

# Congressional and Presidential Effects on the Demand for Lobbying

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## Abstract

The authors show that the number of lobbyists active in a given issue area is driven not only by social mobilizations and economic trends but also by government activity. The effect of government spending is smaller than that of congressional interest as reflected in the number of hearings. Much lobbying is in response to regulations, not budgets. The authors augment their analysis by considering indicators of presidential activities. In areas where the president is traditionally active, presidential activity is shown to divert lobbying away from Congress, reducing overall lobbying levels. The authors find strong support for the congressional demand model of lobbying.

## Keywords

interest groups; lobbying; Lobby Disclosure Act; congressional hearings

Social movements, the mobilization of professional communities associated with economic growth and diversity, and rent seeking by interest groups have long been seen as important explanations for the growth of government. Economic and social groups have mobilized in various areas of political life, leading to the creation of new government programs, services, and protections. In a recent article, Leech and several colleagues showed that the reverse is also true (Leech et al. 2005; for extensions to the state level, see Baumgartner, Gray, and Lowery, forthcoming; Gray et al. 2005; Lowery et al. 2004). As government has become involved in a wider range of activities in diverse areas of the economy, interest group mobilization has been stimulated. Groups respond to the mobilization of government, just as government responds to the mobilization of groups.

Government stimulates the growth and mobilization of interest groups not only by direct subsidy and contracts, as Walker (1983, 1991) demonstrated, but also and on a much larger scale simply by expanding its range of activities. Campbell (2005), for example, showed that the Social Security program transformed the patterns of political mobilization of the entire elderly generation, significantly increasing their interest and engagement in politics, especially among those most dependent on their Social Security income. This mobilization followed, rather than preceded, the change in government policy. The effects go far beyond direct federal spending. Much more important are regulatory activities of all kinds. These encourage some groups to

mobilize to protect the government rules that help them, while other groups are mobilized to fight the level of government control in a given area. The more activity, the more groups of all kinds have reason to get involved in the policy process. Increased government activity in a broader range of economic and social sectors therefore has a stimulating, "demand" effect on the interest group community as a whole. In this article, we update and expand on the analysis conducted by Leech and colleagues (2005), confirming their results with a longer time series relating to the effects of congressional activities on group mobilization and adding a new analysis of the effects of presidential involvement in policy. The results strongly support a demand-side theory of group mobilization.

Our results show important interbranch dynamics in this process as presidential activities, measured alone, have a strong mobilizing effect on groups. However, these effects are heavily dependent on the issue domain. We distinguish

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between those areas where presidents have traditionally played a more important policy role and those where Congress has dominated or where powers have been more equally shared. Increased presidential actions in those domains where presidents dominate serve to depress congressional lobbying. Presidential actions in congressionally dominated domains have no effect beyond that of congressional activity.

### Driving the Lobbying Community

Political observers at points throughout the twentieth century and up to the present have exclaimed over the continuing growth of the U.S. interest group system (for a discussion, see Baumgartner and Leech 1998, 106.). With each passing year, the lobbying community in Washington grows larger, although not always growing at the same rate or in the same policy areas. Why does the lobbying community continue to expand in size? And how is this growth related to the parallel growth in the size of government that we have seen across the same period? What drives its growth and what encourages growth in some places rather than others? There are three, not necessarily mutually exclusive, possibilities. First, both growth in the lobbying community and growth in the size of government could be driven by external changes in the social-economic environment. This is the argument put forth by Truman (1951) in his discussion of “disturbances” and the ways in which these disruptions to the status quo encourage new groups to form or existing groups to take new actions. Changes in the economy or in society more generally would thus result in increases in the numbers of interest groups, since more groups would be needed to address issues arising from these changes. Although the underlying collective action problems and differential abilities to organize identified by Olson (1965) means that this response to disturbances will not apply equally to all groups, some subsequent research has found support for the idea that interest groups mobilize more easily when their interests are threatened (Hansen 1985, Walker 1991; but for a contrary finding see Lowery et al. 2005).

The second possibility is that the growth in the interest group community is driven by interest groups themselves as they organize to seek economic advantages in the form of rents from government (Buchanan and Tullock 1962, Buchanan 1980). In this scenario, entrepreneurs see that organizing a new interest group or mobilizing an existing group to lobby in Washington would be to their advantage (Salisbury 1969). The entrepreneurs work to help the potential groups overcome the collective action problems inherent in organizing, and the groups then seek economic advantages through the power of the political process rather than through the market. These advantages may be in the form of direct subsidies or in the form of protective regulations; in either case, the result would be a constant drive to increase the size of the interest group system.

The third possibility is that the growth in the interest group system comes in large part from forces within government itself. Government encourages interest group growth in part through direct patronage (Truman 1951, 86; Walker 1983, 1991; Campbell 2003), but more importantly simply by bringing issues to the table that groups may care about. In particular, it is government activity that determines in which policy areas growth occurs. While certainly some groups under some circumstances may come to Washington without encouragement from within government, the first two explanations fail to recognize that the policy-making process poses a second-level collective action problem. Even once an interest has successfully overcome the collective action problem inherent in becoming a viable interest group in the first place, there still are costs involved in the decision to lobby on any particular policy. While an interest group may *want* government officials to legislate or regulate in a particular policy area, expending resources is risky because not only might the effort be unsuccessful, but the issue itself might be virtually ignored.

The resource in shortest supply in Washington is attention (Jones and Baumgartner 2005, Baumgartner, Gray, and Lowery, forthcoming). At any given point in time, there is a potentially limitless supply of possible issues that elected officials and interest groups could be working on. Even once issues make it to the formal legislative agenda, they join more than eight thousand new bills in each two-year Congress, of which only about four hundred become law. Any given political actor can put time and effort into only a few. In this situation, it is in the best interest of interest groups to be working on an issue that has some likelihood of moving forward, rather than spinning their wheels and wasting time on an issue that no one else is likely to pay attention to.<sup>1</sup> This pattern of interest group behavior has been shown to play out empirically as well as theoretically; Baumgartner and Leech (2001) show that a majority of the lobbying effort is focused on a fraction of the issues. Most interest groups are spending time working on the same issues. The central question is which issues and which issue areas will attract enough actors to make it worthwhile to spend time and effort on them. Interest groups spend a vast amount of time monitoring their policy environments (Heinz et al. 1993), and one of the most important things they are looking for is an indication that the time is ripe for a particular issue. While political actors inside as well as outside government are making the same calculations, those inside government are much better placed to send convincing signals that an issue is about to move forward. The most straightforward way this can be accomplished is simply by holding a hearing on the topic.

Government activity in a policy area therefore lowers the risk that an interest group’s efforts will be for naught and thus lowers the cost to the interest group for participating. Most interest group activity is therefore expected to gravitate toward policy areas in which government is

already active. Interest groups do have a role in agenda setting, but that role very seldom drives the size of the interest group population beyond the existing status quo. A few interest groups may petition government, but large numbers will not join in unless there is a strong probability of action. Government activity draws the lobbyists to the issue by providing a coordination point for other political actors to focus on, thereby suggesting that interest group effort has a chance of success.

Given this pattern of interest group involvement, presidential activity should be of particular importance. Scholars have noted that presidents have a substantial ability to direct attention to a particular set of issues (Kingdon 1995; Baumgartner and Jones 1993). Major presidential initiatives do not always pass, but they virtually always attract substantial attention from members of Congress and other members of the political community. Studies of presidential State of the Union addresses, for example, indicate that presidents are able to set the public agenda, in the short run, in a limited number of policy areas, as well as in the long run for foreign policy issues (Cohen 1995; Hill 1998). These annual calls to Congress to act on various proposals or policy areas should therefore exert an impact on lobbying activity. In addition, presidents often call on representatives of interest groups to serve on advisory commissions that provide legitimacy for presidential policy positions (Chin and Lindquist 2004), and organized interests with close ties to the administration are called on to help provide support for those positions by lobbying Congress and otherwise mobilizing around the issue (Peterson 1990).

We thus predict that levels of lobbying will increase as government activity increases, and we expect those increases to be issue specific. We link data collected from federal lobbying disclosure reports to indicators of congressional and presidential activities drawn from the Policy Agendas Project ([www.policyagendas.org](http://www.policyagendas.org)). The Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 requires lobbyists to report their activities in each of seventy-four specific issue areas (later expanded to seventy-six domains). Leech et al. (2005) demonstrated that fifty-six of these issue areas could be linked to the topic coding system used in the Policy Agendas Project, covering about 85 percent of the lobbying reports. We follow this same procedure here, updating the earlier analysis from just four time points to sixteen six-month periods from 1996 to 2003. Since the publication of the earlier article, new data resources relating to presidential activities have also become available through the Policy Agendas Project. These include a summary of the topic discussed in each sentence of the president's annual State of the Union address and a data set consisting of every executive order of the president. These data resources are coded by topic category using the identical system as the congressional hearings. We provide further detail on the data sets and measures in the next section.

## Congress, the President, and the Demand for Lobbying

Congressional hearings can be used as a general indicator of the intensity of interest or activity in an issue area. Hearings may relate to legislation, to bureaucratic oversight, or simply to information gathering. In any case, interest is rarely neutral; it means that Congress is actively considering some new legislation, overseeing the activities of a bureaucratic agency, or directing attention to a policy area. Since hearings are an indicator of congressional involvement in a policy area, we expect that hearings should have a driving effect on lobbying activity—the more hearings, the greater the number of lobbyists who will register. Note that speaking or testifying at the hearings themselves will not have any direct impact on our dependent variable, since lobbyists are not required to register if their activities are limited to testifying. Rather, the increases in lobbying occur because hearings indicate the level of government activity in the issue area more generally.

Presidential actions are expected to affect the mobilization of lobbyists as well. The number of statements on a topic in a given State of the Union address is used as one indicator of presidential activity. In State of the Union addresses, presidents list a number of agenda items for congressional consideration. While the argument has been made that the State of the Union address does not provide an exhaustive expression of the president's agenda (Rudalevige 2002), the address is generally viewed as a good indicator of presidential priorities. The number of executive orders issued on a given topic in a given year is a second indicator of presidential activity. Research indicates that executive orders have gradually evolved from a primarily administrative tool to a policy-making tool; they have become a means for presidents to take control of certain policy areas by acting first and relying on the inability of Congress to respond quickly and avoid its collective action problems (Mayer 2001). Howell (2003) has argued that as Congress becomes more fragmented, presidents have more freedom to act unilaterally and issue more significant executive orders. We have created an index of presidential activity by combining the number of executive orders and the amount of attention to the issue in the State of the Union speech using Stata's factor command.<sup>2</sup> The resulting variable allows a single indicator of presidential activity.

One caveat to our analysis of presidential activities is that the greatest emphasis in the Lobbying Disclosure Act is on congressional activities. Virtually all congressional lobbying activity must be reported, whereas the definition of "covered officials" within the executive branch includes only more senior members, down to the level of undersecretaries, assistant directors, and members of commissions, such as the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission. As a result, much of the routine contact

between lobbyists and staff members in executive agencies need not be reported in the lobbying registration reports. Nonetheless, executive orders requiring agency action would virtually always include actions by agency officials in top policy-making positions. Interest group activities and their lobbying reports should reflect that tendency.

Table 1 presents average annual levels of congressional and presidential activity across the fifty-six issue areas. We distinguish in the table between presidential domains and others.

Presidential activity tends to be focused on just a few areas: defense, health care, and foreign affairs as well as civil rights, education, and the other issues listed in at the top of the table. Those issue areas that have a mean of 1.0 or greater on the index of presidential activity are considered presidential domains. Theoretically, these areas of high presidential activity can be explained by three overlapping factors: a constitutional comparative advantage, the implementation of national security, and pet policy projects that presidents carry over from their campaigns. The commander-in-chief role gives presidents more autonomy in defense and foreign affairs (Wildavsky 1964). National security concerns encompass both international and domestic threats, which include law enforcement and civil rights and civil liberties issues. During the time period of study, 1996 to 2004, the two presidents who held office pushed hard and took the lead on their personal policy objectives. For Clinton, this was health care and welfare. George W. Bush entered office with education as a top priority, but then had defense and foreign affairs thrust upon him with the September 11th attacks.

Presidents speak a lot about the environment, trade, and taxation in their State of the Union addresses, and Table 1 shows that these areas also have high scores on our index of presidential activity because of this. We do not include these as part of the presidential domain, however, because these areas do not meet our threshold. Additionally, they are not areas where presidents have autonomy over Congress. Whereas we expect that presidential activity *in presidential domains* will have a significant impact on lobbying (decreasing the congressional focus of the lobbying effort), we expect *no impact* of presidential actions in those areas that are outside of the presidential domain. Therefore, in the analysis below, we test two models, one including the presidential activity index, and the other where we interact this with a dummy variable scored 1 for presidential domains and 0 for other areas. Effectively, this simply substitutes a value of 0 for the presidential activity index in all nonpresidential domains.

Congressional actions are widely dispersed throughout the fifty-six areas, as one would expect because of the committee structure. However, there is considerably more attention in Congress to many of those areas also of concern to the president. Of course, both presidential and congressional actions vary not only by issue area but also over time, as we discuss below.

Tables 2 and 3 present the number of registered groups (Table 2) and hired lobbyists (Table 3). Note that all our analyses are based on fifty-six issue areas and sixteen time periods, so there is variation both across domains and over time.

The mobilization of interest groups in Washington differs substantially by issue area. An average of six hundred interest organizations lobbying on their own behalf and 1,100 lobbying firms hired to represent interest organizations register in each six-month period in the area of taxation, but only eight organizations and fourteen hired firms work in the area of District of Columbia affairs. This is unremarkable, as some issue domains are substantively much more important than others, involving much more government spending and affecting more Americans. The two types of variance apparent in our data actually present us with an opportunity and a challenge. To the extent that all the variability is from one issue area to another, this may reflect the substantive importance of the domains and the relative mobilization of social groups for the long term. These factors are likely to vary relatively little from year to year, however. To the extent that we observe variation in the mobilization of lobbyists over time, this cannot be attributed to such slowly changing factors as demographic or economic trends. Controlling for the amount of activity in the previous time period effectively allows us to isolate the impact of changes in government activity on the mobilization of groups, other things held equal.

We take advantage of the variation not only across issue domains but also over time. The table therefore presents the standard deviations associated with the average levels of lobbying mobilization and the coefficient of variation, which is simply the mean value divided by the standard deviation. Series where the mean is much greater than the variance will have a very high coefficient of variation; series where the variance is higher than the mean would have scores below 1. These figures make clear that while there is some variation over time, the bulk of the variance is across issue areas, not over time.

The level of inertia in lobby registrations is extraordinary. Leech et al. (2005) showed this in their Tables 1 and 2 and in the related appendix tables to their original article. For organizations lobbying on their own behalf, a simple regression of the number of registrations predicted by the number in the previous time period (with a constant term) shows an  $R^2$  of 0.98. For organizations lobbying on the behalf of clients, there is greater variation; the simple regression produces an  $R^2$  of 0.84. The data in Tables 2 and 3 show similar characteristics. Looking at the last row shows that the average issue area has an average of 113 groups and that this number is associated with a standard deviation of only 18; there is very little variation around the average value. Hired lobbying firms show an average of 234 and a standard deviation of 80, indicating not only much greater use of hired lobbyists than in-house work but also much more variability over time.

**Table 1.** Congressional and Presidential Activities by Issue Area

Issue area	Hearings	Executive orders	State of the Union	Presidential activity index
<b>Part A: Presidential domains</b>				
Foreign relations	81.2	2.9	61.6	4.54
Government issues	86.9	4.0	8.4	2.60
Defense	44.5	2.6	19.0	2.33
Health care	49.1	1.3	27.4	2.01
Education	22.8	0.5	33.2	1.83
Labor issues	30.8	0.9	16.9	1.32
Law enforcement	39.4	0.8	18.5	1.30
Welfare	14.9	0.6	19.4	1.27
Civil rights/liberties	11.6	1.1	10.4	1.07
<b>Part B: Nonpresidential domains</b>				
Environment	28.9	1.1	7.7	0.98
Trade	12.6	0.9	8.1	0.90
Natural resources	36.6	1.1	4.4	0.79
Transportation	29.8	1.1	0.4	0.60
Taxation/Internal Revenue Service code	8.6	0.6	11.1	0.56
Medical research	10.4	0.6	3.4	0.49
Computer industry	10.5	0.5	2.8	0.43
Veterans	14.7	0.2	5.9	0.41
Science/Technology	11.9	0.4	4.1	0.39
Energy/Nuclear	22.8	0.4	2.6	0.35
Alcohol	11.3	0.3	3.5	0.33
Family issues	3.9	0.1	6.3	0.33
Indian affairs	16.6	0.5	0.1	0.26
Immigration	8.2	0.2	3.1	0.24
Urban development	6.1	0.2	2.7	0.23
Medicare/Medicaid	9.9	0.0	3.9	0.19
Small business	15.3	0.2	1.2	0.19
Housing	8.7	0.2	1.6	0.18
Retirement	5.7	0.0	3.4	0.16
Agriculture	19.4	0.1	1.8	0.15
Aviation	11.1	0.2	0.1	0.14
Communications	4.9	0.2	0.0	0.13
Trucking/Shipping	6.4	0.2	0.0	0.13
Aerospace	5.9	0.1	1.1	0.12
Clean air/water	7.7	0.0	2.5	0.12
Gaming/Gambling	1.9	0.2	0.0	0.10
Waste	4.4	0.1	1.4	0.10
Tobacco	0.9	0.1	0.6	0.09
District of Columbia	6.9	0.1	0.4	0.08
Pharmacy	2.6	0.0	1.8	0.08
Unemployment	2.3	0.0	1.5	0.07
Disaster management	3.3	0.1	0.0	0.06
Railroads	3.0	0.1	0.0	0.06
Food industry	1.8	0.1	0.2	0.04
Minting/Money	4.5	0.1	0.1	0.04
Copyright/Patent	4.8	0.1	0.0	0.03
Postal	2.6	0.1	0.0	0.03
Finance/Investments	11.1	0.0	0.5	0.02
Banking	8.2	0.0	0.2	0.01
Commodities	4.9	0.0	0.2	0.01
Bankruptcy	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.00
Consumer issues	3.0	0.0	0.0	0.00
Fuel/Gas/Oil	6.8	0.0	0.0	0.00
Insurance	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.00
Roads/Highways	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.00
Telecommunications	5.7	0.0	0.0	0.00
Travel/Tourism	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.00

The table shows average numbers of activities per six-month period for sixteen time periods from 1996 to 2004.

**Table 2.** The Distribution of Registered Interest Groups in Each Issue Area

Issue area	Mean group registration	Standard deviation	Coefficient of variation	Minimum	Maximum
Taxation/Internal Revenue Service code	603.6	54.0	11.18	512	687
Health care	475.5	60.3	7.89	339	541
Trade	356.8	27.5	12.97	319	407
Environment	291.8	36.7	7.95	223	377
Labor issues	283.4	33.2	8.54	240	381
Medicare/Medicaid	255.3	48.8	5.23	181	347
Energy/Nuclear	234.1	73.1	3.20	146	333
Transportation	225.4	39.2	5.75	168	311
Education	214.8	46.1	4.66	147	278
Defense	192.3	30.9	6.22	150	254
Government issues	175.3	19.6	8.94	135	223
Agriculture	158.2	23.0	6.88	120	197
Clean air/water	148.7	19.7	7.55	125	199
Telecommunications	145.1	15.2	9.55	117	178
Finance/Investments	135.4	15.8	8.57	107	161
Copyright/Patent	133.5	13.4	9.56	117	160
Immigration	131.9	31.2	4.23	69	177
Science/Technology	124.6	18.2	6.85	88	153
Banking	121.5	8.0	15.19	107	135
Insurance	121.4	24.2	5.02	86	171
Foreign relations	109.3	14.3	7.64	92	132
Retirement	107.1	34.4	3.11	53	164
Consumer issues	100.9	8.9	11.34	84	119
Natural resources	92.9	11.2	8.29	70	121
Law enforcement	91.6	15.1	6.07	67	114
Medical research	84.4	12.6	6.70	62	104
Bankruptcy	79.8	24.0	3.33	17	110
Communications	74.1	12.3	6.02	53	97
Food industry	74.0	9.4	7.87	53	89
Aviation	73.1	10.1	7.24	59	101
Housing	66.4	3.2	20.75	62	71
Waste	61.9	24.6	2.52	31	126
Civil rights/liberties	61.6	8.3	7.42	47	77
Computer industry	60.6	10.8	5.61	40	81
Small business	58.8	10.0	5.88	45	79
Fuel/Gas/Oil	50.7	6.1	8.31	40	62
Welfare	50.6	18.6	2.72	30	95
Railroads	48.9	8.2	5.96	32	58
Pharmacy	48.0	11.1	4.32	31	68
Veterans	47.0	12.3	3.82	32	73
Family issues	45.1	4.3	10.49	37	52
Tobacco	39.4	16.5	2.39	24	85
Postal	38.1	10.2	3.74	23	62
Aerospace	32.6	7.8	4.18	20	45
Disaster management	32.3	10.3	3.14	17	57
Trucking/Shipping	31.9	4.1	7.78	23	39
Roads/Highways	30.9	6.6	4.68	20	41
Alcohol	24.9	4.0	6.23	17	32
Indian affairs	23.3	5.5	4.24	15	31
Gaming/Gambling	14.8	5.1	2.90	4	22
Travel/Tourism	9.9	2.4	4.13	6	15
Unemployment	9.3	3.8	2.45	3	17
Urban development	8.3	1.6	5.19	6	12
District of Columbia	7.9	1.9	4.16	5	11
Commodities	7.4	1.9	3.89	4	11
Minting/Money	3.6	1.7	2.12	2	7
Total	113.0	17.7	6.48	2	687

**Table 3.** The Distribution of Registered Lobbying Firms across Issue Areas

Issue area abbreviation	Mean lobbyist registration	Standard deviation	Coefficient of variation	Minimum	Maximum
Taxation/Internal Revenue Service code	1114.6	173.8	6.41	844	1551
Defense	1036.3	383.5	2.70	563	1611
Health care	937.4	297.2	3.15	540	1593
Transportation	811.2	291.3	2.78	469	1277
Environment	630.3	214.6	2.94	520	923
Trade	616.8	199.6	3.09	441	1093
Energy/Nuclear	526.8	197.5	2.67	296	904
Medicare/Medicaid	521.9	168.5	3.10	270	842
Education	505.5	241.8	2.09	238	1007
Telecommunications	442.4	139.8	3.16	255	874
Government issues	344.9	153.2	2.25	209	801
Agriculture	331.1	91.2	3.63	212	578
Natural resources	311.1	79.5	3.91	214	515
Aviation	280.9	139.3	2.02	154	747
Finance/Investments	269.4	115.9	2.32	139	580
Banking	257.8	46.9	5.50	208	410
Indian affairs	245.1	89.0	2.75	148	467
Labor issues	224.0	63.3	3.54	164	421
Clean air/water	218.8	43.7	5.01	166	324
Housing	204.4	69.6	2.94	123	405
Science/Technology	195.9	78.4	2.50	106	405
Copyright/Patent	191.9	50.6	3.79	161	362
Law enforcement	187.4	84.7	2.21	102	450
Communications	169.3	43.5	3.89	112	243
Medical research	166.9	56.0	2.98	106	330
Foreign relations	158.9	67.2	2.36	96	371
Insurance	152.9	71.0	2.15	86	329
Computer industry	133.1	58.2	2.29	52	288
Consumer issues	121.8	30.9	3.94	90	221
Food industry	117.7	41.0	2.87	78	249
Urban development	114.6	41.5	2.76	61	213
Fuel/Gas/Oil	108.9	44.2	2.46	56	235
Immigration	105.2	27.7	3.80	69	172
Waste	96.7	26.4	3.66	67	159
Tobacco	93.7	36.8	2.55	51	192
Roads/Highways	93.3	45.0	2.07	49	226
Gaming/Gambling	92.2	38.8	2.38	49	208
Pharmacy	89.3	32.6	2.74	58	186
Railroads	88.8	32.7	2.72	64	185
Retirement	85.3	41.8	2.04	32	196
Bankruptcy	84.9	32.6	2.60	17	129
Aerospace	81.4	41.2	1.98	45	194
Disaster management	81.0	47.0	1.72	38	226
Postal	67.4	36.0	1.87	35	193
Small business	64.7	18.0	3.59	42	109
Welfare	61.1	22.0	2.78	39	112
Alcohol	43.1	12.4	3.48	27	78
Travel/Tourism	43.0	18.5	2.32	26	106
Veterans	38.5	16.8	2.29	12	70
Trucking/Shipping	34.6	17.2	2.01	22	95
Civil rights/liberties	27.6	10.3	2.68	14	50
Minting/Money	22.6	14.2	1.59	12	66
Family issues	15.7	6.2	2.53	8	30
District of Columbia	14.0	11.8	1.19	6	54
Commodities	6.7	3.1	2.16	2	13
Unemployment	2.8	2.0	1.40	0	8
Total	233.6	79.6	2.83	0	1611

These characteristics suggest several things. First, organizations lobbying on their own behalf register in a given issue area because they have interests there and they are highly likely to remain interested, and registered, in subsequent periods. Second, organizations with fleeting or temporary interests in a field where they are not routinely involved will hire a firm to represent them in that area rather than establish their own presence there. Third, the small amount of remaining variance over time makes it very difficult statistically to find significant coefficients, once lagged registrations are included. Finally, there is greater statistical opportunity to explain the behavior of paid lobbyists rather than organizations lobbying on their own behalf, since there is greater period-to-period variation there.

## Analysis

Having explained the structure of our data, we move to the analysis. We have several simple hypotheses. First, we expect to confirm the previous results by Leech and colleagues when using our extended time series. Specifically,

*Hypothesis 1:* Congressional hearings mobilize lobbyists.

*Hypothesis 2:* Federal spending mobilizes lobbyists.

*Hypothesis 3:* The effects of Hypothesis 1 will be greater than those of Hypothesis 2.

Furthermore, these results should hold with controls for each other as well as with controls for the level of lobbying in the same issue area in the previous time period.

Controls for the amount of lobbying in the previous six-month period effectively control for a range of alternative hypotheses, including virtually all social and economic factors, as such things as demographic shifts, income, and social movement mobilizations are not likely to change much during any six-month period. Any long-term impacts of such things as the greater mobilization of professionals rather than the unemployed are already reflected in the number of groups lobbying in the previous period. The huge variation across the different issue areas certainly reflects the bias in the ability of different social groups to mobilize in Washington. Our focus here is to know whether short-term variability in congressional actions affects the mobilization of Washington lobbyists. There is no question that longer-run social trends also matter. These are incorporated into our analysis by use of the lagged dependent variable in our models, and therefore our analysis can be considered one of asking whether congressional actions affect the mobilization of groups after the long-run effects of social mobilizations have been taken into account.

Finally, we add new variables here to the earlier analysis. We expect the following:

*Hypothesis 4:* Presidential actions in presidential domains will cause a shift away from congressional focus in lobbying.

*Hypothesis 5:* In areas outside of presidential domains, presidential actions will have no effect on the mobilization of lobbyists, controlling for congressional actions.

Finally, these hypotheses suggest that inclusion of presidential activities into the model will show an increased impact of congressional actions in those areas outside of the presidential domain. In effect, the previous models may have underestimated the impact of congressional actions on lobbying activity because they did not control for lobbying directed at the executive branch. Since this lobbying is likely to be focused on some issue domains more than others, including presidential activities in the model should increase the estimated impact of Congress in nonpresidential domains.

*Hypothesis 6:* The effect of congressional actions on the mobilization of lobbying in nonpresidential domains will be higher when we control for presidential actions than in a model without presidential actions included.

First, we replicate the results shown by Leech and her colleagues (2005). Tables 4 through 7 present these results.

Table 4 shows these results for lobbying organizations (e.g., organizations lobbying on their own behalf in Washington), and Table 6 shows the results for lobbying firms (e.g., hired lobbyists working on behalf of clients). Models 1 through 4 in each table replicate the original findings virtually exactly.<sup>3</sup> Model 5 then drops the variable for firms from the original model. The number of firms active in the same area of the economy was included in the original analysis as a measure of social or economic supply, since sectors with greater economic activity might generate more lobbying activity. The original analysis showed that this variable was insignificant in its impact when previous lobbying activity was included, as model 4 indicates in both tables. As inclusion of the firms variable caused a significant loss of data, because the data were not available for all fifty-six issue areas and cannot be collected for each of the sixteen six-month time periods we include in our extended analysis, we omit this variable in our extension of the original work. As model 5 shows, there is no substantively important difference in the results between model 4 and model 5, so we proceed without the firms variable.

Table 5 presents the full analysis of the extended time series now available. The first model shows that twenty additional hearings in any issue area (that is, about one standard deviation) can be expected to result in about thirty-six more groups registering to lobby in that area. Controlling



**Table 4.** The Effects of Congressional Activity on Lobbying Activity by Organizations

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Hearings	1.67*** (0.43)	1.652*** (0.58)	2.64** (1.07)	0.25* (0.15)	0.29* (0.17)
Federal spending (in billions)		0.004 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.02)	0.02*** (0.01)	0.02*** (0.01)
Firms			$3.32e^{-04}$ *** ( $5.03e^{-05}$ )	$3.33e^{-05}$ ( $2.84e^{-05}$ )	
Organizations, $t-1$				0.98*** (0.05)	1.00*** (0.04)
Intercept	83.41*** (5.10)	98.951*** (8.58)	49.19*** (13.55)	-1.70 (1.16)	-1.28 (1.26)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.07	0.07	0.42	0.98	0.98
N, T	N = 56, T = 4	N = 26, T = 4	N = 21, T = 2	N = 21, T = 2	N = 26, T = 3
Observations	224	104	42	42	78

Coefficients computed using ordinary least squares with panel-corrected standard errors, which appear in parentheses.  
\* $p < .10$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .01$  (two-tailed tests).

**Table 5.** The Effects of Congressional Activity on Lobbying Activity by Organizations: Extending the Original Model, 1996-2004

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Hearings	1.88*** (0.21)	2.00*** (0.04)	0.18*** (0.062)
Federal spending (in billions)		0.05*** (0.01)	0.01* (0.004)
Organizations, $t-1$			0.98*** (0.015)
Intercept	86.80*** (3.02)	96.82*** (4.87)	-0.21 (1.103)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.10	0.14	0.98
N, T	N = 56, T = 16	N = 26, T = 16	N = 26, T = 14
Observations	896	416	364

Coefficients computed using ordinary least squares with panel-corrected standard errors, which appear in parentheses.  
\* $p < .10$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .01$  (two-tailed tests).

for the level of federal spending in the issue area causes the number of observations to drop substantially (because we do not have spending data for each of the fifty-six issue areas where we have hearings and lobby registration information), but the substantive impact remains virtually the same: forty more groups for every twenty hearings and a small effect for spending. For each \$100 billion in spending, we would expect to see an increase of about five registered interest groups. This effect is statistically significant now that it is based on many more observations than in the earlier published analysis. However, overall federal spending across the entire budget was less than \$2.5 trillion in 2003, so this effect within any given issue area would substantively be related to at most only a few more group

registrations. Finally, model 3 is the most appropriate and accurate model, controlling as it does for the number of groups registered to lobby in the previous time period. Here we see significant coefficients both for hearings and for spending. Comparing the results from Tables 4 and 5 shows that our extended time coverage confirms the earlier analysis. Some of the coefficients change in size, but all the effects are now significant and the analysis is based on a much larger empirical base. Considering our discussion earlier about the high levels of inertia in the lobbying patterns we observe, the significant effects we observe in model 3 are very strong. Controlling for how many lobbyists were active in the previous period, we see a significant effect for increased or decreased numbers of hearings on the number of lobbyists registered in that time period.

Table 6 shows an identical series of results for hired contract lobbyists rather than for organizations lobbying on their own behalf, as in Table 4. These results are stronger than those for the groups analyzed in Table 4 because there are greater numbers of contract lobbyists, with more variation from area to area and from time period to time period. In any case, the results largely reconfirm the original analysis but put these findings on a much more substantial empirical footing.<sup>4</sup>

We turn now to an analysis of the ways in which presidential and congressional activities affect the mobilization of lobbyists. Tables 8 and 9 present the results. The tables are identical to the final models presented in Tables 5 and 7 but with presidential actions now added to the model.

Table 8 presents the full analysis of the extended time series for organizations with the addition of our newly developed indicator of presidential activity. We include as model 1 in both cases the results from the final models presented in Tables 5 and 7, which did not include the presidential variable. Furthermore, we include only the

**Table 6.** The Effects of Congressional Activity on Lobbying Activity by Firms

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Hearings	2.90*** (0.59)	3.25*** (0.66)	6.80*** (2.07)	1.96** (0.80)	3.59*** (1.04)
Federal spending (in billions)		0.21*** (0.02)	0.11** (0.05)	0.03** (0.01)	0.16*** (0.02)
Firms			4.15e <sup>-04</sup> *** (8.66e <sup>-05</sup> )	-2.54e <sup>-05</sup> (2.40e <sup>-05</sup> )	
Organizations, t - 1				0.92*** (0.06)	1.33*** (0.09)
Intercept	132.34** (6.38)	147.67*** (11.00)	57.34** (25.55)	-15.15*** (5.72)	-11.32 (7.80)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.07	0.10	0.43	0.98	0.69
N, T	N = 56, T = 4	N = 26, T = 4	N = 21, T = 2	N = 21, T = 2	N = 26, T = 3
Observations	224	104	42	42	78

Coefficients computed using ordinary least squares with panel-corrected standard errors, which appear in parentheses.  
\*p < .10. \*\*p < .05. \*\*\*p < .01 (two-tailed tests).

**Table 7.** The Effects of Congressional Activity on Lobbying Activity by Firms: Extending the Original Model, 1996-2004

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Hearings	5.27*** (0.67)	5.79*** (0.78)	2.05*** (0.67)
Federal spending (in billions)		0.31*** (0.04)	0.05** (0.02)
Organizations, t - 1			0.91*** (0.07)
Intercept	160.26*** (12.90)	171.73*** (19.61)	-6.40 (12.22)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.14	0.19	0.86
N, T	N = 56, T = 16	N = 26, T = 16	N = 26, T = 14
Observations	896	416	364

Coefficients computed using ordinary least squares with panel-corrected standard errors, which appear in parentheses.  
\*p < .10. \*\*p < .05. \*\*\*p < .01 (two-tailed tests).

interactive term for presidential actions. This allows us to distinguish those issue domains where the president is a major policy player from those that are more Congress focused. This improved specification has several interesting impacts on the coefficients. First, the estimated impact of the hearings variable increases substantially in each case (from .18 to .30 for organizations and from 2.05 to 3.14 in the model for firms). That is, hearings generate much greater mobilization by lobbyists than we had previously estimated, for those areas that are dominated by Congress. While theory leads us to expect that the overall impact of presidential and congressional policy-making activities will be to stimulate greater lobbying, we see these effects most strongly in the areas dominated by Congress. Some of the apparent depressive effect of presidential actions may be because of the legislative branch focus of the disclosure requirements under the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995. Lobbying reports are

**Table 8.** The Effect of Executive Activity on Lobbying by Organizations

Variable	Model 1	Model 2
Presidential attention in presidential domains		-2.91*** (1.08)
Hearings	0.18*** (0.062)	0.30*** (0.09)
Federal spending (in billions)	0.01* (0.004)	0.01*** (0.00)
Organizations, t - 1	0.98*** (0.015)	0.98*** (0.02)
Intercept	-0.21 (1.103)	-0.93 (1.16)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.98	0.98
N, T	N = 26, T = 14	N = 26, T = 14
Observations	364	364

Coefficients computed using ordinary least squares with panel-corrected standard errors, which appear in parentheses.  
\*p < .10. \*\*p < .05. \*\*\*p < .01 (two-tailed tests).

systematically lower in those areas where the president traditionally is active and increasingly so in those periods where there is heightened presidential policy-making activity. This could occur as lobbyists shift their actions to the executive branch, where much of that activity need not be reported under current requirements. In those areas where the president is a substantial player, increases in presidential activity have a substantial depressive effect on congressional lobbying, as the large and strongly significant coefficients for these terms show. We present more complete results of these models in Appendix Tables A1 and A2 (see appendix tables at <http://prq.sagepub.com/supplemental/>). In these tables, we present the presidential activity variable across the board as well as interacted with the presidential domain dummy variable. Furthermore, we present those variables without including the hearings and spending variables to show their direct effects. Results are highly robust.

**Table 9.** The Effect of Executive Activity on Lobbying by Firms

Variable	Model 1	Model 2
Presidential attention in presidential domains		-27.24** (10.86)
Hearings	2.05*** (0.67)	3.14*** (0.95)
Federal spending (in billions)	0.05** (0.02)	0.07*** (0.02)
Organizations, $t - 1$	0.91*** (0.07)	0.90*** (0.06)
Intercept	-6.40 (12.22)	-13.97 (12.97)
$R^2$	0.86	0.87
$N, T$	$N = 26,$ $T = 14$	$N = 26,$ $T = 14$
Observations	364	364

Coefficients computed using ordinary least squares with panel-corrected standard errors, which appear in parentheses.

\* $p < .10$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .01$  (two-tailed tests).

## Conclusion

Leech et al. (2005) argued that group mobilization is often in response to, rather than the cause of, government activities. While social and economic mobilization affect the development of the interest group universe, so too does government activity itself. Recent work has confirmed and extended these findings. Baumgartner, Gray, and Lowery (forthcoming) found that congressional hearings stimulated subsequent interest group mobilization in the state capitals. That is, even controlling for state legislative activities, actions in Congress caused groups to mobilize in those same issue areas in the fifty states. Clearly, federal government activities send strong cues to interested constituencies. In response to increased levels of federal activities, affected interests mobilize to fight off the new federal incursions, move to encourage the activity, or attempt to modify the proposals before they are completed. In any case, we see that state action affects group mobilization, not only the reverse.

In this article, we confirm and extend the original findings by Leech et al. (2005) in three ways. One is simply by adding additional time points and more observations, showing more robust and stronger findings than in the original. With a substantial number of additional observations now available, we show that the first findings are clearly robust. Second, we clarified the earlier model by dropping the long-term hearings variable where a lagged dependent variable was also used. Third, we have explored the impact of presidential involvement. Our treatment here is certainly not the last word on this topic. Our measure of lobbying activity is more accurate for congressional lobbying activities than it is for presidential or executive branch lobbying. We have not presented a full model of presidential-legislative relations. But we have found some intriguing results suggesting that presidential activities affect interest group mobilization only to the extent to which they are filtered through the impact of the president on Congress. Interest groups clearly respond differently

to congressional and presidential actions depending on the policy domain. Presidential attention in policy domains where Congress has clear and widely understood autonomy has no effect on lobbying actions beyond that of hearings themselves. Presidential actions in those domains traditionally reserved for greater executive branch authority, on the other hand, depress congressional lobbying because they divert lobbying energy away from Congress and toward the executive. Congressional actions in areas within traditional congressional control stimulate substantially more lobbying mobilization by both groups and hired lobbyists than Leech and colleagues had previously estimated. By including the measure of presidential actions, we improve our model of congressional lobbying. The substantive impact of our model including presidential actions in the model on congressional mobilization of lobbying is that congressional actions have an even stronger impact on mobilizing lobbyists than we had previously estimated, but only in those areas where Congress dominates. Where the president is an important player, his actions actually decrease congressional lobbying.

Seventy years ago, Ernest Griffith (1939) noted the importance of communities of professionals in and around government dealing with the many details of public policy. His idea of “policy whirlpools” became part of the standard understanding of the policy-making process and remains relevant today. Over fifty years ago, David Truman’s (1951) view of the mobilization of interests through social disruptions generated a new view of the dynamics of social mobilization and interest group activity in America. Since this time, scholars from Olson (1965) to Salisbury (1984; Heinz et al. 1993) to Walker (1983, 1991) have made this story more complete. More recently, a number of scholars have addressed the impact of large new government programs on the development of citizen mobilization surrounding those issues. These studies have focused on war-related pensions (Skocpol 1992), the Social Security program (Campbell 2005), and the GI Bill (Mettler 2005). In this article, like those that have preceded it (Leech et al. 2005; Baumgartner, Gray, and Lowery, forthcoming), we add to this growing perspective. What we have shown does not rule out the possibility of growth in the interest group system being caused by societal changes or by the desires of interest groups themselves. In fact, we should expect all three forces to have an impact on interest group populations. What the analysis does show, however, is the importance of government action as a mobilizing force in interest group activity. By providing a coordination point where there is a higher probability of a positive payoff, it encourages interest groups to mobilize around that issue rather than others. The level of government attention explains changes in interest group lobbying more than does government spending or the size of the economy in that area. Although government and the group system coevolve, we find that the influence of government on interest groups is stronger than the other way around.

The fact that presidential actions have a substantial depressive effect on congressional lobbying also suggests that the goals of government transparency so commonly addressed in public speeches by public officials would be greatly enhanced by a revision of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 to expand greatly the number of “covered officials” in the executive branch. Our evidence strongly suggests that much is happening there that is not documented by the limited public disclosure of executive branch contacts now required by the law.

### Authors' Note:

All data and related files used in this article are available at <http://lobby.la.psu.edu/related.html>.

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### Notes

- In this regard, lobbying for earmarks and other private benefits differs from lobbying for collective goods that involve changes in public policy. Earmark grants may require as little as the activities of one interest group and one active member of Congress to come to fruition. Although growing and the subject of great attention and concern, earmarks still are a relatively small portion of the federal budget—less than 1 percent, according to the Congressional Research Service—and are a correspondingly small portion of what interest groups in Washington spend most of their time on (Baumgartner, Gray, and Lowery, forthcoming).
- The index was created using Stata's factor command with unrotated principal components; each variable loaded on the principal factor with a value of .8156. The index then had a mean of 0 and a minimum value of  $-0.4981271$ . For ease of interpretation, we added this number to all values so that the index of presidential activity would have a minimum value of 0 corresponding to no presidential activities. The index equals  $0.5507736 \times \text{executive orders} + 0.0473831 \times \text{statements in the State of the Union}$ .
- The Policy Agendas Project released updated budgetary figures since the original Leech et al. (2005) article was published. Using the new Policy Agendas Project budget data, figures are reported in 2003 dollars rather than 2000 dollars as in the original. In addition, a small number of budgetary categories were adjusted in the new data set. None of this affects the replication of the original results in any significant manner. Just one coefficient shifts by even one-tenth of one decimal place: In model 3 of Table 4, the coefficient for hearings is 2.64; it was 2.63 in the original.
- We do not replicate the analyses presented in Table 4 in the original publication. These used the number of hearings in the previous ten years rather than only in the contemporaneous six-month period. Replication of these results showed that the models were largely confirmed. However, with sixteen time points rather than only four, as in the earlier article, the results were not significant in the model with a lagged dependent variable. This is because the number of hearings in the previous ten years is almost the same for each successive six-month period. (If one thinks of a ten-year period consisting of twenty six-month windows, moving forward in time, the data are identical for eighteen of the twenty windows, changing only by replacing one old window with one new one in each period. These differences are never very substantial.) The redundancy of including both this variable as well as the lagged dependent variable makes little sense. Findings were highly significant, as in the original, without the lagged dependent variable.

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