

# Advocates and Interest Representation in Policy Debates

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In this paper we take up a set of questions fundamental for interest group scholars: whose interests are articulated in the policy process, whose interests are not, and how does policy success vary for different types of interests? Previous work on these questions has led to the largely uncontested conclusion that business is dominant in the process, in terms both of its presence in the organizational universe and its participation in public policy debates. This emphasis on business has led scholars to neglect the other interests that may be engaged by the same issues. Thus, while we might know that business is actively protecting and advancing its interests on a number of policy issues, we know far less about the participation of other interests whose policy objectives may be similar to those of business, and also whether and by whom the interests of business are opposed. In a departure from existing work, we ask not simply who participates, but who is participating with whom on various sides of a random sample of policy issues, and who is opposing these interests. Our analysis begins with a description of the diversity and type of *both* organizational and governmental interests aligning themselves on different sides of a random sample of policy issues. Subsequently, we seek to explain whether certain types of interests are more likely to achieve their goals given both the context of the policy debate, and the other interests that line up on different sides of an issue.

## **Who Participates and Who is Represented?**

There is substantial evidence of business dominance in Washington interest group communities. In this section, we describe how scholars have thought about that bias and the evidence they have offered for it. Our aim is to draw attention to what we most clearly understand about the nature of business dominance, and to highlight some of the limitations in the existing literature. Although the evidence of business interests' numerical dominance in Washington is hard to dispute, what remains unclear is how their presence

and voice is mediated by the participation of other types of interests and governmental actors, and how participation in large numbers translates into influence over policy. We believe that the focus on business bias in the literature leaves us with an incomplete picture of who is active in the policy process, whose interests are represented by various actors, and, ultimately, whose interests prevail. In order to understand interest group influence and whose interests prevail in policy, it is important to account for the advocacy context (nature of the issue, goals of the organization, activity and goals of governmental actors) as well as for the participation of governmental and both business and non-business interests. Ultimately, we address questions of who comes out ahead in policy debates and whether *any* particular interests are advantaged in the process.

At least since Schattschneider's (1975) characterization of the accent of the "heavenly chorus," interest group scholars have offered considerable evidence of an upper class bias in the universe of organizations that take an interest in public policy. One commonly cited indicator of this bias is the relatively large proportion of business, corporate, and institutional interests in Washington, DC (Salisbury 1984; Schlozman, et al. 2008). The idea underlying this work is that the numerical dominance of business is indicative of the broad reach these interests have over public policy. Thus, when Salisbury (1984) observed that institutional interests were a dominant part of the landscape of organizations in Washington, he coupled that observation with an emphasis on the characteristics that facilitate the ability of institutional interests to shape public policy. Institutions' mainstream and relatively narrow policy goals, the support they receive from wealthy sponsors, and their lack of individual members make it relatively easier to participate, and gives them greater flexibility, in the policy process (Salisbury 1984). These characteristics, in conjunction with business' relatively greater command of resources, tend to produce a pattern of organizational participation in the policy process like the one

observed by Baumgartner and Leech (2001). Business interests are simultaneously involved with issues that attract few additional participants (niche issues), and with the relatively small set of issues that attract a wide variety of interests (“bandwagon” issues).

Importantly, the advantages that flow from business’ numerical dominance in the organizational community do not necessarily end with their greater capacity for pursuing their policy goals across a range of different issues. Further evidence of institutional and business bias is apparent in the greater attention accorded to business interests by the news media (Danielian and Page 1994), and in the greater participation of business and institutional interests in setting the Supreme Court’s agenda (Caldeira and Wright 1990). Indeed, it is the depth and breadth of business interests’ reach that raises normative concerns about bias in the policy process, and the broader political system.

But while there is general agreement that business interests are advantaged in terms of their numbers and their capacity for participation, evidence of how these advantages shape policy outcomes and affect the policy process has been both limited (typically focusing on the impact of PAC contributions), and inconclusive (Baumgartner and Leech 1998; R. Smith 1995). Perhaps more importantly, researchers have increasingly pointed to the limitations inherent in equating interest representation with numbers of participants. As Lowery and Gray (2004) explain, there simply is no way to determine what a “representative” interest community, that is, one that reflects the distribution of interests in society, should look like. Moreover, there also has been a growing recognition that the idea of a general business advantage is too simplistic; any advantage that does exist is likely to be contingent on a host of factors that shape the contours of the policy debate. Put somewhat differently, aggregate, system-wide assessments of participation and influence are too far removed from issue-level activity where participation occurs and policy

decisions are made to reflect accurately whether particular types of interests consistently win out over others (Lowery and Gray 2004).

For instance, it is unlikely that an accurate and complete understanding can emerge of how different interests fare in policy debates if the actions and objectives of subsets of participants are considered in isolation from their relationships to other participants. A number of recent studies suggest that policy outcomes, generally, may well be shaped by the characteristics of advocates who take an interest in and participate on a given policy issue; also significant is whether and to what extent those participants oppose or support one another's objectives (Baumgartner, et al. 2009; Brasher 2009; Nelson and Yackee 2010). And the work of Salisbury and his colleagues (1987) serves as a reminder that the alliance and adversarial patterns that emerge in policy domains often are driven by the types of interests represented by organized advocates. Recent work also recognizes that organizations are not the only players relevant for interest representation; public, elected and also non-elected officials engage in issue advocacy and contribute to the representation of interests (Lowery and Gray 2004; Baumgartner, et al. 2009). Overall, it is increasingly apparent that any understanding of the policy process and its outcomes must consider the behavior of all types of advocates both in and out of government.<sup>1</sup>

The goals of policy advocates and the context in which those advocates operate also can affect whether they ultimately achieve their policy objectives. In their recent study, Baumgartner and his collaborators (2009) demonstrate that advocates' goals regarding the status quo affect the tactics they employ, the arguments they make, and how likely they are to achieve their objectives. The observed resilience of the status quo suggests that interests who benefit from status quo policy are indeed those who are likely to prevail. Yet it is also

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<sup>1</sup> Baumgartner and Leech's (2001) research offers an important illustration of how the *expected* behavior of other advocates may affect whose interests are represented in policy debates.

true that the current context surrounding an issue will affect how the policy process unfolds. For example, scholars have long recognized that one potential constraint on the advantage enjoyed by business interests is an expanded policy conflict, one that draws attention from the media and general public (Schattschneider 1975). According to Mark Smith (2000), attention does indeed limit the amount of influence the business community is able to exert over the policy process; the types of issues that unite the business community tend to be those that are relatively salient, attracting the attention of organized citizen interests.

Overall, the extant literature makes clear that understanding interest representation in the policy process and whose interests are likely to prevail in policy debates requires attention to more than identifying whose interests are engaged by various issues. To be sure, knowing whose interests are represented in a policy debate is important; it allows us to understand whose voices are articulated, even if those voices may not all be heard. However, merely identifying those voices does not go far enough; a more complete picture of interest representation also requires that we understand whether and how different sets of participants – including those in and out of government -- support or oppose one another. Attention to participants' shared and opposing objectives allows us to see whether they broaden or restrict the voices that are conveyed through the different sides of an issue debate. Knowledge of the teams of advocates that line up on different sides of an issue, and the context in which they take action provides for a more accurate picture of the policy process, one that allows us to better assess whether particular types of interests really do enjoy an advantage.

## Studying Interest Representation in the Policy Process

In order to investigate interest representation in the policy process and how it may affect policy outcomes, we draw on data collected through the Advocacy and Public Policymaking Project (see Baumgartner, et al. 2009). The project team conducted interviews with more than 300 Washington, DC-based policy advocates (e.g., representatives of organized interests, congressional staff, agency personnel) active on 98 randomly selected policy issues. The issues were identified and the interviews conducted over the last two years of the Clinton administration (1999-2000) and the first two years of the George W. Bush administration (2001-2002). Through these interviews and by searching systematically through publicly available documents the project team mapped out the constellation of government officials and organized interests mobilized on a given issue, and, through follow-up telephone interviews and by monitoring news and official web sites for four years after the initial interviews, the project team was able to find out who got what they wanted and who did not.

The issues included in the study were selected by a set of organizational advocates called *issue identifiers*. These issue identifiers were chosen at random from the list of organized interests that registered to lobby Congress in 1996, the last year for which these registration data were compiled in a usable format at the time the team began the data collection (see Baumgartner and Leech 1999). During the interviews, the issue identifier was asked to do the following: select the most recent issue he or she had spent time on; describe what he or she had done and what the organization was trying to accomplish on the issue; narrate the appeals and arguments they made when they spoke with others about the issue; specify with whom they had talked about the issue; describe the type of opposition they faced; and provide a variety of other information about their organizations. Interviewees were also asked to identify the major players on each side of the debate. This

typically elicited two lists, one of government officials and other outside advocates who shared the goals of the advocate, the other of a set of actors in opposition. Sometimes others were mentioned as well, sets of actors who were not necessarily opposed to what the advocate was trying to accomplish, but were seeking another outcome nonetheless. That set of actors who shared a policy goal was termed a “side.” The actors associated with a side may or may not have been working together; the team designated them as a side if they sought the same outcome even if they did not coordinate their activities.

The project team identified 214 “sides” over the 98 issues (see Table A.1 in the appendix) and attempted to interview a leading representative from each side on the issue; in each interview the team asked the same questions about who was involved (two to three interviews per issue were the norm). The number of sides per issue ranges from just one to seven but typically is just two: one side seeking some particular type of change to the existing policy and another side seeking to protect the status quo. The number of advocates on each side was determined by a count of “major players” – that is, any actors representing organizations as well as any elected or unelected government officials mentioned by others (or, occasionally, who were revealed through subsequent documentary searches) as playing a prominent and important role in the debate. Major players could include organizations that directed the overall advocacy effort on an issue and were the primary liaisons with congressional staff, members of Congress who served as bill sponsors and whose offices were involved in shepherding a measure through the chamber, as well as agency officials working with groups outside of government to develop language for a proposed rule. The number of major players per side ranges from just one to over fifty; the average (median) side is composed of eight advocates. Overall, the team identified 2,221 of these players across the 98 study issues. In order to be included in a side a major player had to have been actively supporting the goals of that side; that is, the actor had to have been actively

advocating either the retention of the status quo or some policy change. Government decision-makers who played a neutral role but who may have been the object of considerable lobbying were not included.

For every issue side that was identified, the team determined whether it was supportive of or opposed to the status quo policy. The status quo was defined in one of two ways, depending on whether the policy issue in question was legislative or regulatory. The status quo for legislative matters was defined as the policy in existence prior to the start of the session of Congress in which the issue was identified. For regulatory issues, the status quo was represented by the policy in place at the start of the calendar year in which the issue was identified. Sides that sought to change the status quo policy – regardless of whether or not they proposed a clear alternative to it – were classified as status quo challengers. Overall, 81 (37.9%) of the 214 sides are status quo supporters and 133 (62.2%) are challengers.

## **Who Sides with Whom? Interest Representation On A Random Sample of Policy Issues**

As explained above, we are interested in studying who participates and who is represented in a random sample of public policy debates, and also in explaining whether certain types of interests are more successful than others in achieving their policy goals. In order to carry out our investigation, we needed to develop measures that reflect the types of interests represented by the organizational and government advocates comprising each of the sides active on the sample of 98 issues. Because we are also interested in understanding whether and to what extent different interests seek the same policy outcomes, the measures we created also needed to capture the relative heterogeneity apparent among the interests that are part of a given side. With these goals in mind, we first sought to characterize the relative balance of organizational and government advocates

that comprised each side, and subsequently we created indicators that reflected both the relative balance of different types of organizational interests and governmental interests associated with each side.

The first characteristic of the sides that we examined was whether they reflected the interests of government, the interests of organizations, or the interests of both sets of advocates. Government advocates included members of Congress, officials and offices associated with the Executive Office of the President, and agency level bureaucrats. Organizational advocates included citizen or cause-related groups, business and trade associations, corporations and institutions, unions, professional associations, charities and civic groups, public interest law firms, religious groups and denominations, and associations of government units and government actors.<sup>2</sup> We classified a side as primarily reflecting organizational interests if the percentage of organizational actors comprising a side exceeded the percentage of government actors associated with that side by at least 30 percentage points. Similarly, if the percentage of government actors comprising a side exceeded the percentage of organizational actors associated with that side by at least 30 percentage points, we classified that side as primarily reflecting government interests. Sides comprised of more equal proportions of government and organizational interests (i.e., sides in which the percentages of government and organizational actors differed by less than 30 percentage points) were classified as “balanced” sides.<sup>3</sup> We also characterized

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<sup>2</sup> The following advocates were not classified as either organizational or governmental interests: consulting firms, individual non-government experts, individual state or local government officials, ad hoc congressional committees, foundations and think tanks, and coalitions. Coalitions were left unclassified because they could include actors from both categories. The other types of advocates were either difficult to classify (e.g., a governor) or sufficiently distinct (e.g., a foundation) from the other advocates in the government or organizational categories. Below we describe the procedures we used to account for the presence of coalitions or one or more of these “other” advocates when classifying the interests represented by each side.

<sup>3</sup> We set 30 percentage points as the cut off because it provided a relatively conservative indicator of the dominance of or balance between the different interests making up a side. For example, if members of Congress constituted two-thirds or more of the advocates associated with a side, it

separately the sides comprised entirely of organized interests and those comprised exclusively of government actors. Table 1 shows the extent of participation by organizational and governmental interests for the 191 active sides comprised of two or more advocates.<sup>4</sup>

**Table 1: Distribution of Organizational and Government Actors, by Sides**

	Number of Sides	Percent of Sides
Type of Side:		
Exclusively organizational actors	26	13.6%
Primarily organizational actors	45	23.6
Balance of organizational and government Actors	76	39.8
Primarily governmental actors	30	15.7
Exclusively government actors	14	7.3
Total	191	100.0

*Note:* Includes sides comprised of two or more advocates.

As Table 1 indicates, 40 percent of the sides are relatively balanced between government and organizational actors, over a third of the sides are primarily or exclusively comprised of organizational actors, and another 23 percent of the sides are dominated by advocates from government. The fairly sizable proportions of sides that either are dominated by government advocates or balanced between government actors and organizations provide a useful corrective to the many popular accounts of lobbying that depict organizational advocates pressing their claims to members of Congress as if the members had no particular policy preferences. Quite to the contrary, our data show that interest representation in policy debates is not achieved solely through organizations. More

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seemed reasonable to expect that the dominant voice of that side was the voice of government rather than that of the outnumbered organizations who were also part of that side. Conversely, if a side was comprised of six members of Congress and four organizational representatives, it would be much more difficult to claim that the interests of the congressional advocates dominated that side.

<sup>4</sup> We did not classify the organization-government balance of, nor the types of interests represented by the 23 single actor sides. Obviously, the concept of balance has no meaning for these sides, and their inclusion overstates the prevalence of government-exclusive and organization-exclusive sides.

often than not, representatives from organizations and those from government actively advocate on behalf of their shared policy goals.

The second set of indicators we created was designed to gauge the types of organized interests and the types of government interests the sides represented. To this end, we created four variables that distinguish between different types of organizational advocates – citizen interests (cause-related and public interest groups, religious groups, charities, and unions); business, corporate or institutional interests (individual corporations and institutions as well as associations of institutions or corporations, business groups, and trade associations); professional or occupational interests (e.g., Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, National Wrestling Coaches Association); and the interests of government entities or groups of government actors (e.g., Association of State Drinking Water Regulators, National Association of Counties). For government actors we created two variables in order to distinguish between members of Congress and actors in the executive branch. Included in the latter category are White House officials as well as civil servants working in government agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency.

Once these interest type variables were defined, we set out, first, to determine whether the sides reflected one type of organizational interest, or whether different types of organized interests in relatively equal numbers were present on the side. Second, we sought to similarly characterize the types of government interests represented by the sides. Namely, whether the government actors affiliated with a side reflected mostly or exclusively congressional interests, executive branch interests, or both types of interests. To accomplish each of these tasks, we took the same approach that we used to determine whether primarily organizational or primarily governmental interests were associated with a side. That is, to determine the type of organizational representation characterizing the

sides, we assessed whether the percentage of one type of organized interest exceeded each of the three others by a margin of 30 percentage points or more<sup>5</sup>. If it did, we categorized the side as reflecting primarily citizen interests, primarily business interests, primarily occupational interests, or primarily organized government interests, respectively.<sup>6</sup> If no one type of interest prevailed, we characterized the side's organized interests as representing a mix of different types. Similarly, in order to determine the type of government representation characterizing the sides, we evaluated whether the percentage of congressional interests differed from the percentage of executive branch interests by a margin of 30 percentage points or more. If it did, we categorized the side as reflecting primarily congressional interests or primarily executive branch interests. If the difference in the percentage of these two types of government interests was less than 30 percentage points, we characterized the government interests associated with the side as mixed. Tables 2.A and 2.B show the distributions of organizational interests and government interests for all of the relevant active sides, as well as for the organizationally-dominated, government-dominated, and balanced sides.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> We computed the percentage of each of the four types of organizational interests out of the total number of organizational interests. Likewise, the percentage of members of Congress and the percentage of executive branch actors were computed from a base figure that combines the two types of government actors.

<sup>6</sup> An important assumption underlying our work is that organizations represent the interests of their constituents and members. To what extent and how organizations do so will certainly vary. These are important questions but they are not ones we address here.

<sup>7</sup> After the sides were categorized in this way, we examined the composition of any side that included one or more "other" advocates mentioned above: consulting firms, individual non-government experts, individual state or local government officials, ad hoc congressional committees, foundations and think tanks, and coalitions. We did so to assess whether the presence of these advocates led to misclassified sides. For example, a side initially classified as having a mix of organized interests might also include a coalition comprised exclusively of business interests. In conjunction with the other business interests associated with the side, the presence of the coalition could (depending on its size and the number of organized interests associated with a side) lead us to reclassify it as primarily reflecting the interests of business. The point is that all sides that included "other" advocates were reexamined to ensure that they were appropriately categorized. This procedure led to the reclassification of 23 sides.

**Table 2.A: Types of Organizational Interests Represented by Sides with Different Proportions of Government and Organizational Actors**

	<u>Primarily Organizational Actors</u>	<u>Balance of Organizational &amp; Government Actors</u>	<u>Primarily Government Actors</u>	<u>All Sides</u>
Primarily business interests	42.3%	34.2%	36.7%	37.9%
Primarily citizen interests	31.0	30.3	26.7	29.9
Primarily occupational interests	4.2	11.8	23.3	10.7
Primarily organized government interests	2.8	1.3	0.0	1.7
Mix of organized interests	19.7	22.4	13.3	19.8
Number of sides	71	76	30	177

*Note:* Includes sides comprised of two or more advocates with at least one organized interest. The 14 sides that consist solely of government actors are not included in this table because they have no representation from organized interests.

As shown in the far-right column of Table 2.A, the vast majority of all the active sides (80 percent) are dominated by a single type of interest. Nearly two-fifths of all the active sides (38 percent) primarily reflect the interests of business, and just under a third (30 percent) primarily reflect citizen interests. Far fewer of the active sides reflect a mix of different types of interests (20 percent), or the interests of particular occupations or organized entities related to government (11 percent and 2 percent, respectively).

For the most part, these same patterns of interest representation are evident when we take into account whether a side is comprised primarily of organizations, comprised primarily of government actors, or shows a fairly even balance of government and organization actors. Specifically, the active organizations that make up a side tend to reflect a single type of interest and, more often than not, that interest represents the concerns and priorities of the business and corporate community. The main difference observed across these three categories of sides is the degree to which the sides with organizational actors that represent business interests exceed those with organizational actors that reflect citizen interests. Among the sides that are comprised primarily of organizations, we are much

more likely to observe sides dominated by the interests of business (42 percent of the sides) than we are to observe sides predominantly representing the interests of citizens (31 percent of the sides). In contrast, the organized interests represented among the sides with a government-organization balance are almost equally likely to be those of the business and corporate community (34 percent of the sides) as they are to be those of citizens (30 percent of the sides). Taken together, these patterns may reflect the willingness and ability of business interests to be proactive on issues that have not yet engaged government officials, including those issues that have yet to be taken up on the political agenda.

The pattern of interest representation by organizations is a bit different when we look at the sides that are comprised primarily of government officials. Like the other sides shown in Table 2.A, the organizations associated with sides dominated by government actors are relatively more likely to reflect the interests of the business and corporate community than they are to reflect any other type of interest. But, in contrast to the sides made up primarily of organizations as well as those with a balance of government actors and organizations, the sides made up primarily of government actors are relatively more likely to reflect the organized interests of professional associations (23 percent of sides), and relatively less likely to represent a mix of different interests (13 percent of sides). Yet these differences between the government-dominated sides and the other sides shown in Table 2.A may be less significant than they appear; the 30 sides that are comprised primarily of government actors include no more than a handful (five, to be exact) of organized interests.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, what may be most notable about the sides comprised primarily of government actors is that they reflect little in the way of organizational interest

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<sup>8</sup>In contrast, the organizationally-dominated sides may include as many as 18 government actors. The government-dominated sides also are significantly smaller overall than either the balanced or organizationally dominated sides. On average, the sides dominated by government actors include about seven advocates whereas the organizationally-dominated sides have 11 and the balanced sides 13. These differences between the government-dominated sides and the two other types of sides are statistically significant at the .01 level.

representation of any type (recall from Table 1 that there are also 14 sides that include *no* organizational actors). With some regularity, then, government officials advocate positions and seek policy outcomes that reflect their own (and/or their constituents') interests.

The types of government interests represented by the sides are shown in Table 2.B. Given that our study issues were identified by representatives from organizations that were registered to lobby Congress, it is not surprising that members of Congress are as active as they are among the sides associated with the 98 issues. Overall, the data in Table 2.B show that nearly four-fifths (78 percent) of all the active sides reflect primarily the interests of Congress. Far fewer of the active sides reflect either a balance of congressional and executive branch actors (12 percent), or primarily the interests of executive branch officials (10 percent).

**Table 2.B: Types of Government Interests Represented by Sides with Different Proportions of Government and Organizational Actors**

	<u>Primarily Organizational Actors</u>	<u>Balance of Organizational &amp; Government Actors</u>	<u>Primarily Government Actors</u>	<u>All Sides</u>
Primarily congressional interests	77.8%	82.9%	70.5%	78.2%
Primarily executive branch interests	11.1	9.2	9.1	9.7
Mix of government interests	11.1	7.9	20.5	12.1
Number of sides	45	76	44	165

*Note:* Includes sides comprised of two or more advocates with at least one government actor. The 26 sides that consist solely of organizational actors are not included in this table because they have no representation from government interests.

In fact, as Table 2.B illustrates, members of Congress are overwhelmingly the dominant government interest represented regardless of the relative balance of organizational and governmental actors that make up a side. Specifically, between 71 and 83 percent of the government interests associated with the sides are primarily comprised of members of Congress. Because the government interests associated with a side are almost

always synonymous with congressional interests (at least for this sample of issues), virtually any other type of interest representation by government actors is a pretty rare event. The only notable exception to this pattern is the fact that one-fifth of all sides comprised primarily of government actors represent the interests of both executive branch and congressional officials.

Table 2.C provides additional information about the congressional interests that are so frequently a part of the sides that are active on the study issues. Specifically, the table shows the partisan distribution of the congressional interests that are associated with all the sides that include members of Congress, as well as the sides that are dominated by organizations, dominated by government, and balanced between government and organizational actors.<sup>9</sup> Table 2.C reveals that the congressional interests represented by the sides tend not only to be partisan but more often than not, Republican. So, while over two-thirds of all the sides with congressional actors reflect either Democratic or Republican interests, the vast majority of those partisan sides are Republican. In addition, even though only a third of the sides overall reflect the interests of a bipartisan set of government actors, those sides outnumber the sides that reflect Democratic congressional interests. Indeed, the relatively greater Republican presence among the congressional actors active on a side is even more pronounced when we consider just the sides that are primarily comprised of organized interests (45 percent Republican versus 33 percent Democrat), and just those primarily comprised of government actors (45 percent Republican versus 28 percent Democrat). As Table 2.C illustrates, it is only when sides are comprised of a fairly even

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<sup>9</sup>The partisan balance of the sides was assessed using the same approach that we used to determine whether primarily organizational or primarily governmental interests were associated with a side, and whether one or more types of organizational and governmental interests were represented. Specifically, a side was deemed to be primarily Republican if the percentage of Republican members of Congress exceeded the percentage of Democratic members of Congress by a margin of 30 percentage points or more. A side was considered primarily Democratic if the Democratic percentage of members was similarly greater than the Republican percentage. Bipartisan sides are those in which the percentages of Democrats and Republicans differ by less than 30 percentage points.

balance of organizational and government actors that the congressional actors associated with those sides represent the interests of both Democrats and Republicans.

**Table 2.C: Partisanship of Congressional Interests Represented by Sides with Different Proportions of Government and Organizational Actors**

	<u>Primarily Organizational Actors</u>	<u>Balance of Organizational &amp; Government Actors</u>	<u>Primarily Government Actors</u>	<u>All Sides</u>
Primarily Republican interests	45.0%	31.9%	45.0%	38.9%
Primarily Democratic interests	32.5	27.5	27.5	28.9
Bipartisan interests	22.5	40.6	27.5	32.2
Number of sides	40	69	40	149

*Note:* Includes sides comprised of two or more advocates that are characterized as representing primarily congressional interests or a mix of government interests.

To some extent, that Republican interests were often the primary ones represented by congressional actors active on a side is not unexpected. Republicans were the majority party during both sessions of Congress covered by the study (the 106<sup>th</sup> and 107<sup>th</sup> sessions of Congress). But the relatively greater presence of Republican members of Congress is a bit surprising given that the participants making up the sides included any actor who played a prominent and important role in either challenging or defending current policy. With this in mind, these patterns in the data may reflect the fact that Democratic members of Congress were less willing, as members of the minority party, to devote their scarce resources and time to advancing positions and taking the lead on issues that had no support from the majority party or issues that had little chance of becoming part of the legislative agenda, choosing instead to allocate time and effort to issues that would be taken up by Congress and to positions that held some potential for success. If this is the case, the Democrats' reluctance to play a major role on a wide array of issues would be similar to the skewed pattern of organizational participation that was described by Baumgartner and

Leech (2001). That is, while business interests were involved on a number of issues, most other organized interests were more selective in their participation, engaging solely on those issues that were being actively considered by government.

In Table 3, we consider jointly the types of organizational interests (from Table 2A) and the government interests (from Tables 2B & 2C) that characterize the sides in our study. Taken together, these data provide a useful summary of our observations about whose interests are represented by the sides; whether organizational and government actors typically share the same goals and occupy the same side on policy issues; and whether sides reflect different types of organizational interests who seek the same policy outcomes. For one, the figures in Table 3 make clear that the organizational interest represented by most sides tends to be that of business (67 sides); sides reflecting citizen interests rank second in prevalence (53 sides). As noted earlier, these single-interest sides are the norm; they outnumber to a fairly large extent the sides that reflect a mix of different interests (as shown in Table 3, the 67 sides reflecting the interests of businesses and corporations are nearly double the 35 reflecting the concerns and priorities of a mix of different types of organized interests). Based on this sample of issues, “strange bedfellows” are not a common sight in policy debates. That diverse interests pursuing the same policy goals appear to be so rare may explain why they are suggested to be important for policy success. That is, if a mix of different types of interests are seen by policymakers to be supportive of the same outcome, that shared support could serve as a signal for their being relatively broad benefits associated with a given policy alternative. Policymakers, especially those who are elected, would no doubt seek to support such a popular measure. In our analysis of policy outcomes, we consider whether there is evidence to support this assertion about “strange bedfellows” and policy success.

**Table 3: Who Sides With Whom? Primary Types of Organizational and Governmental Interests by Side**

	The primary organizational interest is:				
	<u>Business/ Corporate/ Institutional</u>	<u>Citizen</u>	<u>Occupational</u>	<u>Organized Government</u>	<u>Multiple Interests</u>
The primary government interest is that of:					
Members of Congress	59.7%	67.9%	73.7%	66.7%	80.0%
Executive branch officials	7.5	9.4	0.0	0.0	5.7
Multiple government actors	13.4	13.2	10.5	0.0	2.9
Organizations only (no government actors)	19.4	9.4	15.8	33.3	11.4
Number of sides	67	53	19	3	35

*Notes:* Includes sides with two or more actors, at least one of which represents an organized interest (177 sides). Another 14 sides include only government officials.

The data in Table 3 also underscore how common it is for members of Congress to give voice to their policy preferences through the sides associated with the sample issues. While this comes as no particular surprise given the approach that was taken to select the study issues, it is notable that the extent of congressional involvement with the sides of these issues varies somewhat depending on the type of organizational interests a side represents. As shown in Table 3, the interests of members of Congress are represented on a total of 83 percent of the sides that also are representative of the interests of different types of organized interests (the government interests represented by 80 percent of the sides reflect primarily the interests of members of Congress, and another three percent of the sides reflect the interests both of Congress and the executive branch). As mentioned above, these sides that reflect a mix of different interests are not especially common, but they nonetheless almost always include representation from Congress. Similar percentages of sides representing congressional interests also are apparent among the sides that reflect the interests of citizens as well as the interests of particular occupations. But a somewhat different pattern is apparent among the more numerous sides with organizational interests

representative of the business or corporate community. Among these sides, about 73 percent reflect the interests of members of Congress (59.7 percent of the sides reflect primarily the interests of members of Congress and another 13.4 percent reflect their interests in conjunction with those of the executive branch).<sup>10</sup> On their own, these differences in congressional participation across the sides might not seem especially meaningful; no matter how you examine the data, Congress' interests are nearly ubiquitous across the sides associated with our study issues. However, Table 3 shows that a sizable proportion of the sides representing the interests of the business community (about a fifth) include no representation of governmental interests. In contrast, fewer than 10 percent of the sides representing the interests of citizens include no interest representation from government. As noted above, the relatively greater absence of government interests among the business-focused sides may reflect a greater ability and willingness on the part of the business community to engage on issues that are not part of the active governmental agenda. Later in the paper, we consider whether organized interests' differential tendencies to side with any type of government interests have implications for their success as policy advocates.

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<sup>10</sup> An even lower percentage of the sides dominated by government-related organizations include members of Congress. With only three sides of this type, the relatively lower percentage is not substantively important.

## Who Opposes Whom? Interest Opposition On A Random Sample of Policy Issues

As we mention earlier, most studies that examine the participation and representation of organized interests in the policy process do not consider the extent or type of organized opposition that they encounter. In Table 4, we turn our attention to this missing piece of the policy context by examining the types of interests that are represented on opposing sides of the study issues. Here, we focus exclusively on the types of *organized* interests associated with each opposing side.<sup>11</sup> Of particular interest is how often different types of interests encounter opposition, whether interests of a given type stake out positions in opposition to one another, whether one type of interest tends to be opposed with some regularity by other types of interests, or whether there is no clear pattern of opposition.

As shown in Table 4, the organized interests most likely to be observed on different sides of our sample of issues are citizen interests and those of businesses or corporations. Just over a quarter (27 percent) of the 79 pairs of opposing sides involve one side comprised mostly of citizen groups working against a side made up primarily of business groups or corporations. At first glance this may not seem too surprising in that it reflects the iconic battle so often described in popular and scholarly accounts of lobbying. However, many studies that examine the participation of organized interests in the policy process describe the ubiquitous presence of business interests in Washington, DC and on Capitol Hill, and the relative absence of countervailing voices (Schlozman 1984; Petracca 1986; Golden 1998; for an exception see Salisbury, et al. 1987). But Table 4 shows not only the opposition the business community faces from citizen interests, but also the relatively

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<sup>11</sup> Because of the widespread participation of members of Congress across the sides, and the relative absence of executive branch actors, members of Congress typically find themselves in opposition, and they serve as the most prevalent form of government opposition encountered by organized interests.

**Table 4: Who Opposes Whom? Primary Types of Organizational Interests by Opposing Sides**

	<u>Business/ corporate/ institutional</u>	<u>Citizen</u>	<u>Occupational</u>	<u>Organized Government</u>	<u>Multiple Interests</u>	<u>Government Only (no organizations)</u>
Business/corporate/ institutional	10.1%	26.6%	2.5%	2.5%	17.7%	8.9%
Citizen		6.3	3.8	1.3	10.1	0.0
Occupational			1.3	1.3	0.0	0.0
Organized government				0.0	0.0	0.0
Multiple interests					2.5	5.1
Government only (no organizations)						0.0
<hr/>						
Number of opposing pairs with at least one side of this type	54	38	7	4	28	11
Percent of all opposing sides (n=79)	68.4%	48.1%	8.9%	5.1%	35.4%	13.9%
<hr/>						
Number of sides with no opposition (n=35)	7	9	9	1	7	2
Percent of all sides of this type	10.4%	17.0%	47.4%	33.3%	20.0%	14.3%

*Notes:* Includes sides with two or more actors that are opposed by sides with two or more actors. There are 79 pairs of sides for which we can compare the dominant type of organizational interests on one side with the dominant organizational interest on the other side. These pairs serve as the base for the percentages shown in the upper third of the table. For example, the 10.1 percent shown in the business-business cell in the upper left-hand corner reflects the percentage of all opposing pairs of sides in our sample that are characterized by a side dominated by business interests opposing another side dominated by business interests (eight of the 79 pairs). The percentages are symmetric for each type of opposing pairs.

The middle third of the table provides information about the relative distribution of interests represented by the sides in the opposing pairs. The bottom third of the table shows the number and percentage of sides of a given type that encounter no active organizational or governmental opposition. For example, the last row shows that nine of 53 sides dominated by the interests of citizens (17 percent) faced no active organizational or government opposition.

frequent opposition it encounters from sides that are comprised of different types of interests (18 percent of opposing sides pit a mix of organized interests against the interests of business). Indeed, these two types of organizational opposition characterize almost half (44 percent) of all the opposing sides associated with the study issues. Business, clearly a dominant voice in policy debates, does not go unchallenged. Of course, the percentages shown in the first row of Table 4 also speak to the prevalence of business *as an opponent* to other interests.<sup>12</sup> The relatively high rate at which business serves as opposition is consistent with its greater capacity relative to other types of interests to become involved simultaneously in as many issues as its interests and agendas dictate. Later in the paper, we will consider whether opposition from business interests affects the likelihood that opposing sides achieve their objectives.

Table 4 also provides information about the extent to which different types of interests encounter any opposition. Looking first at the two rows below the first shaded line, Table 4 shows that over two-thirds of all the opposing sides include at least one side dominated by business interests. Of course, we know from Table 2.A that business-dominated sides are quite common in our sample. But their prevalence among the sides associated with our study issues does not necessarily dictate that they be among the opposing sides in large numbers. They might instead be well represented among the sides with no opposition. But as the bottom rows of Table 4 illustrate, business-dominated sides make up a relatively small percentage of the 35 sides that encounter no active opposition from government or organizations. Although this may initially appear to be bad news for

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<sup>12</sup> In addition to the data shown in Table 4, we computed the proportion of opposition that sides of each interest type encountered. With two exceptions, at least half of a side's opponents were sides dominated by business interests. For example, 21 of the 38 pairs (55 percent) with at least one side dominated by the interests of citizens involved opposition from business interests. As another example, 14 of the 28 pairs (50 percent) with at least one side characterized by a mix of different interests involved opposing sides dominated by business. The only sides that were more likely to face opposition from a source other than business were business-dominated sides and those few sides dominated by the interests of particular occupations.

business and good news for sides representing other types of interests, recent evidence suggests that a lack of tangible opposition may serve as an indicator of a lack of serious attention from government actors and other policy advocates to the issues that command the attention of these groups (Baumgartner, et al. 2009).

Taken together, the data we present in Tables 1 through 4 provide us with a fairly comprehensive picture of who participates and whose interests are represented in the policy debates associated with a random sample of issues. These data tell us whose interests are conveyed with great regularity and whose interests are less often part of the policy dialogue. To this end, it is no surprise that the voice of business is articulated with more frequency than is the voice of any other type of organized interest. But because we also give attention to actors within government, our data make plain that the interests of government, most especially the interests of Republican members of Congress, are almost never absent from the debate over policy.

Unlike many studies, our data also provide us with information about the full array of interests engaged by the same issues, and whether their policy objectives tend to be similar to those of other participants. Here we see that different types of interests rarely share the same goals on policy issues. Instead, single types of interests – those of the business community or those of individual citizens – tend to pursue the same goals on issues that engage them. Rarely does one type of interest share a common perspective on policy with another type. In fact, a similar observation can be made about government advocates. Republicans in Congress find themselves on the same side of an issue with much more regularity than they find themselves articulating the same objectives as Democrats. Bipartisan perspectives in an issue debate are not common. Not surprisingly, then, business and citizen interests frequently find themselves opposing one another in issue debates, with business an especially common opponent to all types of interests. In the

section that follows, we consider whether sides' achievement of their policy goals are shaped by these patterns of participation. Specifically, we investigate whether a side's achievement of its goals is affected by the types of interests engaged in the issue debate, the interests represented by its opponents, and the characteristics of issues and advocates that are known to shape success.

## **Does Interest Representation Affect Outcomes?**

Given what we have learned about the types of interests represented through the active sides on our study issues, we turn our attention to whether and how the presence of particular interests in policy debates translates into policy success. Are certain types of interests (e.g., business), or certain combinations of interests working toward the same goal (e.g., those of business and citizens) more likely than other types or combinations of interests to realize their policy goals? If so, to what can we attribute their greater likelihood of success? Does it emerge from the greater capacity of certain interests or combinations of interests to achieve success? How, if at all, does opposition affect that capacity? Are observed advantages still apparent when we account for other variables that have been shown to shape a side's likelihood of success (e.g., administration opposition, a comparative resource advantage)? In order to investigate the links between interest representation and outcomes, we examine whether the types of interests that characterize the various sides associated with our 98 policy issues help to explain, all else being equal, the observed variation in sides' success. Our measure of *policy success* distinguishes sides that fully or partially achieved their desired policy outcome after four years (coded one) from sides that did not get their desired outcome after four years (coded zero). Table 5 lists the full set of variables that we include in our analysis. In addition to the variables that reflect the interests represented by each side and the interests represented by opponents, we include

variables to account for various sources of opposition and support the sides received, as well as variables previously shown to affect success, including a side's support for or opposition to the status quo and the resource advantage a side enjoys over its opponents (Baumgartner, et al. 2009).

The first variable shown in Table 5 measures whether a side *supports* (coded zero) or is *challenging the status quo policy* (coded one). Policy change is quite unusual so we need to account for the lower likelihood of success experienced by sides that challenge the status quo (Baumgartner, et al. 2009).

The next two sets of variables in our model reflect the primary types of organizational interests and the primary types of congressional interests represented by the sides in our study. As indicated in Table 5, each type of interest is measured using a set of dichotomous variables. The first two variables are coded one if the side reflects primarily business interests or primarily citizen interests, respectively, as defined above. The third variable combines some of the smaller categories of interest types described above. Specifically, *primarily other interests* is coded one if a side reflects primarily occupational interests, primarily organized government interests, some combination of these two types of interests, or one of these types of interests in combination with business or citizen interests. The omitted category then reflects only those sides that are comprised of a relatively even balance of business and citizen interests. We took this approach so that the omitted category would reflect what most political observers have in mind when they think about "strange bedfellows."<sup>13</sup> Based on the existing literature, we expect that sides dominated by the interests of business are likely to be more successful in achieving their

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<sup>13</sup> We are not aware of any generally accepted definition of "strange bedfellows." The term appears to be used rather loosely to refer to actors who share a position on a particular policy option or goal even though they generally represent different interests or have divergent perspectives on policy.

**Table 5: Variables Affecting Sides' Chances of Policy Success**

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Value Range</u>			<u>Valid Observations</u> (# of sides)	<u>Expected Effect on Policy Success</u>
	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Maximum</u>		
Policy success	.51	0	1	214	
Status quo challenger	.62	0	1	214	-
<u>Type of Organized Interest Represented</u>					
Primarily business interests	.35	0	1	191	+
Primarily citizen interest	.28	0	1	191	ns
Primarily other interests	.16	0	1	191	ns
<u>Type of Congressional Interest Represented</u>					
Primarily Republican interests	.33	0	1	191	+
Primarily Democratic interests	.23	0	1	191	-
<u>Sources of Opposition</u>					
Executive branch	.20	0	1	169	-
Members of Congress	.43	0	1	169	-
Business interests	.31	0	1	147	-
Citizen interests	.22	0	1	147	-
Business interests x status quo challenger	.17	0	1	147	-
Citizen interests x status quo challenger	.13	0	1	147	-
<u>Side Resources</u>					
Comparative resource advantage	-.12	-6.25	2.88	214	+
Midlevel government allies	1.71	0	12	214	+
Issue salience	.10	-.54	2.80	214	+ or -

Notes: ns indicates that we anticipate no significant effects on success

policy goals than are other types of sides, especially compared to the sides dominated by citizen interests. We also expect that sides comprised of “strange bedfellows” will be relatively successful, although we are uncertain about precisely how these sides will fare in relation to other specific types of interests.

The primary types of congressional interests represented by the sides in our study are measured with two dichotomous variables. *Primarily Republican* and *primarily Democratic sides* are coded one if the congressional advocates comprising a side are primarily Republican members of Congress or Democratic members of Congress, respectively. The omitted category reflects the sides with members of Congress from both parties, as well as those without any congressional actors. Given that Republicans were the majority party in Congress during the period of the study, we expect that sides dominated by Republican members of Congress will be more likely than other sides to realize success. For the same reason, we expect that sides comprised primarily of Democratic members will be much less likely than other sides to realize success. Our expectations regarding the bipartisan sides and those sides without congressional representation are less clear. On the one hand, we might expect the bipartisan sides to be relatively successful if the presence of members of Congress from both parties is indicative of that side’s appeal to a relatively broad segment of the Congress. On the other hand, sides that draw support from members on both sides of the aisle could be a relatively ineffective in moving issues through a partisan chamber. This could explain why these sides are fairly uncommon across our sample of issues (see Table 2.C). Members and other advocates may see little value in constructing alliances that draw bipartisan support if these alliances are relatively ineffective at moving legislation forward. Finally, we have no a priori expectations about the relative likelihood of success for sides without congressional representation.

The next four variables in our model reflect the types of opposition encountered by the sides in our study. As Table 5 illustrates, we have two dichotomous measures that are each coded one if a side reports experiencing active *opposition from the executive branch*, or *opposition from members of Congress*, respectively. In addition, we include measures of the type of organizational opposition that sides encounter. *Opposition from business interests* is coded one if a side not dominated by the interests of the business community is opposed by a side that primarily represents those interests. Similarly, *opposition from citizen interests* is coded one if a side not dominated by citizen interests is opposed by a side that primarily represents those interests. We expect that all forms of opposition will have a negative effect on success. We are especially interested in whether sides' prospects for success could be eroded when they are opposed by sides that represent a particular type of organized interest. Business interests and citizen interests could enjoy an advantage if they were able to prevent or lessen their opponents' chances of achieving their policy goals. Although citizen interests and business interests are frequently on opposing sides of an issue (see Table 4), it remains unclear whether they play a part in affecting one another's success. Because it is possible that the success of sides challenging or supporting the status quo may be affected by whether or not the side also represents business or citizen interests, we include two interactive terms. The first is for the combined effect of a side challenging the status quo and drawing opposition from a business dominated side while the second is the combined effect of a side seeking policy change and being opposed by a side reflecting citizen interests.

Our model of policy success also includes two measures of sides' resources. As shown in Table 5, we include an *index comparing a side's resources* to those of its opponents, with larger, positive values indicating that a side enjoys an advantage relative to its opponents and larger, negative values indicating that a side is disadvantaged relative to its

opponents.<sup>14</sup> In addition, we include an indicator that counts a side's support from *midlevel government allies*, including leaders of committees or subcommittees that have jurisdiction over the issue of interest to the side. Based on the analyses presented by Baumgartner and his collaborators (2009), we expect that sides with these assets are likely to increase their chances for policy success.

Finally, as shown in Table 5, our model of success includes an indicator of *issue salience* that taps both congressional and media attention to an issue. Higher values on the salience index reflect issues with greater public visibility. We control for salience in our model because it is possible that sides' rates of policy success will covary along with the level of public attention an issue receives.

Table 6 presents the results of our analysis of sides' policy success.<sup>15</sup> Looking first at the variables that reflect the types of organizational and congressional interests represented by the sides, Table 6 shows that the sides reflecting primarily business or corporate interests and those that primarily reflect the interests of citizens are statistically significantly more likely than sides that reflect a mix of citizen and business interests to achieve their policy goals ( $p=.06$  and  $p=.07$ , respectively). In addition, sides that primarily reflect the interests of Republican members of Congress are statistically significantly more likely than sides that are bipartisan in composition and those without congressional representation to achieve policy success ( $p=.05$ ). Table 7 makes use of the logit coefficients shown in Table 6 to illustrate these differences in sides' chances of achieving their policy goals.

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<sup>14</sup> See Baumgartner, et al. (2009) for information about the content of the index.

<sup>15</sup> If we estimate an ordered logit model where the dependent variable distinguishes between complete, partial, and no success, the results are substantively unchanged from those we present in Table 6. We opt to present the simpler, dichotomous analysis.

**Table 6: Logit Analysis of Policy Outcomes/Success**

<b><u>Variable</u></b>	<b><u>Coefficient</u></b>	<b><u>p-value</u></b>
Constant	-0.55 (1.08)	0.61
Status Quo Challenger	-1.94 (0.78)	0.01
<b><u>Type of Organized Interest Represented</u></b>		
Primarily business interests	1.65 (0.86)	0.06
Primarily citizen interests	1.56 (0.86)	0.07
Primarily other interests	1.34 (0.96)	0.16
<b><u>Type of Congressional Interest Represented</u></b>		
Primarily Republican interests	1.13 (0.58)	0.05
Primarily Democratic interests	-0.20 (0.67)	0.77
<b><u>Sources of Opposition</u></b>		
Executive Branch	-1.87 (0.63)	0.00
Members of Congress	0.78 (0.49)	0.11
Business interests	-0.12 (1.00)	0.90
Citizen interests	-0.23 (0.94)	0.80
Business interests x status quo challenger	-0.34 (1.15)	0.77
Citizen interests x status quo challenger	-0.49 (1.19)	0.68
<b><u>Side Resources</u></b>		
Comparative resource advantage	0.50 (0.30)	0.10
Midlevel government allies	0.11 (.10)	0.28
Issue salience	-0.25 (0.34)	0.47
Number of observations	122	
Pseudo $R^2$	0.27	
Log-Likelihood	-62.08	

*Notes:* Figures in each column are maximum likelihood estimates (standard errors are shown in parentheses below each coefficient). Policy success is coded one if the side partially or fully achieved its goal and 0 if the side did not achieve its goal.

**Table 7: Changes in Predicted Probability of Policy Success**

Independent Variables	Change in IV	Change in Predicted Probability
Status quo challenger	0 to 1	-0.37
Primarily business interests	0 to 1	0.31
Primarily citizen interests	0 to 1	0.28
Primarily Republican interests	0 to 1	0.20
Executive Branch opposition	0 to 1	-0.15
Comparative resource advantage	20 <sup>th</sup> to 80 <sup>th</sup> percentile	.09

*Notes:* Changes in predicted probabilities were estimated for variables that have a statistically significant effect on success ( $p=.10$  or less) based on the model shown in Table 6.

According to Table 7, the expected probability of policy success increases by about .31 for a side that reflects business, corporate, or institutional interests relative to a side that reflects a mix of business and citizen interests. It appears, then, that business interests do indeed have an advantage. However, the nature of that advantage differs from what is typically described in the extant literature. At least implicitly, most discussion in the extant literature about the advantages enjoyed by business interests characterizes that advantage relative to the interests of citizens. But we find no statistically discernable difference in the likelihood of policy success between sides that predominantly reflect citizen interests and those that reflect the interests of the business community.<sup>16</sup> In fact, Table 7 shows that sides that predominantly reflect the interests of citizens also have an advantage. Relative to sides reflecting a mix of business and citizen interests, the expected probability of realizing

<sup>16</sup> We tested for differences in the likelihood of success between sides representing every type of organizational interest – e.g., sides primarily representing the interests of the business community and those primarily reflecting the interests of citizens, sides representing occupational interests and those reflecting citizen interests). The only statistically significant differences are those shown in Table 7.

policy success is about .28 points greater for those sides that primarily represent the interests of citizens.

Importantly, the lower expected probability of success that we observe for sides that reflect both business and citizen interests is somewhat unexpected. In much of the extant literature, the existence of “strange bedfellows,” signals to legislators the broad popularity of that goal. Consequently, legislators should perceive little risk and potentially considerable electoral gain in supporting the bedfellows’ positions. But our data suggest that policymakers might not be so inclined to support these diverse sides. The sides representing the interests of both citizens and businesses operate at a relative disadvantage to the more commonly observed single-interest sides (see Table 2.A). Although we cannot know for certain why the sides reflecting the interests of unusual allies are less successful than the literature leads us to expect, their relative lack of success may be understood by distinguishing between the breadth of support associated with an issue and the depth of that support. The extant literature may be right that broad support for an issue is conveyed when a policy alternative is supported or opposed by an array of different types of interests, or simply by interests that are seen as having distinctive perspectives on issues, such as those of individual citizens and the business community. However, that breadth of support (or opposition) may not be accompanied by deep support (or opposition). Instead, the issues that attract different interests on the same side might be relatively lower priorities for at least some of the organized interests that are included in those sides. In contrast, the issues that attract single-interest support might be those that provide more focused benefits to and thus are higher priorities for the associated organizations. If this is the case, the sides overall or the organizations that comprise them may put forth greater effort on the higher priority issues that draw support from interests of a particular type than they do on

the lower priority issues that attract more diverse interests.<sup>17</sup> If success comes with greater effort, the more homogeneous sides would more often realize success. Unfortunately, we cannot test this claim because we lack systematic information about the priority assigned to the study issues by the advocates associated with each side.<sup>18</sup>

Returning to Table 7, we see that the differences in policy success for sides representing different types of organizational interests are mimicked in some ways by differences in the likelihood of success for sides reflecting different types of congressional interests. Specifically, relative to sides comprised of congressional actors from both parties and those with no congressional representation, the expected probability of success is .20 points greater for those sides that primarily reflect the interests of Republican members of Congress. That greater success would come to Republican-dominated sides is not especially surprising given that Republicans were the majority party in Congress during the period covered by the study. In fact, Baumgartner, et al. (2009) found that of the 98 study issues, those deemed most partisan received relatively more attention in Congress and were more likely to be subject to a floor vote. Republicans were likely to do well on these votes because in both the 106<sup>th</sup> and 107<sup>th</sup> sessions of Congress, the leadership typically did not bring measures to the floor unless the measures had support from the Republican caucus. That being said, we are somewhat surprised that the Republican dominated sides' rates of success are not significantly greater than the sides that primarily reflect the interests of

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<sup>17</sup> Recall that all of the advocates associated with the sides in this project are major players on the associated issues. Consequently, we are *not* suggesting that some participants in the "mixed" sides resemble Hula's (1999) "peripheral" actors. In his model, the periphery seek information or other organizational (rather than policy-focused) benefits in exchange for their support of an alliance. Our claim here is that major players are likely to prioritize among the issues on which they are deemed to be important voices.

<sup>18</sup> Indeed, recall that the research team asked issue identifiers to talk about the most recent issue the identifier's organization had spent time on. In some cases, that issue might have been the identifier's number one priority. However, it is just as likely that the issue was of lesser importance to the identifier's organization but one the group believed it needed to react to because it was receiving attention from policymakers.

Democratic members of Congress. In fact, our analysis reveals no statistically discernable difference in the likelihood of success between primarily Republican and primarily Democratic sides.<sup>19</sup>

Continuing with our focus on interest representation, we also explored whether opposition from sides that were dominated by business interests might have an adverse effect on the success of sides representing non-business interests. If business opposition had a systematic effect on the success of sides representing other types of interests, it would represent a distinctive dimension of business advantage. As shown in Table 6, there is no evidence of this type of advantage. Note as well that Table 6 reveals that this remains true regardless of whether business' opponents support or are opposed to policy change. We also considered whether opposition from sides that primarily reflected citizen interests affected the success of sides representing other interests. The results in Table 6 offer no support for this link between opposition from citizen interests and success.

Beyond the variables that reflect the interests represented by the sides in this study, we identify three additional statistically significant predictors of sides' policy success. As demonstrated in Table 6, sides that seek to change the policy status quo and those whose positions engender executive branch opposition are less likely to achieve the outcomes they seek after four years. Conversely, sides with a comparative resource advantage relative to their opponents are somewhat more likely to realize at least some success after four years time. Table 7 shows the expected change in the probability of success associated with each

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<sup>19</sup> We did observe statistically significant differences in success between primarily Republican and primarily Democratic sides under some alternative specifications of our model. We plan to explore this difference more carefully in future analyses. We also will give greater attention to defining the omitted, nonpartisan category which combines sides consisting of representatives from both parties with sides that lack congressional representation.

of these variables, all of which have been identified previously as systematic predictors of policy success (Baumgartner, et al. 2009).<sup>20</sup>

This look at how individual variables affect a side's prospects for policy success reveals important differences across sides based on whether they represent a single interest as opposed to a combination of interests, and whether they support or oppose the policy status quo. But these individual effects do not reveal how different types of interests are likely to fare in the policy process contingent on their own goals and resources, the nature of their adversaries, and the context of the issue debate. With this in mind, Table 8 presents a set of scenarios to illustrate how the potential for policy success varies for different types of sides with different policy objectives. Based on the maximum likelihood coefficient estimates shown in Table 6, we calculate and present in Table 8 how the probabilities of success for status quo defending and status quo supporting sides, representing different types of interests, are affected by changes in sides' ties to Republican members of Congress, their relative resource advantage, and opposition they encounter from the executive branch.

Table 8 of course, makes plain the advantage that status quo defenders enjoy in the policy process. Looking at the base probability for all three types of sides, we see that status quo defenders are much more likely than status quo challengers to achieve at least some measure of policy success after four years. For sides representing primarily business interests or primarily citizen interests, status quo defenders are all but assured that no departure from the status quo will take hold (predicted probabilities of .86 and .84,

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<sup>20</sup>If we use the variables shown in Table 5 to predict variation in sides' success after two years, none of the interest representation variables emerge as significant predictors of success. Instead, we find that sides challenging the status quo and those facing opposition from the administration are statistically significantly less likely to realize their goals after two years. Sides that enjoy a comparative resource advantage over their opponents are, however, more likely to realize their goals in the shorter time period.

**Table 8: Predicted Probabilities of Policy Success for Sides Representing Different Types of Interests**

	Variable Change	Primarily Business Interests		Primarily Citizen Interests		Mix of Business and Citizen Interests	
		Status Quo Defenders	Status Quo Challengers	Status Quo Defenders	Status Quo Challengers	Status Quo Defenders	Status Quo Challengers
Base Probability		.86	.52	.84	.49	.58	.21
Primarily Republican interests	0 to 1	.94	.75	.93	.73	.77	.40
Executive Branch opposition	0 to 1	.53	.16	.50	.15	.23	.05
Comparative resource advantage	20 <sup>th</sup> to 80 <sup>th</sup> percentile	.93	.66	.92	.64	.70	.30

Note: Table entries are the predicted probabilities that a side will achieve policy success given changes in the type of congressional interest represented by the side, changes in the type of opposition to the side, and changes in side resources under different scenarios of organized interest representation and side position vis-à-vis the status quo. For each scenario, it is presumed that sides do not contain primarily other interests or primarily Democratic interests and they do not encounter opposition from members of Congress, opposition from business interests, or opposition from citizen interests (all variables were set to their respective medians of zero). The interactions between business interests and status quo challenger and between citizen interests and status quo challenger were also set to their respective medians of zero. Finally, the number of midlevel government allies and level of issue salience are set at their respective means. The predicted probabilities are computed using the maximum likelihood estimates shown in Table 6.

respectively). However for the sides that represent both business and citizen interests, defense of the status quo is far more precarious. As shown in Table 8, status quo defenders face slightly better than even odds of success or failure after four years time (predicted probability = .58).

In fact, Table 8 shows that the sides supporting the status quo that represent a mix of citizen and business interests are about as likely to achieve their policy goals as are the single interest sides who oppose it. So, while the dual interest status quo defenders do enjoy an advantage over the dual interest sides that challenge the status quo (predicted probabilities of success of .58 versus .21, respectively), the status quo defending sides that represent both citizen and business interests operate at a considerable disadvantage relative to single interest sides who support current policy. For the dual-interest sides, success is most likely to be realized when they support the status quo, and they share the goals of Republican members of Congress or have a fairly sizable resource advantage over their opponents (predicted probabilities of success of .77 and .70, respectively). As Table 8 indicates, even when the dual interest status quo challengers have backing from primarily Republican members of Congress, they are unlikely to achieve the policy they prefer (predicted probability = .40).

For the sides representing either primarily business or primarily citizen interests, the likelihood of success is most dependent on whether they are seeking to change or maintain the status quo.<sup>21</sup> For status quo defenders that represent a single interest, the likelihood of success is quite high regardless of whether the side also has support from Republican members of Congress or the side enjoys a resource advantage. Only opposition

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<sup>21</sup> Because success is so dependent on a side's position relative to the status quo, we considered a number of alternative specifications to the model shown in Table 6 that were intended to assess whether the effect of a variable on success differed for status quo supporters and status quo defenders. In no instance did we find that the variables we considered, including the support of midlevel allies, affected differently the likelihood of success for sides with different policy goals.

from the administration substantially depresses the prospects for success. For single interest sides that challenge the status quo the situation again is similar to that of the dual-interest status quo defenders. Sharing the policy goals of Republican members of Congress, and to a lesser extent, having comparatively more resources than the opposition are the keys to success.

## **Discussion and Concluding Comments**

In this paper we focus on fundamental questions about whose interests are articulated in the policy process, whose interests are not, and whether and how policy success varies for different types of interests. Through an in-depth descriptive analysis of the types of interests that participate on a random sample of policy issues, and a multivariate analysis of the types of interests that are likely to prevail in the policy process, our research offers new insights about interest representation in the policy process.

The results of our investigation have important implications for how we think about the representation of business interests as well as business influence in the policy process. Scholars have long understood that business interests are very active in the policy process, and that their participation exceeds that of other types of organized interests. There also has been some evidence to suggest that business interests have the ability to be more active on a wider array of issues than citizen groups and other types of interests. Our data confirm both of these patterns. That being said, our research makes plain that the nature of business influence is much more complicated than is often portrayed. We see this in three main ways.

First, how a given business interest acts and with whom it shares goals has important implications for its success. When a side reflects the singular voice of business interests, the prospects for success are greater than if the side also reflects the voice of

citizen interests. Yet we find no evidence of the more commonly assumed type of business advantage, namely that sides dominated by business interests are significantly more likely than sides dominated by citizen interests to achieve their policy goals. In fact, sides dominated by citizen interests also enjoy an edge over sides comprised of both citizen and business interests. When sides primarily reflect the interests of citizens, and only citizens, and when sides primarily reflect the interests of business, and only business, those sides are more likely to prevail over sides where citizen groups are pursuing goals that they have in common with business. Why these single-interest sides appear to be more successful than those comprised of “strange bedfellows” is not immediately clear. We suggest that it may have something to do with the kinds of issues that bring the same interests together on a side versus the kinds that attract to a side different types of interests. Single interest sides may come together on issues to which they give greater priority and make a deeper commitment.

Second, our attention both to the types of interests who occupy the same sides of an issue and the types of interests who line up on opposing sides show that business interests are the most frequent type of opposition a side is likely to encounter. That being said, our analysis of the correlates of policy success provides no evidence that sides dominated by business interests affect the likelihood of an opposing side achieving its policy goal. Therefore, business’ advantage stems from its ability to “get things done” as opposed to its ability to prevent other types of sides from accomplishing their objectives. Business prevails in policy more frequently than do “mixed” sides and, as we describe below, they appear to be better situated to shape the public agenda and public discourse surrounding an issue.

Third, business interests are especially active relative to other types of interests among the sides dominated primarily by organizations and those dominated primarily by

government actors. That sides consisting of mainly business interests are especially common among the organizationally-dominant sides suggests the willingness and ability of business to be proactive on issues that have not yet engaged government officials and thus are not part of the public agenda. In this way, business holds an advantageous position relative to other types of interests. Business interests are better situated to push an agenda of issues they care about, and their “early” engagement with an issue provides an opportunity to define that issue for both decision makers and the public. Other types of interests might be put in a position of reacting to the issues pushed to the fore by business interests, and as “latecomers,” they would certainly have difficulty reframing the debate (Baumgartner, et al. 2009).

In addition to revising our sense of business’ role in the policy process, our work also provides very important qualifications to the conventional understanding of the power of the status quo. We do not dispute that those who defend the status quo are more successful than those who challenge it. However, not all interests benefit equally from the status quo. We see this with the mixed sides – even when acting to defend the status quo these sides do not do particularly well compared with single interest sides that support current policy. Compared with status quo defending single interest sides, the success of mixed sides defending the status quo is much more dependent upon forces often beyond their direct control – specifically, having the support of Republican members of Congress and not being opposed by the administration.

Finally, our study refines conventional ideas about representation through evidence we provide about the role of government actors in the advocacy process. Our data demonstrate that organizations often work in conjunction with governmental actors in the pursuit of shared policy goals rather than working solely with other organizations, and that government actors sometimes seek to advance policy objectives with little or no assistance

from organizations outside of government. This is an important finding as it suggests that research focusing solely on the activity of organizational actors may fail to capture the entire representational picture. Members of Congress and the executive branch frequently advance their preferences on policy issues, and they do so with substantial effects.

Opposition from the administration can effectively kill a side's prospects for success, and support from Republican members of Congress can be critical to a side's success. By accounting for the distributions of various types of both organizational and governmental interests we are better able to understand patterns of alliances and opposition that emerge in policy debates and to examine whether these patterns lead to substantive changes in policy.

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