

Why Support Your Industry's PAC

*"Democracy is the worst system of government
devised by wit of man... except for all the other ones."*

Sir Winston Churchill

Some business people prefer to have little to do with the political process.

Washington is seen as an alien place where "special interests" vie for favor, and conversations brim with legalese. Washington doesn't seem to follow the same rules as business. Waste and inefficiency that would doom a furniture company to failure seem common to federal government programs. Faced with this, many business people decide to focus on the world that makes sense to them – a world of operations, logistics, product design and marketing. They ignore the political process or limit their involvement to a brief stop by the polls every few years.

This is their right. The Constitution protects political activity, as well as the choice to abstain from it.

The problem is that political decisions continue to take place. Competing interests still speak out, testify before Congress, make media appearances and conduct voter registration. Legislation still determines how tax money is spent. Regulations impact operations and profitability. And votes for or against these policies are not always based on facts, but rather on philosophies legislators bring to Washington when they are elected.

The political process will endure. Your choice is whether to be a participant or an observer.

Labor organizations and pro-regulatory groups choose to actively participate. Their voices are amplified by media exposure until it seems that only their view of the world is presented to the public.

Perhaps you are convinced of the importance of political participation but question why political action committees are necessary. When people decide to get involved in our democracy, they organize. University of Virginia political scientist Larry Sabato has

argued that interest groups are the logical way for citizens to participate politically in the modern age. The average person could not possibly follow every piece of legislation or every regulation that affects them and still maintain a job and family. Instead, they join organizations that reflect their interests and values, so that they will have their say in what becomes law and the impact those laws have on their lives.

One of the ironies about the term "special interests" that is so often tossed around by critics of the political system is that every American participates in such groups. Further, many of the most powerful lobbies in Washington represent the interests of ordinary people who hardly fit the mold of "fatcats." AARP, for example, aggressively represents retired persons. The NRA protects the rights of sportsmen and gun owners. Those who drive cars, another elite special interest, are represented by the American Automobile Association. These groups derive their power from the sheer number and mainstream status of the people for whom they speak.

There is an additional factor: money. In Washington, as in every other place, talk is cheap. Anyone can hold vigil with a bullhorn in front of the White House. But the groups that are taken seriously are the ones that can elect and support their allies in Congress. PAC money provides the resources lawmakers need to take their message – your message – to voters through public appearances and advertising.

It is also worth remembering that mobilizing resources for political ends is not a corruption of the representative democracy our Founding Fathers envisioned. Indeed, coming together to achieve needed government reform is precisely what our Founding Fathers did and intended for us to do centuries later.

Now, our message to you is simple. You may not like every aspect of our political system. It is a rough and tumble competition where victory is not always assured. Participants are sometimes bruised and disappointed. But it is the best system yet devised for sorting out the competing demands of a diverse, multi-faceted society.

For this reason, the system will continue, with or without your participation. With your participation, the views of furniture industry manufacturers, importers and suppliers will be heard and factored into public policy. Without your help, we may be left with someone else's preferred outcome.