			Registrations		
	Number	Percent	Cum.	Number	Percent	Cum.
Lowest 5 Percent (7 issues)	7	0.07	0.07	7	0.04	0.04
5.1 to 10 (issues 8 to 14)	7	0.07	0.14	7	0.04	0.09
10.1 to 20 (to issue 28)	20	0.20	0.35	29	0.18	0.27
20.1 to 30 (to issue 42)	41	0.42	0.76	59	0.38	0.65
30.1 to 40 (to issue 57)	95	0.96	1.73	120	0.76	1.41
40.1 to 50 (to issue 71)	173	1.76	3.48	232	1.48	2.89
50.1 to 60 (to issue 85)	286	2.90	6.38	431	2.74	5.64
60.1 to 70 (to issue 99)	477	4.84	11.22	690	4.39	10.03
70.1 to 80 (to issue 113)	985	10.00	21.22	1,327	8.45	18.48
80.1 to 90 (to issue 128)	2,475	25.12	46.34	3,652	23.25	41.73
90.1 to 95 (to issue 135)	1,786	18.12	64.46	2,848	18.13	59.87
Top 5 Percent (top 7 issues)	3,502	35.54	100.00	6,303	40.13	100.00
Totals (142 Issues)	9,854	100.00	100.00	15,705	100.00	100.00

Source: Compiled from 1996 Lobby Registration Reports

Whether we look at the raw numbers of lobbyists active in a given issue or the number of lobby registration reports, we see that the bottom 10 percent of the cases attract less than one tenth of one percent of the lobbyists, where as the top 10 percent of the cases attract over fifty percent of the lobbying activities. The bottom half of the cases account for about three percent of the activity. These findings make clear that lobbyists are active in an extremely broad range of circumstances. On most cases where lobbying occurs, there are almost no rival lobbyists active. In a small number of cases, however, literally hundreds of lobbyists descend on the Capitol.

We have already discussed the enormous bias in favor of the business community that the Lobby Disclosure Reports make clear. Business, trade, and professional associations account for 65 percent of the registrants, and government institutions themselves account for another 12 percent of the total; nonprofits, citizen groups, and unions together account for only ten percent of the total registrations in the 1996 reports (Baumgartner and Leech 1999, Table 1). In this



section, we look at this distribution of activity across our sample of 142 cases. Table 2 presents these data, showing the distribution of activity by group type separately for those cases in which very few to a great number of other lobbyists were involved in each issue. The last column in the table presents the total involvement of each type of group across our 142 issues.

Table 2. Business Predominance on Large and Small Lobbying Issues.

Type of Groups Lobbying	Number of Lobbyists Involved in the Issue								Total for All 142 Issues	
	1 or 2 lobbyists involved (32 issues)		3 to 10 lobbyists involved (27 issues)		11 to 50 lobbyists involved (43 issues)		50 or more lobbyists involved (40 issues)			
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Business	50	17	31	49	42	442	42	3,592	42	4,101
Trade	15	5	15	23	20	209	16	1,396	17	1,633
Government	18	6	8	13	9	95	12	1,052	12	1,166
Professional	9	3	12	18	11	112	6	555	7	688
Institutions	3	1	13	21	7	69	10	823	9	914
Citizen groups	3	1	13	20	7	71	8	732	8	824
Unions	0	0	5	8	2	21	2	186	2	215
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	313
Total	100	34	100	156	100	1,052	100	8,612	100	9,854

Source: Compiled from 1996 Lobby Registration Reports

Several features are clear from Table 2. First, the overall distribution of lobbyists across our 142 issues is quite similar to the data we presented previously (Baumgartner and Leech 1999) on all issues in the entire database. Businesses represent 42 percent of the total here, and they represent 43 percent in the entire database. Similarly for trade associations (17 percent here; 16 percent in the larger database); government units (12 percent; 12 percent); professional associations (7 percent; 6 percent); institutions (9 percent; 8 percent); citizen groups (8 percent; 9 percent); unions (2 percent; 1 percent); and other miscellaneous registrants (3 percent; 5 percent).

These comparisons allow confidence that our sample of 142 issues is well chosen and generalizable.

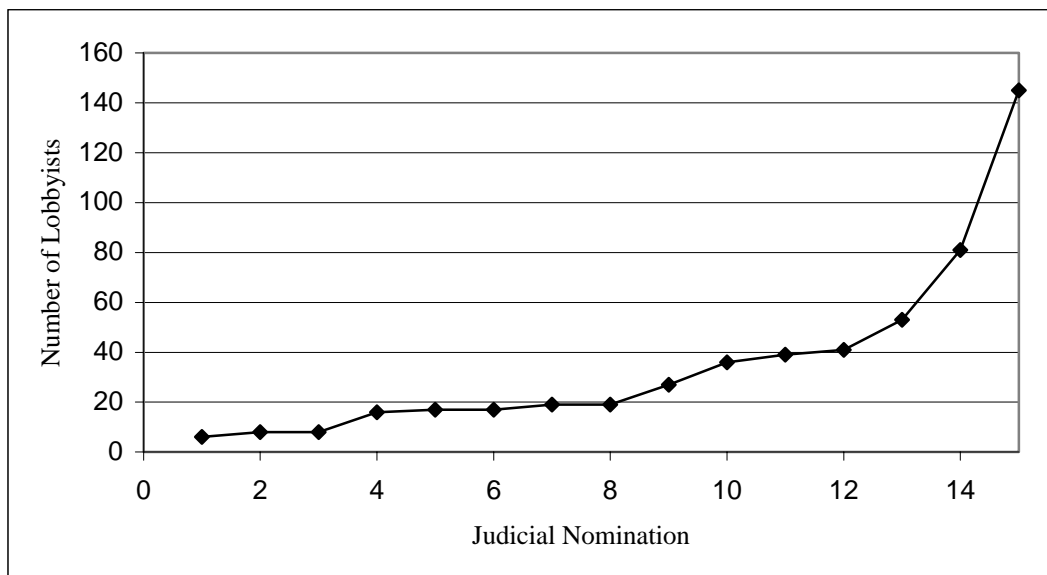
The second feature of these data is that they allow us to show that business advantage, while great overall, is even more striking in the cases where the fewest lobbyists are active. In the 32 cases where only one or two lobbyists were involved in the issue, participation was almost wholly limited to businesses, trade associations, and the intergovernmental lobby. These data paint a striking picture of the lack of conflict that can often accompany the relatively secretive lobbying process where few are involved. Businesses, trade and professional groups, and representatives of states, cities, and other government institutions appear to be involved in all types of lobbying activities. Unions, nonprofits and citizen groups are more likely only to be involved in the relatively more open and conflictual processes involving more participants.

Of course, following Schattschneider (1960), there is ample reason to suspect that the involvement of unions, citizen groups, and other non-profit sector organizations may be the cause of conflict in the lobbying process and the reason why some issues attract the attention of hundreds of lobbyists while others involve only a handful. By focusing our attention on high-profile cases of lobbying activity, we gain understanding of how these conflictual issues are handled and how important the lobbying process can be in such cases. But we should not overlook the more secretive and more troublesome elements of lobbying alone. When this type of activity occurs, it is generally in the absence of many types of groups, in particular representatives of labor, citizens, and the nonprofit sector of the economy. General Motors often lobbies alone; the Sierra Club, almost never.

## Conclusion

Our findings concerning the distribution of lobbying activity have not replicated any already in the literature because there are no similar studies based on a random sample of issues. In a recent study based on a survey of groups involved in federal judicial nominations, however, Caldeira, Hojnacki, and Wright (2000) found some similar patterns. They reviewed participation in discussions over Senate confirmation of 15 Supreme Court, Appeals Court, District Court, and Justice Department nominations in the 1980s and 1990s. The numbers of participants they reported across the cases are as shown in Figure 4:

Figure 4. Lobbyist Involvement in Judicial Confirmation Debates



(Source: Caldeira, Hojnacki, and Wright 2000, 58)

The highest numbers of lobbyists in the judicial nominations study were, of course, the highly controversial cases of Supreme Court nominees Bork (145 groups active); Thomas (81 groups); Souter (53); Rehnquist (41); and Kennedy (39). Lower numbers of lobbyists were

involved in Department of Justice nominations and District and Appeals Court cases. Still, the general pattern is similar: most cases attract only a small proportion of the total potential audience of lobbyists, whereas a few cases generate a firestorm of lobbying activity. Certainly Justice Thomas and almost-Justice Bork would see it that way.

What is there about the process of lobbying that produces these seemingly general patterns? We have not yet gathered enough information about each of our cases to answer this question definitely, but we suspect it has to do partly with the size and scope of the issue at hand. Certainly it is reasonable to think that those issues costing more money, involving a greater departure from the status quo, and affecting more people will attract more attention from lobbyists. In Table A-1 we can see that the Defense Department Authorization bill, certainly an expensive measure affecting people in every state, attracted the most lobbyists. There can be no surprise that this issue was of concern to more lobbyists than some of the smaller issues we also studied. However, the judicial nomination study is interesting because it includes a number of Supreme Court nominees: Arguably, each seat on the Court is equal, so it is difficult to argue that the different scope of those decisions should naturally affect the patterns of lobbying. Rather, some conflict expansion process must be at the heart of the distribution of lobbying.

Conflict expansion processes are well understood. What has been rarely understood in the literature on lobbying is how commonly or uncommonly these types of processes occur. The distribution of lobbyists across a sample of issues, as we have laid it out here, helps shed light on this question. Perhaps the most troubling finding from this distribution is that the great majority of the issues seem to involve not too many lobbyists, but too few. For in the cases where few lobbyists are involved, we can be almost certain that few representatives of labor, citizens, or the nonprofit sector are heard. The heavenly chorus, indeed.

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Table A-1. A Sample of Lobbying Issues.

#	Short Title	Lobby-ists	Registra-tions
1	Welfare reform	162	306
2	Budget Reconciliation Act	673	1061
3	China's MFN status	100	146
4	Farm Bill	149	225
5	Fair Debt Collection Practices Act	90	121
6	Issues dealing with the possible auction of 1-888 numbers	4	5
7	Federal Aid Facility Privatization Act	11	12
8	Postmark Prompt Payment Act	26	28
9	Independent Contractor Tax Simplification Act	37	54
10	Defense appropriations	743	1512
11	Restrictions on illegal immigrants (HR 2202)	234	316
12	Copyright Protection Act	93	147
13	Public Health Service Act	10	12
14	Capital gains tax reform	36	45
15	Superfund	313	543
16	Sunsetting of the Interstate Commerce Commission	13	15
17	Savings in Construction Act	5	6
18	Temporary Duty Suspension Act	26	30
19	Amendments to the Federal Labor Standards Act to allow compensatory time off for overtime work	53	74
20	Anti-trust relief for health service providers	37	52
21	Electric utility restructuring issues	255	427
22	Bill to amend the tax code to prevent tobacco companies from deducting advertising expenses	15	19
23	Patient Right to Know Act	49	54
24	Securities Amendments (Capital Markets Deregulation and Liberalization Act)	66	90
25	Omnibus Appropriations Bill specifically pertaining to ports	2	2
26	Veterans' Health Care Eligibility Reform Act	15	22
27	Drug and Biological Products Reform Act	173	363
28	Truth in Employment Act	6	6
29	Defense Appropriations specifically pertaining to military depots	15	16
30	Defense Appropriations specifically pertaining to Uniformed Services Treatment Facilities	10	32
31	Adoption Promotion and Stability Act, specifically the adoption tax credit	20	22
32	Deep Water Outfall Treatment Systems Act	4	4

33	Omnibus Civilian Science Authorization Act	38	65
34	Small Business Job Protection Act	585	857
35	Pension simplification included in the Small Business Job Protection Act	35	48
36	Issues Pertaining to education assistance and the research and development tax credit in the Small Business Job Protection Act	40	53
37	Express carrier provision in the Federal Aviation Administration budget	93	127
38	Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act	28	40
39	Agriculture appropriations	200	285
40	Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations	186	238
41	Department of the Interior Appropriations	242	318
42	Indian provisions in Interior Appropriations	21	38
43	Transportation Appropriations	355	515
44	Labor/HHS/Education Appropriations	289	377
45	Education Appropriations	36	44
46	Departments of Commerce, Justice, and State, the Judiciary, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act	173	957
47	Sardis Lake Economic Development Project	1	1
48	Bill limiting state taxation of certain pension income (H.R. 394)	5	6
49	Bill providing remedies for government infringement of patents	3	4
50	Clean Water Act	169	217
51	Constructed conveyances amendments to the Clean Water Act	1	1
52	ERISA Targeted Health Insurance Reform Act	11	16
53	Coast Guard Appropriations	80	99
54	Health Insurance Reform Act	519	840
55	The Compassion Credit Act	1	1
56	Safe Drinking Act	139	214
57	Funding for a particular transit project	2	3
58	Ocean Shipping Reform Act	40	46
59	Medical Records Confidentiality Act	64	83
60	Hours-of-service rules for utility vehicles (Utility Consumer Service Improvement and Protection Act)	4	4
61	Small Business Investment Company Improvement Act	11	15
62	Appropriations for emergency telemedicine services	7	7
63	Federal Aviation Reauthorization Act	86	117
64	FAA reauthorization, specifically provisions dealing with port access for intercity buses	1	1
65	Multifamily and Assisted Housing Reform and Affordability Act	3	3
66	Regulatory Transition Act (a.k.a. Regulatory Freeze Act)	6	8
67	Implementation of Section 271 of the Federal Communications Act	3	5



68	Crime Bill, specifically law-enforcement funding	16	18
69	Voluntary Environmental Audit Protection Act	39	42
70	Telecommunications Act	251	472
71	Bank Insurance Fund and Depositor Protection Act provisions pertaining to tax treatment and FDIC status of certain retirement annuities	11	16
72	Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act	314	455
73	FCC Modernization Act, specifically mobile communications issues	19	21
74	Department of Energy Appropriations for natural gas programs	2	2
75	Mobile communications issues before the FCC	18	32
76	Contacts related to a particular HUD loan	1	6
77	Changes to Internal Revenue Code, Sec. 447, involving farm accounting	2	2
78	Mining law issues	33	75
79	Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act	206	277
80	General contacts concerning futures industry issues	3	10
81	Business license in China for registrant	1	1
82	Passenger Services Act	2	3
83	Food stamp amendments in the Farm Bill and Welfare Reform bill	8	9
84	Iran and Libya Sanctions Act	29	42
85	Internal Revenue Code and tax issues related to IRC sections 213, 265, and 7702A, also tax provisions in HR 3103 and HR 3448 (health-related)	224	300
86	Medicare reform pertaining to coordination and duplication of benefits	143	188
87	Reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973	5	5
88	International tax rules	69	79
89	Telecommunications reform as it pertains to FCC IB Doc #9559	4	4
90	American Automobile Labeling Act	10	14
91	Revisions to Section 936 of the Internal Revenue Code	30	56
92	Reuse of Fitzsimons Army Medical Center	1	1
93	Satellite Home Viewer Protection Act	13	25
94	MCI/FOX Direct Broadcast Satellite joint venture	2	2
95	Provisions in the Telecommunications Act for early surrender of analog channels	47	60
96	Cesium Waste Issues	1	4
97	EDA Discretionary Grant Outreach Clinic	1	1
98	Safety slides on cargo airplanes	1	2
99	Hearing aid compatibility rules at the FCC	3	3
100	EPA's brownsfield redevelopment initiatives	21	30
101	EPA's consideration of bonded product's delisting petition	1	1
102	National Science Foundation Appropriations	12	15
103	Department of Defense health affairs programs, specifically TRICARE	28	66

	and the Uniformed Services Treatment Facilities		
104	Issues pertaining to the taxation of governmental retirement plans	3	6
105	Federal tribal recognition for King Salmon	1	2
106	RCRA Corrective Action Subpart S, proposed rulemaking	1	1
107	Proposals to restructure trade functions of the executive branch agencies	6	6
108	Trade issues related to the New Zealand Dairy Board	2	3
109	Raw cane sugar tariffs	24	41
110	Air Force's evaluation of 600 gallon fuel tanks and Navy procurement of ITALD	2	2
111	Job training and placement issues	25	48
112	Civil aviation issues	90	121
113	Hazardous Materials Transportation Act	15	19
114	Federal Home Loan Bank System treatment of derivatives	3	3
115	Immigration reform	239	325
116	Immigration and refugees	276	429
117	Information Technology Agreement	18	20
118	Lifting ban on the export of Alaskan North Slope oil	5	6
119	State management of non-game species of wildlife	1	1
120	Student Loan Evaluation and Stabilization Act	5	11
121	Federal government procurement with respect to freight delivery	1	2
122	Airline license for a particular airport	1	1
123	Defense Production Act Amendments, Title III	2	7
124	Istook Amendment	8	8
125	FHWA rule on warranties	1	1
126	Hydroelectric Issues	18	26
127	Automobile manufacturing issues	19	42
128	IRS, Social Security Ruling to consolidate CALPERS pension program	1	1
129	Federal Deposit Insurance Amendments Act	87	121
130	Possible land exchanges involving land in Florida	1	3
131	Retail wheeling of electricity	9	16
132	Grazing fees on federal land	11	11
133	Senate confirmation of General Tilch	1	1
134	Labor, HHS Appropriations Bill pertaining to SAMHSA	6	7
135	Peanut price supports	15	23
136	Department of Energy Appropriations	214	265
137	Privatization of the TVA	31	46
138	Product liability issues	71	89
139	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Support Services	1	1
140	Issues pertaining to radionuclides in the Clean Air Act	2	2

141	Clean Air Act	144	210
142	Appropriations for overseas refugee assistance	1	1

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Source: Compiled from 1996 Lobby Disclosure Registrations, U.S. Senate.