

Special interest groups bipartisan in Congress, scholar finds

September 1 2009



Matt Grossmann, assistant professor of political science at Michigan State University, argues that special interest groups are not responsible for the partisan divide in Congress. Credit: Michigan State University

Contrary to common perception, special interest groups are not responsible for the partisan division in Congress - and often join bipartisan coalitions to support legislation, according to a Michigan State University political scientist.

The same groups that line up on two sides in elections come together afterward to advance the same bills, said Matt Grossmann, assistant professor of political science.

Grossmann cited the current debate over national health care as an example. "Pharmaceutical companies, unions and doctors have all come

out in support of President Obama's plan," he said. "It is the public and legislators that are closely divided, not interest groups."

Grossmann's research challenges the conventional view on several fronts. In a paper appearing in the September issue of the journal *American Politics Research*, Grossmann and Casey Dominguez of the University of San Diego argue that:

- Interest group alliances on bills before Congress have no partisan structure. Groups allied with different political parties join many of the same broad-based coalitions.
- The Democratic Party coalition is not made up of a mishmash of small groups plagued with internal conflict, as many believe. In reality, the Democratic groups are more closely linked than Republican groups.

In a second paper, Grossmann and co-author Kurt Pyle of MSU contend that interest group coalitions and interest group lobbying have little influence on the fate of legislation - regardless of whether they support or oppose the bill. For the study, the researchers analyzed more than 17,000 bills introduced in the House and Senate over a four-year period.

Grossmann was surprised at the finding. "I expected interest group support to at least help legislators move bills toward passage, but the evidence suggests otherwise," he said. "Interest groups are not the all-powerful, behind-the-scenes actors that many envision."

Grossmann and Pyle will present their study at the American Political Science Association annual meeting in Toronto on Sept. 5.

Source: Michigan State University ([news](#) : [web](#))

Citation: Special interest groups bipartisan in Congress, scholar finds (2009, September 1)
retrieved 24 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2009-09-special-groups-bipartisan-congress-scholar.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.