Editorial

Editors' statement

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Scholars of various stripe, politicians and pundits have long addressed the significance of organized interests, broadly defined. Political science has dwelt on 'interest group' as the term of choice in this area, but we see this as only an approximation of the journal's scope and not any kind of setting of firm boundaries. The interest group label in practice has been applied widely, embracing voluntary associations, social movements, corporations, political action committees, 'super PACs' and even governmental units. Obviously these are all elements of their political systems and are relevant participants in their complex politics. The primary interests of this journal are the heterogeneity of these pressure participants, and the means through which they influence public policies. The focus is at least three fold – on the origins and maintenance of organizations, on the rise and fall of group populations and on the advocacy of groups and organizations for policy impact.

The project does not assume pre-eminent and near-exclusive importance for the sorts of topics covered, but there is an underlying sense that whereas once 'politics' was seen as requiring attention to legislatures, their debates and arguments, which was succeeded by particular attention to parties, manifestoes and voting. We think the focus has rightly moved further. It is now fairly easy to make the case that a party and parliament based explanation needs to be supported by attention to the continuing reactive processes through which Governments engage with the components of civil society and other organizations throughout their tenure.

'Interest group' in the understanding of this journal is simply an organization relevant to shaping the outcomes of government. In terms of preliminary political science, there is an expectation that these bodies will be aggregating views and furthering collective action, but in practice tracking the sources of influence other kinds of body also may be relevant. There is no expectation here that political science adequately addresses these matters. The relevant scholarship is rich and diverse, methods are pluralistic (and occasionally pluralist), and no single professional journal has existed to help define and generate a field of study that focuses on these groupings, their make-up and their attempts to influence politics and policymaking. Thus,

Interest Groups & Advocacy will inclusively examine the contest of interests and policy influence. It will also contain studies of how advocacy by groups, movements and lobbying professionals shapes policy, as well as addressing long-standing debates about how such interests are mobilized and maintained. The journal expects to host both interpretative and descriptive work, as well as more statistically sophisticated exercises. *Interest Groups & Advocacy* will also embrace normative debates on important issues such as transparency, lobby regulation, as well as such classical topics as the role of self-interest. We hope that practitioners – in the bureaucracies or in consultancies – actively contribute to these debates, discussions and scholarly offerings. Conversations ‘at separate tables’ (Almond, 1988) are less likely to be fruitful than the clarity resulting from cross examination, contradiction, confrontation and conflict.

Although much of the innovation and literature in this field derives from American politics and political science, recent years have witnessed a widening geographical focus; groups have grown in numbers, lobbyists have proliferated and spending has increased in country after country, and particularly in the broad European setting. Moreover, organizations such as multi-national corporations, NGOs, social movements and governmental units seek to influence public policies, often adapting strategies and tactics from one setting to the next.

Although many of the initial promoters of this journal are anchored within political science, this fact served only as a starting point for wider recruitment to our editorial board, in that, as noted, we cannot see these academic concerns being satisfactorily addressed without contributions from other disciplines, such as economics, sociology, law and history. For example, social movement scholarship clearly falls under our broad notion of interest groups; likewise, the field of public affairs makes up a major component of advocacy. Both these components in this broad church are represented in this initial issue – along with more conventionally ‘political science’ pieces.

The Editors explicitly seek to create a visible, well-regarded journal with the highest of standards. We want to pursue both theory and the empirical, broad comparison and the particular. We seek to compete with the best general journals for incisive, well-researched and well-written articles. This latter quality is important, given our desire to attract the contributions and attention of practitioners. Indeed, we believe that lobbyists, consultants and other advocates will contribute a great deal to both the scholarship and relevance of the journal, especially in that Conor McGrath has pulled together an impressive array of professionals in a distinctive advisory practitioner panel. Lobbying is not seen as inevitably pathological despite the easily gathered press revelations about malpractice. In January 2012, the UK coalition government introduced a consultation paper on ‘Introducing a Statutory Register of

Lobbyists' (Cm 8233). This is being scrutinized by the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee, but even as this introduction is completed in March, the UK Prime Minister is under fire for paid-for-access stories. Arguably, these running sores discrediting political life on both sides of the Atlantic, are as much of a concern to the profession as their critics.

With a diverse editorial board of first-rate scholars from around the world, we encourage submissions that may be comparative, international or limited to a single country; they should address important topics that will attract a wide audience. The Editors and the editorial board will respond promptly to submissions, with a goal of rendering decisions in no more than 6 weeks.

Although the field of interest groups and lobbying has long received substantial scholarly attention, it has never commanded the attention of a single journal. *Interest Groups & Advocacy* aspires to be the publishing outlet of distinction for a series of academic sub-fields that are currently distributed across a wide range of publishing alternatives. Contributors can expect expert, sympathetic, but demanding referees. We think the benefits of specialist journal focus are indicated by the speed, thoroughness and enthusiasm of referees for these early pieces. We expect the Journal to mature in exciting ways. The reviews section will make an entrance in the coming issues, and our standard format will intermittently be broken by special issues on topics of interest. Darren Halpin would be interested in such suggestions.

This first issue provides ample evidence of the plurality of approaches embraced by this new journal. Geographically, there is representation from Denmark, United States, United Kingdom and Austria. In disciplinary terms, there are contributions from sociologists, practitioners, commentators on practice, mainstream and pioneering political science. The emergence of a new journal shares many characteristics with the mobilization of new groups in dense populations. It reflects the globalization of the academy, as transnational communication and cooperation makes a viable community of interested scholars – and increases the possibility of high-quality cooperative work, for example, the academic movement sparked off by the Policy Agendas Project www.policyagendas.org. The editors and publisher appreciate the support of the ECPR Standing Group on Interest Groups and the American Political Science Association's Political Organization and Parties (POP) group.

The journal welcomes studies that address theoretical issues, seeks to publish the most rigorous empirical work and encourages the comparative assessment of group formation, behavior and impact. We look forward to establishing *Interest Groups & Advocacy* as the focal point for our shared interests.

Reference

Almond, G.A. (1988) Separate Tables: Schools and sects of Political Science. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 21(4): 828–842.

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