

**Ages of Organization:  
The Emergence of National Interests Groups in American History**

**Thomas T. Holyoke**  
Department of Political Science  
California State University, Fresno  
2225 East San Ramon Avenue, MS MF19  
Fresno, California 93740-8029  
[tholyoke@csufresno.edu](mailto:tholyoke@csufresno.edu)

Forthcoming in  
*Political Science Quarterly*

Prepared for presentation at the European Consortium on Political Research Joint Workshops at Université Catholique de Louvain, Mons, Belgium, April 8 – 12, 2019. I would like to thank Bert Fraussen, Darren Halpin, and Michael Heaney for their comments on the manuscript.

## **Abstract**

When in American history did interest groups start to appear in large numbers to lobby the national government, and why? What social, economic, and political influences were most conducive to forming trade and professional associations, citizen and public interest groups, and labor unions? Most of what we know about the history of interest groups in the United States is based on anecdotes and case-studies. In this paper, I use the birth years of interest groups active in Washington, DC in 2019 to chart rates of group formation across the history of the United States. Coupled with data on changes in population, economic performance, and even measures of the federal government's capacity and desire to make policy, I identify ages particularly conducive to mobilizing different types of groups over more than two hundred years of American history, and draw tentative conclusions as to why types of groups formed at those times.

“Liberty is to faction what air is to fire” wrote James Madison in *Federalist #10* of his fear that constitutional freedoms to assemble and petition for redress would lead to a dangerous proliferation of political parties and interest groups.<sup>1</sup> Factions being “a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or a minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community,” he warned their emergence would make it nearly impossible for the government to serve the national interest. President George Washington expressed a similar fear in his farewell address, “However combinations or associations...may now and then answer popular ends, they are likely, in the course of time and things, to become potent engines, by which cunning, ambitious, and unprincipled men will be able to subvert the power of the people, and usurp for themselves the reins of government”.<sup>2</sup>

Parties appeared before Washington left office, but even with a considerable amount of liberty, his prediction that “the course of time and things” would see the arrival of a large number of interest groups proved untrue from the Founding Era through the next hundred years. Small civic groups certainly emerged early in American history, but not for political engagement. Yet somewhere in the twentieth century everything changed. Not only had many civic groups jumped into politics, but business and professional associations, and labor unions too, appeared by the thousands to lobby Washington, DC on behalf of the many interests of their members. So many new activists groups, who saw government action as the solution to social and economic ills, appeared in the late 1960s and 70s that by 1981 an alarmed President Ronald Reagan mounted an effort to cut their philanthropic and, very often, government funding, only to find in frustration that this was nearly impossible to do.<sup>3</sup> By 2019, over 9,000 interest groups were lobbying in Washington. Yet we still do not really know which eras of American history were

most conducive to national group formation or why. Madison's claim that "liberty" sparks interest group formation is not an answer; freedom of assembly and right to petition are merely necessary conditions. Anecdotal evidence has formed a common wisdom, yet little systematic data has been brought to bear on the subject. In this paper I use the founding dates of over 7,000 organizations to trace the history of political groups in the United States and try to explain why they emerged in such numbers to lobby the national government.

## **PERSPECTIVES ON INTEREST GROUP GROWTH**

Americans have never been averse to working in organized groups. Traveling through Antebellum America to gather observations for *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville was impressed with the civic life he saw, especially the inclination to form associations to solve common problems. Yet contrary to what is sometimes claimed, what the French writer was seeing in the early nineteenth century was the antithesis of political interest groups. People were forming associations to solve local problems without looking to government for help. By the twenty-first century, this has dramatically changed, as seen in the nearly 10,000 organizations lobbying Washington, DC in 2019. Because political groups are widely believed to be so influential that Washington lawmakers are compelled to serve a few wealthy special interests at the expense of the public interest, scholars have taken considerable interest in them. Not just mapping the compositions and ideological breadth of the national group community, but also asking where they came from, who they represent, and when they emerged in such numbers.<sup>4</sup>

There are several literatures on group formation, approaching the question from different angles, but broadly grouped under the theory of pluralism, which holds that populations naturally divide into many groups along many dimensions of interests.<sup>5</sup> One, for instance, argues that

interest groups, especially associations representing lines of business and highly trained professions, are a uniquely American variation on the evolution of the administrative state. They emerged as a defensive response to signs of government interest in regulating businesses and professions in the late nineteenth century. By successfully establishing self-regulation through their own standards of best-practices and ethics, associations essentially became quasi-regulatory agencies standing as buffers between the public sector and sectors of the economy, what skeptics claimed amounted to government “capture” because associations used their state-sanctioned authority to set prices and control entry and exit into many professions.<sup>6</sup> As the economy grew and diversified, more associations emerged to defend more lines of business from government control.

Others such as Theda Skocpol have studied interest group emergence in the context of civic participation, recognizing that at least some political groups, especially those appearing earlier in American history, evolved out of the many fraternal and charitable organizations that formed in US cities in the mid-to-late nineteenth century and early twentieth as people looked for community involvement and senses of identity.<sup>7</sup> As discussed below, many of these organizations were not overly political so much as they were about building community institutions or promoting philanthropy, but some became political when it was necessary for achieving organizational goals. The involvement was likely local at first, but as the national government became a greater presence in everyday life, this started to change. Finding late nineteenth century parties too intransigent and corrupt to be vehicles for advocating social change, many civic groups jumped into politics and became the progenitors of national advocacy groups.<sup>8</sup>

The interest group pluralists of the mid-twentieth century such as David Truman argued that interest groups emerged in response to perceived threats to the interests of their would-be members.<sup>9</sup> In this view, interest group formation is again defensive in nature, and, given that group begets group begets group, should expand in a pattern of consistent growth. Yet what is essentially a third literature on interest group formation, and the one most directly challenging traditional pluralism, argues instead that it is often the government itself through its actions, or at least its signaling of a desire to act, that encourages people (and funders) to form lobbying organizations.<sup>10</sup> By enacting new policy regarding new issues, the government stimulates the formation of new national interest groups to lobby for the protection of and expansion of those policies. Greater policy activity means more interest groups form to play offense, pushing new policies when the government shows an interest in them or advocating to expand these policies after they have already been enacted.

What research in these areas largely lack, at least when it comes to national interest groups, is good historical data on when in American history large numbers of these organizations formed, and especially when particular types of organizations formed. Different types likely emerged for different reasons. In this article, I use historical data on national interest groups to clarify these literatures by setting their formation rates in historical context, to see what “ages” in American history were most conducive to group formation. I then examine these trends along with a number of social, economic, and political trends to get a stronger, if not definitive, sense as to what factors may have driven their formation at different points in time.

## **DISENTANGLING ORGANIZATIONAL TYPES**

The large, thriving community of fraternal and philanthropic organizations Americans formed in the mid-nineteenth century, documented by historian Arthur Schlesinger, is proof of a robust civic life, but not necessarily of a desire for political engagement.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, as Skocpol and Robert Putnam argue, the socially turbulent 1960s encouraging Americans to invest their passions and resources into more explicitly political groups likely came at the expense of civic associations, leading to the latter's well documented decline.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, civic and philanthropic groups have at times been lumped together with political groups, making it difficult to determine just when national interest groups started to form. Part of the problem is the lack of a framework for distinguishing the two, made harder by the fact that many once non-political civic groups became political, such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the American Anti-Slavery Society, and the American Peace Society did in the nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup>

The effort to analytically separate them in Figure 1 therefore has an artificial quality to it. The dimensions of this classification are simply how intensely individuals (or other organizations in some cases) want to join and participate in an organization, and the intensity of a group's desire to focus on political advocacy to change or defend public policy.<sup>14</sup> Civic associations, which appeared in significant numbers in the 1840s and steadily increased until 1900, but declined as American social and political life changed, relied on people wanting to join and belong to, even frame their identities in, the organization.<sup>15</sup> Yet their missions were not about politics and policy, so they appear in the lower left quadrant.

---- Figure 1 ----

Trade and professional associations representing highly-trained professions (like lawyers and architects) or industries (like housing and highway builders) are in the upper half of Figure 1

(less member desire to join). They often have to offer exclusive material benefits and rewards to attract members, or simply require membership as a prerequisite for practicing the profession, which makes them very different from civic groups.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, since members are not joining because they really want to, many are not likely to be interested in their association's political mission, though some may accept it as a necessary evil to defend their interests from government regulation or promote regulations protecting their business from foreign competitors. Associations therefore lay in the middle of the desire for advocacy dimension.

In the lower-right quadrant are organizations established and supported by members who really want significant, even radical change in policy and, consequently, society.<sup>17</sup> These are often called citizen groups, and include organizations like the Temperance Union, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and even the Sierra Club. Finally, in Figure 1's upper-right quadrant are the public interest groups, organizations also pursuing significant policy change, but supported more by donations and other financial patrons than large, highly active memberships.<sup>18</sup> These are Ralph Nader-esque consumer rights groups like Public Citizen and Common Cause, and environmental groups like Natural Resources Defense Council and Environmental Defense. They reflect passions people have, but do not require, or even need, their involvement. Organizations, of course, can shift from one quadrant to another as their goals and memberships change, as some civic groups did when their members became worried about social and economic conditions.<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, the Sierra Club was explicitly political when created in 1892 (by John Muir to stop the government from building a dam in the Sierra Nevada Mountains), and then for decades was a quiet hiking club until abruptly moving back into politics (opposing more dams) in the 1950s.<sup>20</sup>

Focusing on interest groups lobbying the national government means putting aside civic associations to focus on the more politically-oriented trade and professional associations, and intensely political citizen and public interest groups. These are the true interest groups, organizations representing people (or other entities) bound together by common interests, like defending professions or promoting social justice, that can only be realized through the political and policymaking processes. While Jack Walker presents data on trends in political group formation from 1820 to 1980, he does not set it in historical context.<sup>21</sup> Otherwise we have little more than case-studies and anecdotes of when and why groups formed in US history. Were there really none in the eighteenth century to worry President Washington? In what ages of American history did they emerge? The first step in answering the question is finding data.

## **GROUP FORMATION IN AMERICAN HISTORY**

Interest group trends in United States history are difficult to trace because until a few decades ago there was no database of national groups. Before then scholars had to be creative, such as going to the District of Columbia phonebook and counting anything looking like a political organization. In the 1970s and 80s, scholars like Walker, and Schlozman and Tierney, started using directories like the *Encyclopedia of Associations* and *Washington Representatives* for counts of the number of organizations in national politics. I adopt this approach, using full population data from *Washington Representatives*, arguably the most comprehensive directory of political organizations. It has two crucial qualities. First, it identifies interest groups by linking them to known Washington lobbyists.<sup>22</sup> Thus civic organizations that do not lobby are sorted-out, leaving only political groups employing lobbyists. Second, it includes birth dates for 7,459 of 9,882 organizations listed in 2019.<sup>23</sup> Figure 2 plots the annual change in this data (as z-scores

so both groups types are on the same scale) for trade and professional associations as well as citizen and public interest groups (there are too few unions to include), while Table 1 shows growth rates for both types plus unions by the major eras of American history.

---- Table 1 and Figure 2 ----

A fair criticism is that the data in Table 1 undercount group numbers in earlier eras because it does not record organizational deaths. To answer, I draw on Aldrich and colleagues, who tracked the emergence and development of trade associations (the most numerous type) from 1900, including disbandings and mergers.<sup>24</sup> They find little evidence of organization deaths until the later twentieth century, and even the approximately 180 closings occurring in the 1970s (the largest number) is just 7 percent of all trade associations at the time. Additionally, in their analysis of change in Washington's lobbying community from 1960 to 1980, Schlozman and Tierney also found that only 7 percent of organizations ceased to exist, leading them to conclude that "there is a remarkable amount of continuity" among national interest groups over time.<sup>25</sup> The percentage is hardly negligible, but does suggest that if it was possible to identify and subtract dead groups from the data, it would not dramatically alter their historical arc. Moreover, as Young finds in his historical tracing of the declining National Small Business Association, organizations often do not die so much as gradually become less active, and even then they sometimes still lobby.<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless, it is a caveat worth remembering.

Table 1 shows that national interest groups really first appeared after the mid-century point in the 1800s, around the time of the Civil War and the beginning of industrialization; labor unions appeared a little earlier in time. Yet while scholars have identified numerous trade and professional associations, and a few citizen and public interest groups as well, appearing in the

nineteenth century, the great age of organization for associations was the mid-twentieth century while the second half saw the big rise in advocacy groups.<sup>27</sup>

Lobbying itself *did* occur in the Founding Era, but usually by individuals with genteel breeding and (consequently) connections trying to petition for personal redress, or back-pay for serving in the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War.<sup>28</sup> It also included efforts by agriculturalists and financiers to influence the fiscal policies Alexander Hamilton was developing for the Washington administration.<sup>29</sup> Yet the only interest groups on the list for the eighteenth century were the American Philosophical Society (supposedly established by Benjamin Franklin) and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Scholars apparently mobilized America's very first interest group.

These trends show little sign of national group formation during the Antebellum, also called the Era of Good Feeling and the Second Great Awakening, though the religious fervor of the Awakening led to the formation of several religious organizations, some of which later entered politics over issues of slavery and alcohol.<sup>30</sup> Associations that did form again represented educated professionals as science began to take root in the years before the Civil War. This included the American Statistical Association (1839), American Psychiatric Association (1844), American Association for the Advancement of Science (1848), and American Medical Association (1847). One of the first skilled craft unions also appeared, the Glass Blowers League (1842).

The Reconstruction Era after the Civil War saw the mobilization of new professional associations, including the American Association of School Administrators (1865), American Otological Society (1868), and American Bar Association (1878), along with a few organizations representing industries such as the American Sheep Industry Association (1865), American

Fisheries Association (1870), and American Bankers Association (1875). Even a few citizen groups popped-up, such as the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (1866) and American Humane Association (1877) advocating on behalf of animals, the National Grange (1867) for agricultural and rural concerns, and the well-known National Rifle Association (1871). Nonetheless, even with industrialization firmly getting underway, and society beginning to shift away from agrarianism, national interest group remained few.

This remained true during the Gilded Age closing out the nineteenth century. While this period, sometimes sarcastically called The Great Barbeque, was known for bigger than life lobbyists, like so-called King of the Lobby Sam Ward, Washington political life still did not heavily involve interest groups.<sup>31</sup> While sensationalist journalists like David Graham Phillips used his 1906 *Treason of the Senate* exposé to hammer away at the power of the evil, but never clearly defined, “interests” supposedly holding Washington lawmakers in thrall, men like Ward used their political skills to benefit individual businesses and powerful families, not interest groups.<sup>32</sup> Only at the century’s end did the swiftly shifting industrial landscape, with population shifts from countryside to the cities, spark significant national group formation.

It was the Progressive Era, a time of good government reaction to Gilded Age excesses that became the first real age of organization in interest group history. Unions were growing in strength, and the William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt administrations were showing some sympathy for their demands to regulate business and restrict abusive employment practices, though McKinley did push business interests with tariffs on imported goods and supported the gold standard to help cope with the depressions of 1893 and 1896.<sup>33</sup> Business leaders needed a collective response so that no single business became exposed, leading to the formation of many of the earliest trade associations, most notably the intensely anti-union

National Association of Manufacturers.<sup>34</sup> It, in turn, led the lobbying charge for the creations of the U.S. Department of Commerce.<sup>35</sup>

As some point out, it was the U.S. government itself that often pushed industries to form trade associations in the early twentieth century. Sometimes this came from pro-business presidents like William Howard Taft and Warren Harding to promote trade and push back on unions, but also from Woodrow Wilson to help coordinate World War I.<sup>36</sup> Commerce Secretary Herbert Hoover's call for the creation of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce is perhaps the best known example.<sup>37</sup> This is consistent with Table 1 and Figure 2, as well as with Pendleton Herring's claim that by the 1920s Washington, DC had been transformed by the opening of hundreds of new organizations representing almost every imaginable interest.<sup>38</sup> Associational expansion continued apace during the Great Depression, often in resistance to new government regulation of the economy under President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. The prime example is the mobilization of banking, finance, and insurance associations in a failed effort to stop the separation of these industries from each other with the 1933 Glass-Steagall Act.<sup>39</sup>

By the 1930s, unions had put aside the Samuel Gompers (president of the American Federation of Labor) strategy of relying entirely on strikes to advance labor interests and became involved in electing Democratic politicians.<sup>40</sup> They were successful to the point of nearly becoming the Democratic Party, at least in Congress since, as Miliks argues, President Franklin Roosevelt tried to stay above party politics and keep unions at arms-length though much of the New Deal era.<sup>41</sup> Labor union formation slowed significantly in the post-World War II era, partially because of Taft-Hartley Act (1947) restrictions limiting union gains under the National Labor Relations Act of 1935.<sup>42</sup> Yet the mid and later twentieth century was an even bigger age of organization for trade associations, as well as citizen and public interest groups. Associations

doubled, doubled again, and kept on growing until the 1980s. Growing domestic spending power and export opportunities in the post-war world led to significant economic expansion and diversification, stimulating more association formations for more sectors of the economy.<sup>43</sup> Industry fragmentation also led to the emergence of narrowly-focused associations representing more specialized industries.<sup>44</sup> By the time the growth ends in the 1990s, nearly every line of business and profession appeared represented by at least one.

Citizen groups first emerged during Reconstruction and grew slowly through the early twentieth century, often as part of efforts at social change such as the Temperance Movement, and especially to pressure a reluctant Woodrow Wilson into supporting the Nineteenth Amendment giving women the right to vote.<sup>45</sup> Table 1 also confirms what is often called the “explosion” of the Post-War and Civil Rights eras.<sup>46</sup> The economic prosperity of the 1950s and 60s gave Americans the leisure time needed to consider larger societal issues, such as consumer and environmental threats, urban decay, and racism.<sup>47</sup> Not liking what they saw, many Americans became inclined to direct their time and disposable income towards organizations lobbying for innovative policy solutions to new public problems. Many would-be entrepreneurs of change, like Ralph Nader and John Gardner, started public interest groups like the Public Interest Research Group and Common Cause to funnel this money into advocacy. Claiming that business’s overwhelming influence with lawmakers rigged markets and put consumers at risk, these public interest group leaders claimed their mobilization was essential for rebalancing the political system to favor citizen interests.<sup>48</sup> Their growth rate certainly continues at a steep rate as they expanded on gains made under Lyndon Johnson, helped Jimmy Carter do more of the same, and defended their policies from Ronald Reagan, George Bush, and Donald Trump.

## **SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INFLUENCES ON INTEREST GROUP EMERGENCE**

The historical record suggest that several measurable social and economic conditions should help explain the emergence of trade and professional associations, or citizen and public interest groups (now referred to as “advocacy groups”). Unfortunately, most historical measures begin at different points in time, making sophisticated statistical modeling, like event history analysis, nearly impossible to do. Instead, I rely on correlations for isolated time periods where social and economic trends appear to be changing consistently with (or against) trends in group formation. Since this article is about when and why increases or decreases in group formation occurred, the data-trends presented and discussed below for both types of interest groups and explanatory variables are year-to-year percentage increases or decreases, as in Figure 2. Tables 2 and 3 report periods in history where each explanatory variable correlates especially high with increases and decreases in associations and advocacy groups. Unfortunately, there are too few labor unions in the data set to study, so the analysis focuses on just trade and professional associations and advocacy groups.

---- Tables 2 and 3 ----

### ***Urbanization and Education***

If the pluralists are right, and society naturally divides into groups along multiple dimensions of interests, then a growing and diversifying population should bring more people together and increase the number of desires and concerns that are conducive to forming new interest groups. Population growth through American history correlates with both association and advocacy group growth at  $r = 0.90$ .<sup>49</sup> Even so, Figure 2 shows little group growth in the nineteenth century even as population grew. Enormous distances between population centers, and even

between family farms, created a largely subsistence agricultural economy in the first half of the century, one that was hardly conducive to forming large national organizations, or even needing them. Only after the geographic size of the nation was mostly set, and the interior began to fill through immigration at the end of the nineteenth century, did expanding markets and methods of production create a need for the kind of infrastructure that only the federal government could provide. This is when significant national interest group growth began.

That interest groups grew through the twentieth century as the population continued to expand is actually not surprising since, to a considerable extent, more groups require more people (and many group memberships likely continued to grow even after group formation rates slowed). As Skocpol found with civic groups, it is urban population growth which likely produced the social complexity needed for new social and economic interests to emerge and serve as the basis for more group formation. Its overall correlation with associations is a solid 0.64, but, as Table 2 shows, is also 0.90 from the beginning of the nation through 1968. Yet the link of urbanization to associations, which are formed around interests in employment and business, likely runs through growing economic activity. People left rural America, or migrated to the United States, to take advantage of rapidly increasing opportunities for urban jobs in mass production manufacturing during the Second Industrial Revolution of the late nineteenth century. Urban growth, though, began declining after the 1960s in favor of suburbs, creating more service and technology jobs outside of urban cores, and may be why the correlation weakens after 1968.<sup>50</sup>

For advocacy groups, the correlation across U.S. history is also 0.64. The complex social fabric that urbanization formed, with people learning to live together and developing new identities, led to an at least somewhat greater awareness of social, economic, and environmental

problems, even if this growing interaction was in fairly homogenous neighborhoods within otherwise cosmopolitan cities. The formation of fraternal and philanthropic organizations is a consequence of this, yet only a small number of advocacy organizations formed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for all that there is a statistical correlation.<sup>51</sup> Those that did were often umbrella groups helping to organize, represent, and unify local urban groups, and include the Anti-Saloon League (1893), the National Civic League (1894), National Consumers League (1899), and the Veterans of Foreign Wars (1899). As the twentieth century entered its second half, growing urban density coupled with racial tensions, stimulated the emergence of large numbers of new activist interest groups. What is surprising, though, is that this connection ends around 1990 where, through 2019, the correlation is  $-0.50$ . While urban populations tend to be more liberal, with the Reagan administration ending right before 1990 and conservatives leaving government to establish many public interest groups, it may be that these newest groups were right-leaning and thus their formation unconnected to urbanization.<sup>52</sup> This includes organizations like Judicial Watch (1994), Family Voices (1990), and Committee for a Fair Judiciary (2001).

Education was also more widely available in the cities than in the country. While degrees were not often needed for nineteenth century production-line manufacturing, business employment later in the twentieth century did tend to require at least a high school education. Education data, unfortunately, only goes back to 1940, yet Table 2 shows a correlation of 0.70 between increases in high school completion and association formation from 1956 to 1971, and one of 0.61 from 1956 to 2019. Some education was increasingly necessary for establishing new industries and their associations like the Greeting Card Association (1941) and the American Institute of Timber Construction (1952).<sup>53</sup>

There is no link at any time between more university undergraduate degrees and association expansion, but there is a modest one (0.41) for growth in advocacy groups from 1940 to 1981 (high school education correlated at 0.70 for 1952 through 1985). There is research finding that education makes interest group membership more likely with a significant divide between those with a bachelor's degree and those without.<sup>54</sup> Enacting the 1944 GI Bill allowed more Americans to get a college education, and, consequently, learn how to more critically assess social and economic structures. Graduates gaining a stronger sense of efficacy, learning that changing society was possible by forming new advocacy groups, were more likely to become politically involved, including the mobilization of organizations and movements to challenge existing institutions and policy. Still, the correlation is too small to be identified as a major stimulus of group growth.<sup>55</sup>

### *Economics*

The urban concentration and education correlations suggest that the driving force behind national group formation, or at least of associations, is economic. It should therefore be seen in what Aldrich and colleagues considered the best economic driver of association formation, gross domestic product (GDP).<sup>56</sup> The data here support this argument with a correlation for associations from 1929 (the first year data is available) to 1975 of 0.84.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, GDP also correlates with total personal income at 0.95, showing these measures to be so tightly linked as to be nearly the same. In other words, personal income also rises with association numbers through 1975, though with associations it arguably makes more sense to argue that GDP drives it more than income. Greater economic activity not only means more businesses and professionals have the income to spare to join their associations, but also means economic diversity is likely

occurring. More lines of business mean more interests that can be potentially represented by associations as both specialize in a more complex economy. What is surprising, though, is that the relationship between GDP and associations is negative,  $r = -0.64$ , from 1960 to 2019; GDP continued to increase through much of the twenty-first century, but the rate of association formation fell significantly.

Yet while economic vitality, captured by GDP, helped spark association formation, this is not true of other measures of the strength of American business, namely increases in corporate profits and kinds of production.<sup>58</sup> While the profit measure begins in 1930, it simply does not correlate with associations until 1970, which through 1998 is  $-0.64$ . The same story appears with different types of production: manufacturing, industrial, and consumer products. These measures also begin in 1930 and scale well together, making it possible to combine them into a single measure, but it turns out that it has no statistical connection to association growth until 1978 where it is  $-0.63$  through 2003. Perhaps profits and rates of production linked to association growth in the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries before these data were available, but in the later twentieth century, as long as they grew, it failed to push the business community to establish an even greater presence in Washington, DC.

Gross domestic product (and therefore personal income) also correlates with the rise of advocacy groups,  $r = 0.71$ , across the ninety years for which data is available. This is not overly surprising. These kinds of organizations are more reliant on disposable income of multiple supporters, and even more so on money from philanthropies (like the Ford Foundation) and big donors, all of which increase as GDP and personal income rise.<sup>59</sup> There appears to be no connection between advocacy groups and corporate profit and rates of production.

Why would the formation rate of trade and professional associations stall in the 1980s and then fall (as seen in Figure 2) when production increased so dramatically in the 90s? Aldrich and colleagues argue that this was not associations decoupling from economic growth, or failing to respond to the friendlier business environment under the Reagan and George H.W. Bush administrations (and presumably the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations).<sup>60</sup> Rather, this type of organization may have simply reached its “carrying capacity,” an argument also made by Gray and Lowery in their study of interest group growth in the American states.<sup>61</sup> That is, while economic production continued to rise until the 2008 recession, most sectors of the economy were now represented by several associations. A few new ones did appear representing emerging new industries such as technology (which largely avoided politics until the late 90s) and alternative energies, such as the Association for Electronic Healthcare Transaction (2007), Fuel Cell and Hydrogen Energy Association (2010), Interactive Media Entertainment and Gaming Association (2007), the Wireless Internet Service Providers Association (2005), and, of course, the new space-based economy with the SmallSat Alliance (2019).<sup>62</sup> Yet these appeared in too few numbers to prevent association change rates from declining. In sum, of economic factors only GDP tells us anything about growth in associations and advocacy groups. It is also important, though, to recall that the 1980s to the present have largely been times of diminished regulatory threats to businesses and professions, who thus have less need to mobilize more associations in defense. Instead of looking to macro-economics for more explanations, it may therefore be worth looking at macro-politics.

### *Government Capacity and Desire*

Sociologists and political scientists studying mass movements and interest groups have long known that one of the most significant collective action catalysts is government itself.<sup>63</sup>

Differences remain as to whether this is because the state is signaling its openness to taking up newly recognized-as-legitimate social and economic problems, or because it has *already* enacted new policies addressing such problems. Nonetheless, if this perspective is correct, select measures of national government growth should link to group formation.

I group these measures into two categories: government *capacity* to act and government *desire* to act. Starting with capacity, one measure is legislative and executive branch staffing. Data on the executive branch civilian workforce begins in 1816, and congressional staffing in 1890 (but at least back to 1881 members of Congress essentially employed a single clerk).<sup>64</sup> The slow growth in legislative staff from the late nineteenth century only correlates modestly with associations at 0.48 through 1976, and, as can be seen in Table 3, is even a bit weaker for advocacy groups until 1981 when the relationships vanishes entirely. Reforms in Congress in the early 1970s expanded congressional staffing, especially committee and subcommittee staff, making it easier for lawmakers to take up larger, more complex issues, but this does not appear to have stimulated any increase in the number of interest groups ready to take advantage of them. Advocacy group trends also do not correlate with growth in the federal civilian workforce, and the only time it does for associations is from 1940 to 1963 when it is  $-0.82$ . Much of this negative correlation, however might be attributed to cut backs in federal workers as the nation scaled down after the end of the New Deal and after World War II during the more fiscally conservative Truman and Eisenhower administrations.

Another approach to government capacity is measuring Congress's ability to assemble the broad majorities needed to enact big reforms rather than narrow, more aggressive and partisan legislation. The former is more likely when the two congressional parties are ideologically closer and thus better able to make compromises. Using the Poole and Rosenthal DW-Nominate ideology scores, I calculated the median values of the House majority and minority parties since the first Congress in 1789, took the absolute value of the difference, and found the annual changes.<sup>65</sup> The focus is on the House because it is arguably a better indicator of party polarization than the Senate, which, through the filibuster, has an institutionally-derived constraint on partisan behavior.

For associations, it turns out that there is a positive, if moderate, correlation with partisan differences of 0.55 from 1929 to 1968, and again from 1992 to 2010. The first time-period, of course, encompasses the Great Depression and New Deal when Democrats were in clear ascendancy over business-friendly Republicans, meaning businesses and some professions needed to defend themselves by forming more political organizations, ultimately achieving a series of wins after World War II when Republicans took control of Congress and pushed through anti-union legislation such as the Taft-Hartley Act. Similarly, 1992 to 2010 was a time when Republicans waged ideological warfare against President Clinton and longstanding Democratic House majorities, winning by taking tough partisan stands coordinated with business groups like the resurgent Chamber of Commerce and National Association of Manufacturers.<sup>66</sup> In other words, associations emerged for defensive lobbying when partisan differences were large, helping Republican allies reclaim power and undermine perceived anti-business policies.

The highest correlation between polarization and advocacy groups is 0.51 from 1906 to 2013. It is difficult to interpret a modest correlation over a long stretch of time, and no larger

ones could be isolated for more specific time periods. It may be similar to the defensive mobilization trend with associations, for these 107 years contain points in time when partisan differences threatened the left-leaning groups made in previous years, such as the 1920s as the Progressive Era died down, the 1950s when the New Deal was being undone, and the 1980s when the Great Society programs were threatened.<sup>67</sup> Yet this time frame also contains the biggest eras of progressive legislation, such as the 1960s and 70s, leaving it impossible to draw any conclusion regarding partisanship and advocacy groups.

Turning now to government desire to act, I start by looking at changes in executive branch regulation as measured by the number of pages of rules (proposed and final), and their interpretations, published annually in the *Federal Register* since 1941 (examining the number of pages of statute added to the United States Code each year produced no results). As with partisan polarization, increases in *Register* pages correlates at 0.58 with increases in associations from 1946 to 1981, suggesting a defensive reaction on the part of the latter. At least after the 1950s, the Kennedy and Johnson administrations and their allies in Congress began to aggressively move on a number of new issue-fronts, rapidly enacting consumer protection, environmental, and civil rights legislation, all of which was complex and required significant delegation of authority to the bureaucracy.<sup>68</sup> It was also a period when advocacy groups opposing the interests of business, or promoting other forms of social and economic change, increased in number, the correlation between increasing regulations and more advocacy groups being 0.51. New issues were being seriously considered for the first time by the federal government, and progressive advocacy groups were there to promote and protect new policies addressing these issues. The close relationships many businesses and their associations had with regulatory agencies, what some scholars called “subgovernments” and “iron triangles,” and the

rights of many professions to regulate themselves were suddenly under threat by left-leaning groups.<sup>69</sup> Put simply, this measure reveals a defensive reaction from associations, but offensive moves by policy entrepreneurs wanting to establish new advocacy groups.

If this interpretation is correct, then a similar pattern should be found with the number of times Congress voted to pass legislation through the House and Senate.<sup>70</sup> This data goes all the way back to 1791, but no correlations with increases in either group type appears until 1929. From then changes in association births correlates with congressional votes until 1976, encompassing the more activist periods of lawmaking such as the New Deal and the Great Society and the years immediately after. This, again, suggests defensive lobbying by associations, but the correlation is only 0.40 so not much weight can be placed on the finding. For advocacy groups, though, there is a stronger correlation of 0.57 from 1955 to 1972 (and it is modestly smaller when including the years around either end of this range), which, again, suggests proactive lobbying by more left-leaning groups pushing more issues during the equally pro-active Kennedy and Johnson administrations, and even a bit of Eisenhower (who did crack the door open a little on civil rights) and Nixon (who signed many new environmental laws).

Finally, evidence of this interpretation may also be found in increasing or decreasing levels of spending by the federal government. Data on government budget payment outlays begins in 1901, and across the entire twentieth century (to 2001) correlates with growth in advocacy organizations at  $r = 0.72$ .<sup>71</sup> To the extent that more government activity, which requires more spending, stimulates the formation of more advocacy groups, then the argument that public sector action at the national level stimulates group formation finds some support. Some advocacy groups even depend on receiving grants from federal agencies for start-up and survival. Nonetheless, greater government outlays may also reflect other priorities, such as

winning two world wars and pursuing the Cold War against the Soviet Union, so not all of this increase can connect to growing numbers of advocacy groups.

Interestingly, through most of the time period covered by this variable, government outlays only correlate with association growth from 1967 to 2010, and it is  $-0.64$ . Why federal spending during a time of significant government activity, and then attempts to reign in that activity during the 1980s by the Reagan administration, would depress association formation is not clear. Again, much of the spending would have been in arms build-ups due to the Soviet conflict, unconnected to group formation. It may simply be that by the late 1960s and early 1970s, the growth in the administrative state was slowing, halted during the 1980s with only a modest rebound after the Reagan-era (and even then growth was mostly in homeland security and immigration). So with associations largely at a saturation point, more spending did not lead to more trade and professional group formation.

## **AGES OF ORGANIZATION IN AMERICAN HISTORY**

If thousands of interest groups were not around to harass George Washington, when did they arrive on the national scene? What were their ages of organization? For trade and professional associations, representing people or other organizations based on the common interest of occupation (and with closed memberships), real growth began late in the nineteenth century and in the Progressive era of the early twentieth. Their growth spiked during the Depression and the New Deal policy package dealing with it expanding the regulatory hand of the national government. Following a smaller burst in the 1950s, the biggest, and last, age of expansion for associations was the late 1960s and into the 70s in the wake of Great Society programs, which was also the last big age of expanding federal authority. After this, their rate of formation

collapses, dropping very nearly to zero in the twenty-first century. Associations grew as the population of the United States started to concentrate in the cities, the growing manufacturing sector providing significant employment opportunities in many new lines of business during the Second Industrial Revolution at the end of the nineteenth century. As economic activity grew, as measured by gross domestic product, the national government also grew in importance and authority, alarming business leaders enough that they began to form organizations to deal with would-be regulators with a united voice.

Associations represent businesses and professionals who otherwise compete against each other in the market place. While at times advocating for protective tariffs and barriers to market entry, in general they are averse to a powerful regulatory state, and consequently, form interest groups to defend themselves against state control, a claim supported by evidence in this paper as well as case-studies and anecdotes in other literature. In other words, associational mobilization is defensive. They do not offensively push new policies or seek to expand the range of issues open to government attention. Times of Democratic control of Congress, along with periods of legislative and regulatory activity, appear to have led to more association formation in resistance, engaging in defensive lobbying to support business-friendly Republicans such as Senator Robert Taft (R-OH) in the later 1940s and President Reagan in the 1980s gain power and push back on efforts to expand the regulatory scope of the federal government.

The opposite appears to be true of citizen and public interest groups. While their heyday of mobilization followed that of associations, especially in the late 1960s and early 70s, there were small spikes of formation as early as the later nineteenth century, and in some cases it involved nonpolitical civic associations finding it necessary to become active on the national stage to pursue goals of social and economic change. As the federal government became larger,

was willing to spend more money on programs, and take more regulatory action, policy entrepreneurs and activists decided their times had come to push for significant social and economic changes in American society and formed new explicitly advocacy-oriented organizations to exploit these opportunities. My analysis is not sensitive enough to learn whether this happened because government signaled a willingness to consider their issues, or whether groups mobilized to expand and institutionalize new policies after their enactment, but it does appear that this advocacy was more pro-active, taking the offensive, than that of associations. This was true of even right-leaning advocacy groups appearing in the wake of the Reagan administration.

Admittedly, the difference between mobilizing for defensive or offensive advocacy is partially a matter of perception. Many advocacy group leaders speak of their work in terms of defending the public from private sector abuses, pointing to aggressive lobbying by business interests to roll back environmental and consumer protection laws along with other parts of the state's regulatory authority. Nonetheless, given that many associations represent industries and white collar professions that would prefer to be left to regulate themselves (if even that), and probably feel they have done so successfully, and because some associations formed at the government's request, it is hard to consider them as activist organizations existing expressly to push for new policies. Advocacy groups, by contrast, were formed explicitly to push policy changes solving social and economic problems, or, as in the case of civic groups, felt compelled to become political to pursue their social goals. It is therefore no surprise that their ages of organization are those times in American history when the government itself was in an activist mood, such as the eras of the Progressives, of the New Deal, and the Great Society. Labor unions too formed to offensively lobby for new policies. While many private sector unions

emerged during the Gilded Age and Second Industrial Revolution when the government was far from sympathetic, most of their efforts focused on striking rather than lobbying, but became involved in national politics during the Depression of the 1930s.

Classical pluralists argued that interest groups form in response to threats from other organized interests in society. That does not quite match the evidence here, except, perhaps, for some associations forming in response to the threats of unions in the 1920s. For the most part, though, associations were responses to threats of regulation from the state itself, while advocacy groups formed when the state offered them hope of realizing policy goals with the potential to radically transform American society. While more decisive conclusions are beyond the scope of this article, I have, I hope, provided a great deal more context for understanding the emergence of a large and robust community of interest groups in the United States, and a better understanding of the interest in collective action held by a surprisingly large number of Americans.

FIGURE 1:  
*Types of Associations and Organizations*

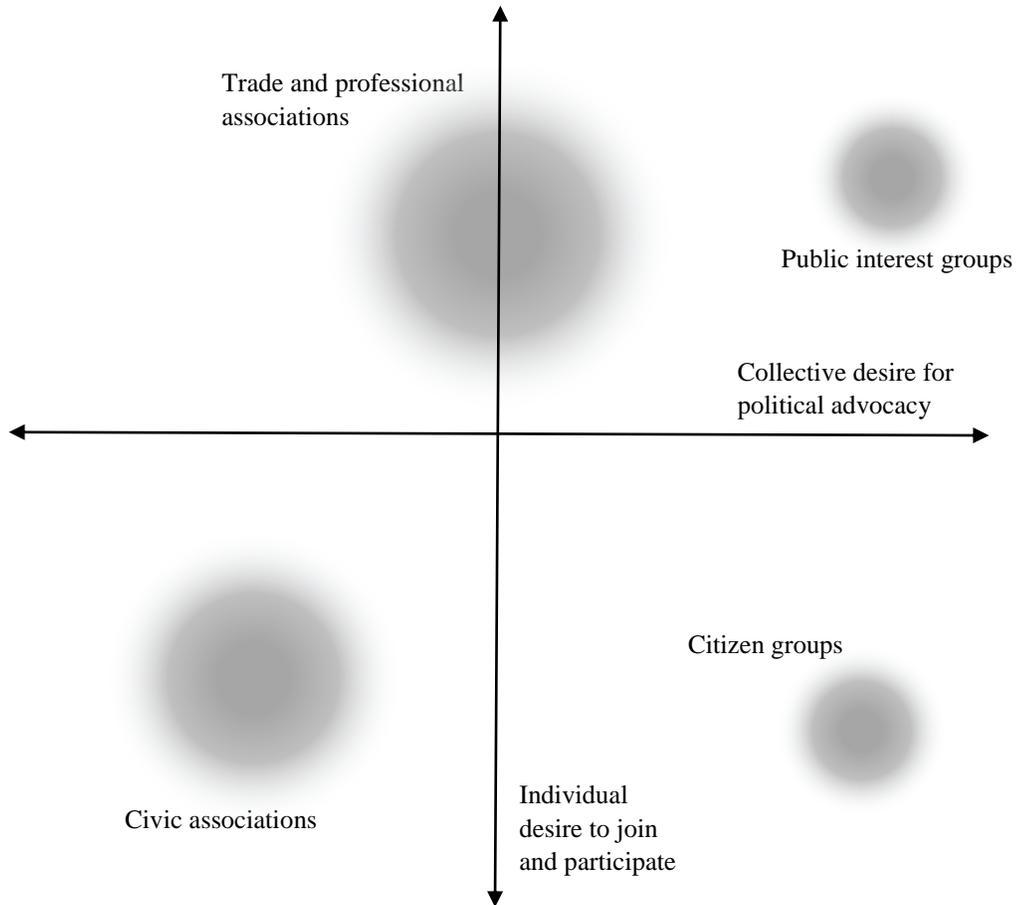


TABLE 1:

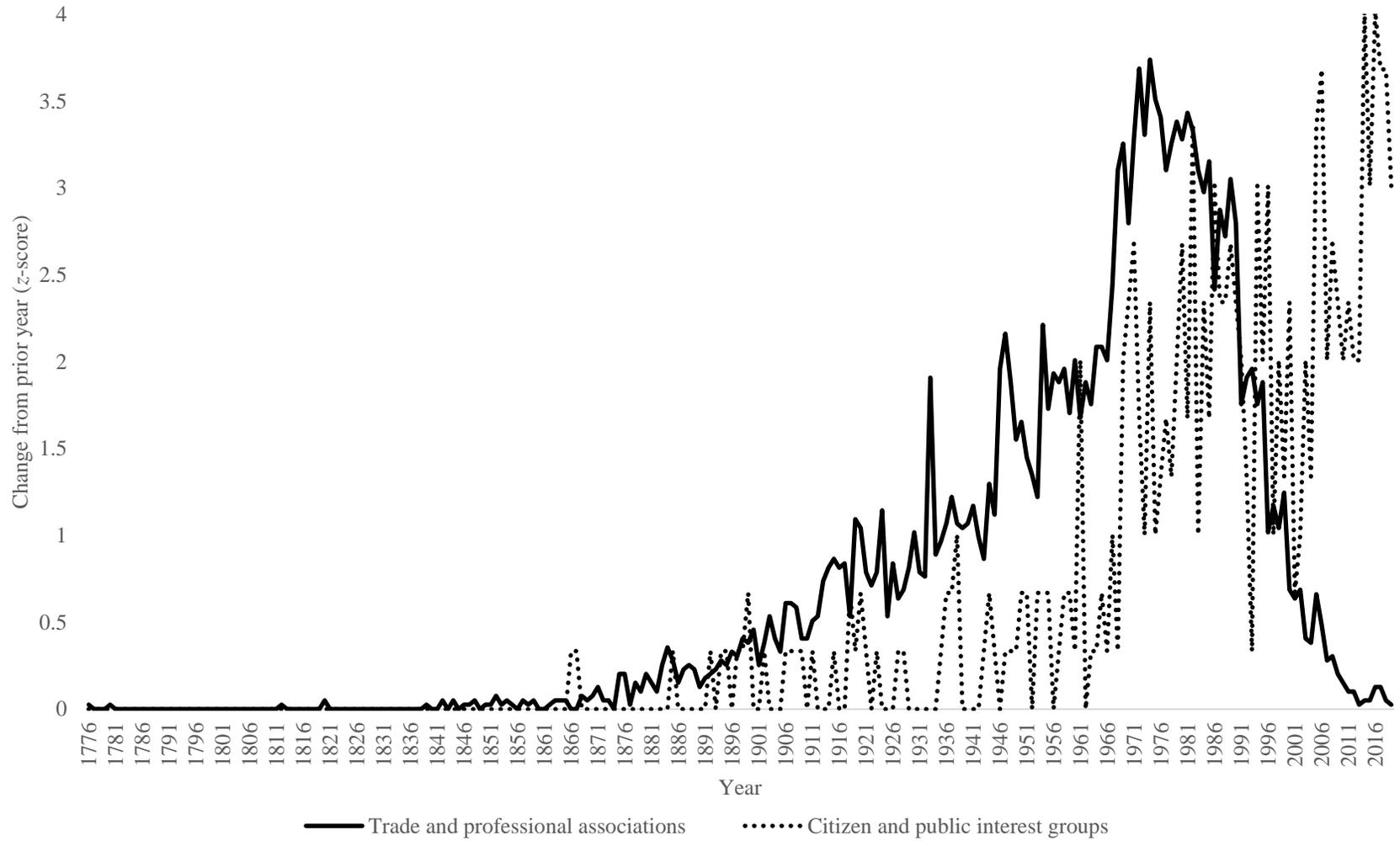
*National Interest Group Numbers by Historical Eras (cumulative percentage)**(Listed groups are those in the final year of each era)*

Historical eras	Trade and professional associations	Citizen groups and public interest groups	Private and public sector unions
Founding (1775 – 1801)	2 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Antebellum (1801 – 1849)	14 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (0%)
Civil War (1849 – 1865)	35 (1%)	0 (0%)	3 (3%)
Reconstruction (1865 – 1877)	69 (1%)	5 (1%)	4 (4%)
Gilded Age (1877 – 1900)	290 (4%)	13 (3%)	23 (22%)
Second Industrial Revolution (1870 – 1914)*	570 (8%)	16 (4%)	33 (32%)
Progressive Era (1900 – 1920)	774 (11%)	25 (6%)	39 (38%)
Roaring 20s (1920 – 1929)	1047 (15%)	29 (7%)	43 (41%)
Great Depression (1929 – 1939)	1469 (21%)	37 (9%)	59 (57%)
World War II (1939 – 1945)	1725 (25%)	41 (10%)	65 (63%)
Post War (1945 – 1964)	3064 (44%)	68 (17%)	81 (78%)
Civil Rights (1964 – 1980)	5016 (72%)	141 (34%)	94 (90%)
Later Cold War (1980 – 1989)	6080 (88%)	202 (49%)	99 (95%)
Dot Com (1989 – 2001)	6782 (98%)	266 (65%)	102 (98%)
Post 911 (2001 – present)	6948 (100%)	410 (100%)	104 (100%)

*Source:* Author's calculations from *Washington Representatives*

\* Era overlaps with the Gilded Age and Progressive Era

FIGURE 2:  
*Year-to-year change in associations and citizen / public interest groups (as z-scores), 1776-2019*



Source: Author's calculations from *Washington Representatives*

TABLE 2:

*Key correlations in time for increases in trade and professional association formation and independent variables*

Time period	Variable and highest correlation (significant at $p < 0.05$ )
1776 to 1968	Urban population percentage: 0.90
1881 to 1976	Congressional staff: 0.48
1929 to 1968	Partisan polarization of the House of Representatives: 0.55
1929 to 1975	Gross domestic product: 0.84
1929 to 1976	Number of bills approved by both chambers of Congress: 0.40
1940 to 1963	Executive branch civilian employment: -0.82
1946 to 1981	Number of annual pages published in the <i>Federal Register</i> : 0.58
1956 to 1971	Percentage of the population with a high school diploma: 0.70
1960 to 2019	Gross domestic product: -0.64
1967 to 2010	Federal budget outlays: -0.64
1970 to 1998	Corporate profit: -0.64
1978 to 2003	Manufacturing, industrial, and consumer product production: -0.63
1992 to 2010	Partisan polarization of the House of Representatives: 0.55

Source: Author's calculations

TABLE 3:

*Key correlations in time for increases in citizen and public interest group formation and independent variables*

Time period	Variable and highest correlation (significant at $p < 0.05$ )
1776 to 2019	Urban population percentage: 0.64
1881 to 1910	Congressional staff: 0.44
1900 to 1971	Congressional staff: 0.36
1901 to 2001	Federal budget outlays: 0.72
1906 to 2013	Partisan polarization of the House of Representatives: 0.51
1940 to 1981	Percentage of the population with an undergraduate diploma: 0.41
1929 to 2019	Gross domestic product: 0.71
1946 to 1981	Number of pages published annually in the <i>Federal Register</i> : 0.51
1952 to 1985	Percentage of the population with a high school diploma: 0.70
1955 to 1972	Number of bills passing both chambers of Congress: 0.57

Source: Author's calculations

TABLE 1A:

*Summary Statistics for All Variables*

Variable (all variables are year-to-year changes)	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Trade and professional associations	28.48	39.30	0	147
Advocacy groups	1.67	2.87	0	12
Population (in millions)	1.4	1.9	-3.0	13.1
Urban population (in millions)	10.9	10.5	0.1	35.0
Population percentage with high school degree	1%	1%	0%	3%
Population percentage with a four-year university degree	0.4%	0.4%	0%	1%
Gross domestic product	0.23	0.27	-0.26	1.05
Personal income (in billions)	205.71	254.66	-407.43	943.43
Corporate profit (in billions)	20.39	71.29	-243.93	349.40
Production (combined)	1.83	3.48	-16.95	7.85
Congressional staff	95.36	500.22	-1,182	3,166
Executive branch staff	13,561	116,348	-487,262	505,356
Difference in House party medians (DW-Nominate)	0.005	0.05	-0.159	0.154
<i>Federal Register</i> Pages	1,420.48	5,557.94	-15,390	16,236
Congressional votes on passage	8.23	119.92	-428.00	472.00
Federal budget outlays (in millions)	34,572	60,779	-82,297	253,858

---

<sup>1</sup> Clinton Rossiter, ed., *The Federalist Papers* (New York: Mentor Books, 1986), 77-84.

<sup>2</sup> George Washington, “Transcript of President George Washington’s Farewell Address (1796),” accessed at <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=15&page=transcript> 9 December 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Paul E. Peterson, “The Rise and Fall of Special Interest Politics,” *Political Science Quarterly* 105 (Winter 1990): 539–556.

<sup>4</sup> See Jack L. Walker, Jr., *Mobilizing Interest Groups in America: Patrons, Professions, and Social Movements* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983); Kay Lehman Schlozman and John T. Tierney, *Organized Interests and American Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986); and John P. Heinz, Edward O. Laumann, Robert L. Nelson, and Robert H. Salisbury, *The Hollow Core: Private Interests in National Policymaking* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> For groups in society, see Arthur F. Bentley, *The Process of Government: A Study of Social Pressures* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1908); for the theory of group pluralism see David B. Truman, *The Governmental Process* (New York: Knopf, 1951).

<sup>6</sup> See Brian Balogh, *The Associational State: American Governance in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Clarence E. Bonnett, “The Evolution of Business Groupings,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 179(May 1935): 1–8; Edward O. Laumann and David Knoke, *The Organizational State* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982).

<sup>7</sup> Early work by Arthur M. Schlesinger, “Biography of a Nation of Joiners,” *American Historical Review* 50(January 1944): 1–25. Also Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy: From*

---

*Membership to Management in American Civic Life* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> See Elisabeth S. Clemens, *The People's Lobby: Organizational Innovation and the Rise of Interest Group Politics in the United States, 1890–1995* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

<sup>9</sup> Truman, *The Governmental Process*.

<sup>10</sup> Sociologists argue for government signals for new policies, see Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1978); Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982). Some political scientists argue that new groups form after new policies, see Beth L. Leech, Frank R. Baumgartner, Timothy M. LaPira, and Nicholas A. Semanko, "Drawing Lobbyists to Washington: Government Activity and the Demand for Advocacy," *Political Research Quarterly* 58(March 2005): 19-30; Frank R. Baumgartner, Virginia Gray, and David Lowery, "Federal Policy Advocacy and the Mobilization of State Lobbying Organizations," *Political Research Quarterly* 62(September 2009): 552-567.

<sup>11</sup> Schlessinger, "Biography of a Nation of Joiners."

<sup>12</sup> Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy*; Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000).

<sup>13</sup> Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy*, 132-133.

<sup>14</sup> That the trade and professional association circle is larger reflects the fact that there are more of them, though the size is not statistically determined in Figure 1.

<sup>15</sup> Gerald Gamm and Robert D. Putnam, "The Growth of Voluntary Associations in America, 1840-1940," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 29(Spring 1999): 511-557; Ada Chamberlain,

---

Alixander B. Yanus, and Nicholas Pyeatt, “The Southern Question: American Voluntary Association Development, 1876-1920,” *Political Science Quarterly* 135(Spring 2020): 103-129.

<sup>16</sup> David C. King and Jack L. Walker, Jr., “The Origins and Maintenance of Groups,” in Jack L. Walker, Jr., ed., *Mobilizing Interest Groups in America*, 75-102; Howard E. Aldrich, Catherine R. Zimmer, Udo H. Staber, and John J. Beggs, “Minimalism, Mutualism, and Maturity: The Evolution of the American Trade Association Population in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century,” in Joel A.C. Baum and Jitendra V. Singh, eds., *Evolutionary Dynamics of Organizations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 223-239.

<sup>17</sup> Andrew S. McFarland, *Common Cause* (Chatham: Chatham House, 1984).

<sup>18</sup> Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy*, 143-143.

<sup>19</sup> Skocpol, 160.

<sup>20</sup> McGee Young, *Developing Interests: Organizational Change and the Politics of Advocacy* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010).

<sup>21</sup> Jack L. Walker, Jr., “The Origin and Maintenance of Interest Groups in America,” *American Political Science Review* 77(June 1983): 390-406.

<sup>22</sup> It does this by throwing a broad net, not only recording lobbyists registered with Congress or executive branch agencies, but also those registered as lobbying for foreign governments, those who send out press releases, and those identified in various questionnaires and surveys. The lobbyists are then back-tracked to client organizations so that *Washington Representatives* presents the most complete list of national political groups.

<sup>23</sup> I tried to locate the birth years for those groups without one in the original data. Unfortunately, apart from a few cases, there was not enough information on the webpages of these groups to pin down a birth year with any accuracy.

- 
- <sup>24</sup> Aldrich, Zimmer, Staber, and Beggs, “Minimalism, Mutualism, and Maturity.”
- <sup>25</sup> Schlozman and Tierney, *Organized Interests and American Democracy*, 78.
- <sup>26</sup> Young, *Developing Interests*.
- <sup>27</sup> See Daniel J. Tichenor and Richard A. Harris, “Organized Interests and American Political Development,” *Political Science Quarterly* 117(Winter 2002-2003): 587-612.
- <sup>28</sup> See Gary Lawson and Guy Seidman, “Downsizing the Right to Petition,” *Northwestern University Law Review* 93(October 1999): 739-766; Jeffrey L. Pasley, “Private Access and Public Power: Gentility and Lobbying in the Early Congress,” in Kenneth R. Bowling and Donald R. Kennon, eds., *The House & Senate in the 1790s* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), 57-99.
- <sup>29</sup> Truman, *The Governmental Process*, 6.
- <sup>30</sup> Clemens, *The People’s Lobby*.
- <sup>31</sup> Margaret Susan Thompson, *The “Spider Web”: Congress and Lobbying in the Age of Grant* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).
- <sup>32</sup> Kathryn Allamong Jacob, *King of the Lobby: The Life and Times of Sam Ward, Man About Washington in the Gilded Age* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).
- <sup>33</sup> Aldrich, Zimmer, Staber, and Beggs, “Minimalism, Mutualism, and Maturity,” 223-225.
- <sup>34</sup> Balogh, *The Associational State*.
- <sup>35</sup> See National Association of Manufacturers, “About the NAM” accessed at <http://www.nam.org/about/>, 9 December 2020.
- <sup>36</sup> Bonnett, “The Evolution of Business Groupings.”
- <sup>37</sup> Truman, *The Governmental Process*.

---

<sup>38</sup> E. Pendleton Herring, *Group Representation Before Congress* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1929).

<sup>39</sup> David McKean, *Peddling Influence: Thomas “Tommy the Cork” Corcoran and the Birth of Modern Lobbying* (Hanover: Steerforth, 2004).

<sup>40</sup> For labor history, see J. David Greenstone, *Labor in American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).

<sup>41</sup> Sidney M. Milkis, “Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Transcendence of Partisan Politics,” *Political Science Quarterly* 100(Autumn 1985): 479–504; Sidney M. Milkis, “Ideas, Institutions, and the New Deal Constitutional Order,” *American Political Thought* 3(Spring 2014): 167–176.

<sup>42</sup> For how labor took over the Democratic Party in the 1930s, see Daniel Schlozman, *When Movements Anchor Parties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); Tichenor, “The Presidency, Social Movements, and Contentious Change.”

<sup>43</sup> Lee Drutman, *The Business of America is Lobbying* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>44</sup> Schlozman and Tierney, *Organized Interests and American Democracy*.

<sup>45</sup> Daniel J. Tichenor, “The Presidency, Social Movements, and Contentious Change: Lessons from the Women’s Suffrage and Labor Movements,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29(March 1999): 14 – 25.

<sup>46</sup> Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy*, chap. 4.

<sup>47</sup> Jeffrey M. Berry, *The New Liberalism: The Rising Power of Citizen Groups* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1999).

<sup>48</sup> Benjamin C. Waterhouse, *Lobbying America: The Politics of Business from Nixon to NAFTA* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

---

<sup>49</sup> Data on population and urban population from the U.S. Census Bureau.

<sup>50</sup> On growing suburbs, see George Galster, Royce Hanson, Michael R. Ratcliffe, Harold Wolman, Stephen Coleman, and Jason Freihage, “Wrestling Sprawl to the Ground: Defining and Measuring an Elusive Concept” *Housing Policy Debate* 12(Fall 2001): 681-717.

<sup>51</sup> Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy*, chap. 2.

<sup>52</sup> See Karen O’Connor and Bryant Scott McFall, “Conservative Interest Group Litigation in the Reagan Era and Beyond,” in Mark P. Petracca, ed., *The Politics of Interests: Interest Groups Transformed* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 263–281. On the expanding influence of organized conservative groups, including the American states, see Alex Hertel-Fernandez, *State Capture: How Conservative Activists, Big Businesses, and Wealthy Donors Reshaped the American States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

<sup>53</sup> From Camille Ryan and Kurt Bauman, *Educational Attainment in the United States, 2015: Population Characteristics* (Washington DC: US Census Bureau 2016), and U.S. Department of Education, “CPS Historical Time Series Tables,” accessed at <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/educational-attainment/cps-historical-time-series.html><https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/educational-attainment/cps-historical-time-series.html> 9 December 2020.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas T. Holyoke, “The Interest Group Effect on Contact with Congress,” *Party Politics* 19(November 2013): 925-944.

<sup>55</sup> Yet such a finding does appear in Suzanne Mettler, “Bringing the State Back in to Civic Engagement: Policy Feedback Effects of the G.I. Bill for World War II Veterans,” *American Political Science Review* 96(June 2002): 351-365.

<sup>56</sup> Aldrich, Zimmer, Staber, and Beggs, “Minimalism, Mutualism, and Maturity,” 230-231.

- 
- <sup>57</sup> Both GDP and total personal income from *Business Statistics of the United States*, eds. Cornelia J. Strawser and Susan Ockert. (Latham: Bernan Press, 2019).
- <sup>58</sup> Strawser and Ockert, *Business Statistics of the United States*.
- <sup>59</sup> Berry, *The New Liberalism*.
- <sup>60</sup> Aldrich, Zimmer, Staber, and Beggs, “Minimalism, Mutualism, and Maturity,” 233.
- <sup>61</sup> David Lowery and Virginia Gray, “The Density of State Interest Group Systems,” *Journal of Politics* 55(February 1993): 191-206.
- <sup>62</sup> James V. Grimaldi, “Microsoft’s Lobbying Largess Pays Off,” *Washington Post*, May 17, 1995.
- <sup>63</sup> Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*; McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*; Leech, Baumgartner, LaPira, and Semanko, “Drawing Lobbyists to Washington”; and Baumgartner, Gray, and Lowery, “Federal Policy Advocacy and the Mobilization of State Lobbying Organizations.”
- <sup>64</sup> Executive branch and congressional staffing from Harold W. Stanley and Richard G. Niemi, *Vital Statistics on American Politics* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, multiple editions); Congressional Research Service, “Federal Workforce Statistics Sources: Updated March 25, 2020” accessed at <http://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R43590> 18 October, 2020.
- <sup>65</sup> Vote View, “Realtime NOMINATE Ideology and Related Data,” accessed at <https://voteview.com/data> 9 December 2020.
- <sup>66</sup> Waterhouse, *Lobbying America*, chap. 8.
- <sup>67</sup> Berry, *The New Liberalism*.
- <sup>68</sup> An argument by Theodore Lowi, *The End of Liberalism* (New York: Norton, 1969).

---

<sup>69</sup> On subgovernments, see Daniel McCool, “Subgovernments as Determinants of Political Viability,” *Political Science Quarterly* 105(Summer 1990): 269-293.

<sup>70</sup> Vote View, “Realtime NOMINATE Ideology and Related Data”; the last few years, from U.S. House of Representatives, “U.S. House of Representatives Roll Call Votes,” accessed at <https://clerk.house.gov/evs/2019/index.asp> 9 December 2020, and U.S. Senate, “Roll Call Votes 116<sup>th</sup> Congress – 1<sup>st</sup> Session (2019),” accessed at [https://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll\\_call\\_lists/vote\\_menu\\_116\\_1.htm](https://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/vote_menu_116_1.htm) 9 December 2020.

<sup>71</sup> U.S. Government Publishing Office, “Budget FY 2021 – Historical Tables, Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 2021,” accessed at <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/BUDGET-2021-TAB/> 9 December 2020.