

*How accurately do political special interest groups' money and power reflect the actual views of the American population?*

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## **Part I: Introduction**

Since gaining its independence, the United States of America has upheld a reputation, both within and without its borders, of valuing its democracy—and the proportional representation of its citizens within that democracy—above all else. To best represent the interests of the people, states elect officials, whose job is to represent the diverse interests of their constituents to the government so that they may be taken into account to decide policy. Throughout history, other factors have arisen to complicate this process, the most prominent of which is that of interest groups. As an extension of the people’s rightful influence over the policy that governs them, political interest groups—whose purpose is to represent the varied interests of the people to their government—should have proportional political power and similar political views to the amount of the public that supports them. In reality, however, this is not the case, especially for the issue

of gun control, which is used as a primary example throughout this paper. The National Rifle Association, helped along by the Supreme Court's recent Citizens United decision, has used its disproportionate wealth and influence to distinguish itself as not only as the most powerful gun control lobby, but also as the most powerful American lobby, with the interests of its 5 million members drowning out the interests of a nation of 319 million. It serves as just one example representative of a national injustice: Although interest groups claim to represent the people, their interests actually rarely align with those of the public. This dynamic undermines American democracy because these groups have much more political influence than average citizens.

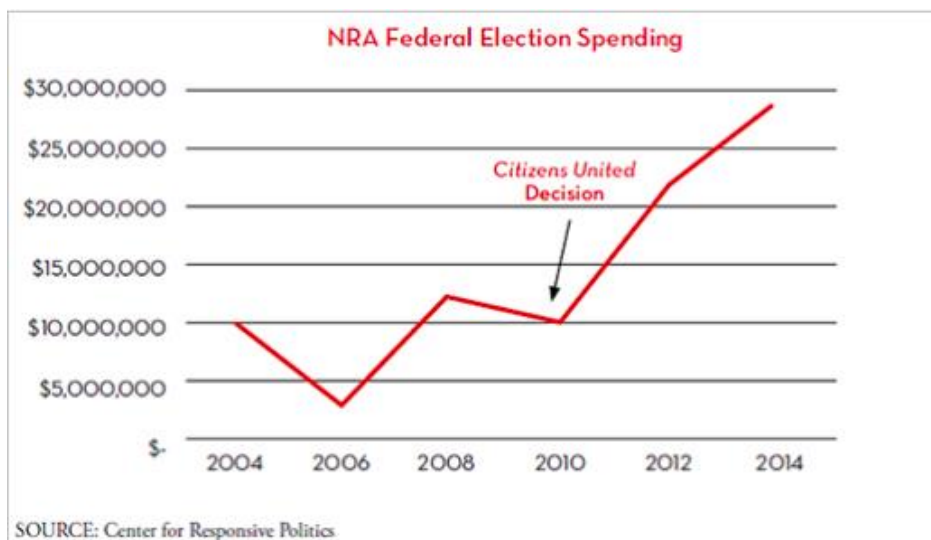
## **Part II: Historical Context**

As the interest group industry has developed throughout history, it has grown in influence, largely due to increased funding from corporate involvement: "In 1975 lobbyists spent \$100 million a year. Today it's well north of \$2 billion" (Allen 42). Over the course of this development, and as corporations became more active and influential political participants, two different classifications of interest groups distinguished themselves: mass-based and business-oriented. Today, mass-based interest groups are most easily recognizable as worker's unions, as they are made up of a large collective of regular people with common goals. Business-oriented groups, on the other hand, are unsurprisingly geared more toward business interests, and don't necessarily represent individual people so much as separate corporate entities and private organizations. These types of interest groups are vastly more prevalent than their mass-based counterparts, making up the majority of the most politically influential interest groups.

One of the most powerful business-oriented groups is the National Rifle Association (NRA), which in 2001 surpassed the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) as the most influential lobbying group on Fortune magazine's Power 25 list ("Fortune's "Power 25" 1).

Since its inception in 1871, it has used campaign contributions, elite conventions, and a strict grading system for politicians to push an extreme pro-gun agenda at the federal level. In addition to these strategies, “The NRA spends millions of dollars for off-the-books issue ads, messages that advocate or oppose certain political candidates” (Hartley 2). This comprises only a fraction of its total expenditures, which includes \$20,783,207 in contributions, \$39,481,584 in lobbying, and \$28,212,718 in outside spending according to an OpenSecrets estimate (“National Rifle Assn: Profile for All Election Cycles”). These figures easily make the NRA the highest-spending gun-issue interest group.

A significant turning point in the NRA’s recent history was the Citizens United Supreme Court decision, which lifted limitations on the amount of money organizations can spend on political campaigns. Since the decision, NRA election spending has skyrocketed from \$10,000,000 in 2010 to almost \$30,000,000 in 2014, as shown in Figure 1 (Reistenberg 1).



*Figure 1: NRA Federal Election Spending*

While this increase in allowed expenditures has certainly augmented the NRA’s political influence, it has not been the sole factor; with the increased visibility of political candidates

through more widespread media, a candidate's image is much more visible and fragile, making some of the NRA's non-monetary tactics (like the grading system), much more effective.

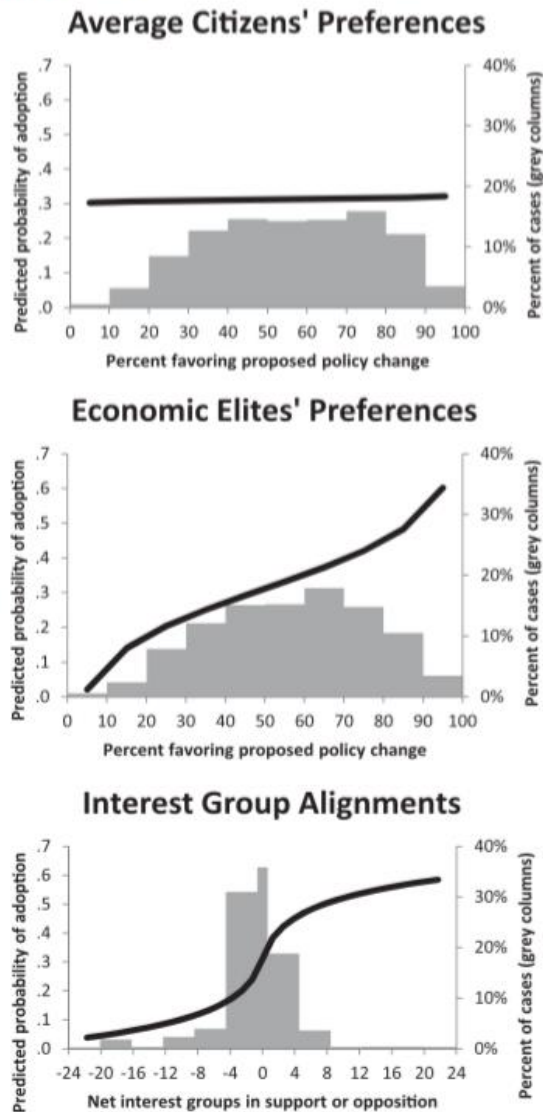
### **Part III: Summary of Past Research**

In terms of political influence, there are four main actors upon policy change: average citizens, economic elites, mass-based interest groups, and business-oriented interest groups. To see how political power was distributed among these groups, a 2014 Princeton University study endeavored to isolate each category’s individual influence on policy changes. The most significant indicator of this power distribution was a comparison of the percentage of each group’s support of various policy changes with that change’s likelihood of being enacted, which the researchers graphed separately. The logical expectations from these graphs would be that the more support any given policy change had

within a group, the more likely that change would be adopted. Whether or not hypothesis held true for each group was crucial in determining the equity of power amongst the four groups. Both the graphs (shown in Figure 2) depicting economic elites’ and interest groups’ policy preferences matched the expectation for a group whose support or opposition mattered to policymakers: increased support of a measure was positively correlated with that measure’s likelihood of passage and adoption.

However, what was most striking about this data was the graph

**Predicted probability of policy adoption (dark lines, left axes) by policy disposition; the distribution of preferences (gray columns, right axes)**



this

their

Figure 2: Predicted Probability of Policy

depicting the average citizen's support as it influenced policy changes. In this graph, the line graphing the likelihood of a policy change stayed almost entirely consistent; even as the citizens' support for a measure increased from 0 percent to 100 percent, the differences between those two extremes was barely detectable on the graph. This indicates that the average American's support of a given policy change has hardly any bearing on the probability of it passing, while economic elites' and interest groups' support have significant impact instead (Gilens 573).

From these results, it is reasonable to conclude that the amount of money a group is able to invest in getting their way politically is a significant factor in their political clout, as it is what distinguishes economic elites and interest groups from average citizens, who make up the majority of political actors yet somehow are less powerful than their less numerous counterparts. The NRA, for example, donated almost \$700,000 to 271 congressional candidates in 2012 alone, 80% of whom won their respective elections and were elected (or re-elected) to the House or Senate. Legislators who received the most amounts of money were, on average, given an A grade by the NRA, indicating a pro-gun voting record (Susskind 1). Since "the net alignments of the most influential, business-oriented interest groups are *negatively* related to the average citizen's wishes," and the NRA most certainly falls under that category, the amount of influence it is able to exercise over Congress can be interpreted as disproportionate to the amount of the American population the NRA comprises, which pales in comparison to the amount average Americans comprise (Gilens, 576).

While this current distribution of political power is by no means ideal—the preferences of the majority are almost entirely overwhelmed by those of the minority—some argue that it is permissible because since, for example, NRA members and gun owners (presumably the most knowledgeable about guns out of all Americans) would be impacted the most by changes in gun

legislation, they should have more say in those changes (Allen 41). However, even though gun policy most affects gun owners and NRA members, changes in national gun policy impact Americans who don't own a gun at all. Gun policy affects our country's approach to mass shootings, criminal activities, and gun violence, events which are in no way exclusive to gun owners.

Furthermore, NRA interests aren't entirely representative of those of the average gun owner, much less the average American. In fact, across 31 different policies, NRA members' beliefs differ from gun owners' by an average of 13.07 percentage points, as outlined in a study by the New England Journal of Medicine in Appendix 1 (Barry 1078). Even among gun owners, in reality, the NRA represents a vastly outnumbered minority. In the NEJM study, only 6.25 percent of respondents were NRA members, compared to non-NRA gun owners (33 percent) and non-gun owners (67 percent) (Barry 1077). These proportions extend to a national level, which is an important distinction to make when most gun owners' beliefs more often align with those of non-gun-owners than they do with NRA members, as shown in Figures 3 and 4 (Ingraham 2). In Figure 3, we can see that NRA members make up the vast minority of overall gun owners, only comprising about 6 percent of the gun owner population. From Figure 4, we can see that this 6 percent tends to hold much more radical views than the average gun owner. The light blue dot in this figure, representing non-NRA gun owners, holds different opinions than NRA members on background checks, assault weapons, and high-capacity magazines by a margin of 10 to 20 percent (depending on the issue). Because of this divide in opinion, the beliefs of non-NRA gun owners were actually closer to the yellow dot (representing non-gun owners) than they were to the dark blue dot (representing NRA members). This proves that NRA members— a group of 5 million— are outliers within the gun-owning population of 81 million, and can in no way be



relied on to represent the interests of all gun owners. Unfortunately, however, these outliers possess a disproportionate amount of political influence.

**A large majority of American gun owners are not NRA members**

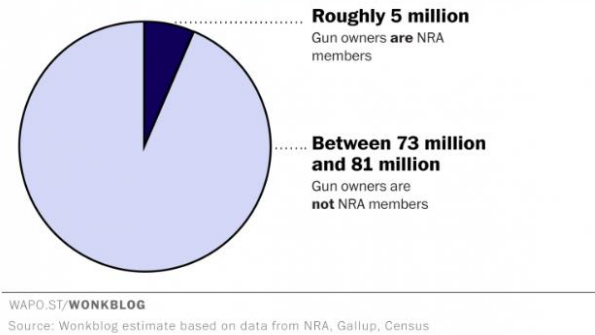


Figure 3: Proportion of Gun Owners that are Also NRA Members

**NRA members stand apart from other gun owners on gun policy**

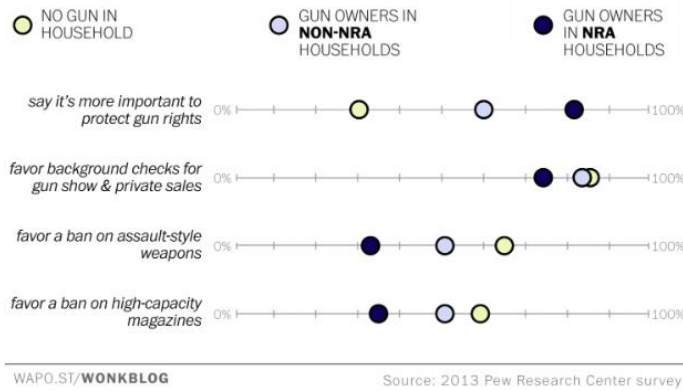


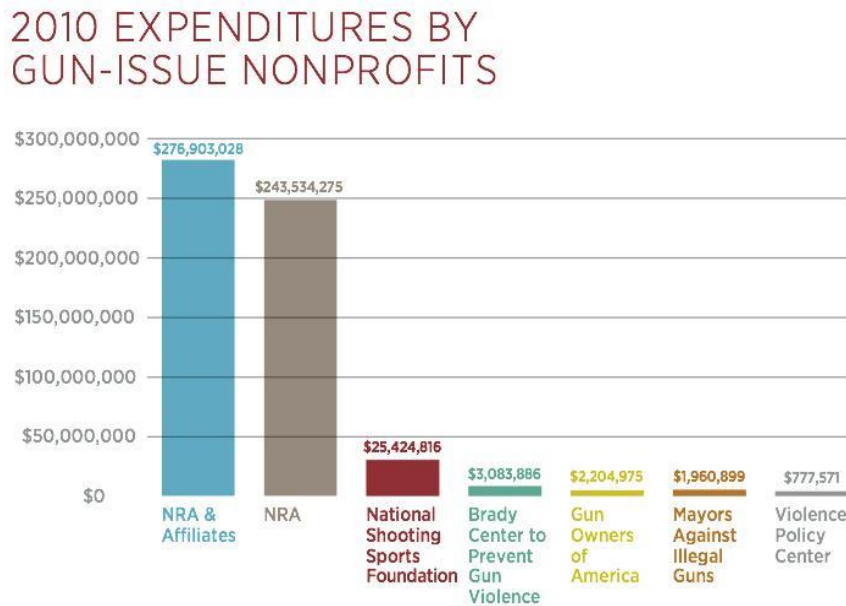
Figure 4: Gun Control Stances of Gun Owners Compared to NRA Members and Non-Gun Owners

Even in the context of the imbalance between the minority the NRA represents and its amount of political power, pro-lobbyists argue that even though the NRA isn't representative of most Americans, opposing interests regarding the same issue will serve as a counterbalance,

challenging a disproportionately pro-gun group with just as powerful of an anti-gun group. As author of “Learning to Love Our Lobbyist Friends” Frederick Allen points out:

Very simply, most of us tend to support the lobbyists who promote the causes we believe in most strongly, and we disrespect the lobbyists whose causes we oppose. That just goes to show lobbyists are ultimately but a reflection of the diversity of the nation and of all the people and social groups and businesses that make it up. (43)

As much as this theory would make up for the NRA’s augmented political influence, in practice it is simply not true, as no anti-gun equivalent of the NRA currently exists, nor has one ever existed. The nearest semblance of an NRA opponent in existence is the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, which spends just over 0.5 percent of what the NRA does, presenting next to no contest, as shown in Figure 5 (Murphy).



Source: IRS 990 tax forms for 2010. The affiliates of the NRA include the NRA Foundation [2010 expenditures: \$26,539,658], NRA Freedom Action Center [\$2,541,434], NRA Civil Rights Defense Fund [\$749,265] and NRA Special Contribution Fund [\$3,538,396].

Figure 5: Gun Group Spending

As a matter of fact, the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence is more representative of the average American's interests, yet has far fewer resources, support, and power than the NRA.

According to authors of "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest

Groups, and Average Citizens," this problem is not exclusive to the gun control debate, and is part of what makes business-oriented groups so politically dominant: "The advantage of business-oriented groups in shaping policy outcomes reflects their numerical advantage within the interest-group universe in Washington, and also the infrequency with which business groups are found simultaneously on both sides of a proposed policy change" (Gilens 575). Because the core values of the most powerful corporate-driven interest groups are so often in alignment, these groups rarely find themselves in opposition with each other, and as a result are often left free to exert their substantial influence without contest.

With no opposition in the realm of other interest groups, and with the voters left incapacitated by the disproportionate influence of elites and interest groups, the only feasible option left to end the cycle of NRA domination of gun policy would be the legislators. However, this system is inescapable for them, too; as campaigns have become more and more expensive to run, federal officials have become almost reliant on interest group donations to get them through election cycles: "A powerful relationship has grown up between politicians and lobbyists where each needs the other to survive. Legislators need more cash to run for re-election, and the richest sources of donations are the businesses and organizations that lobbyists represent," (Allen 42).

On top of the interdependent relationship between legislators and lobbyists that has developed to ensure monetary support, the NRA has another form of support that is almost, if not just as effective: the grading system. This system rewards pro-gun officials with an A rating, and punishes anti-gun officials with an F rating. Especially within the Republican party, whose

establishment is staunchly in favor of gun rights, a low NRA grade could potentially end a politician's career. While Dan Gross of the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence insists that "politicians can survive an NRA stamp of disapproval more than they think," he also admits the prevalence of the problem, stating, "We are behind closed doors with politicians all the time who say they want to do the right thing, but that the gun lobby will ruin them" (Hartley 3). This tool of manipulation, working in coordination with strategic campaign contributions, forces politicians to accommodate more for their blackmailers than for their actual constituents, who while sometimes consisting largely of gun owners do not largely align themselves with the views of the NRA. In no form of government is this more apparent than in Congress, where it too often results in legislation that isn't representative of the people's interests, as explained in the following section.

#### **Part IV: Findings and Analysis**

To further delineate the extent of NRA deviation from public interest, this paper's original research focused on specific legislators that received contributions from the NRA and their voting records. The legislators detailed in this research were chosen based on the extent and quantity of their political activity, as well as how representative they were of the average NRA recipient in the United States Senate ("National Rifle Assn: All Recipients"). These senators' voting records surrounding significant gun control/gun rights measures were compared to both those of their peers within the Senate and to the public opinion of the average voter. Since not all of the bills collectively promoted either gun rights or gun control, to universalize the results, a pro-gun vote was indicated using a Y, while an anti-gun vote was indicated using an N. If the votes or opinions were representative of groups, like those of the Senate or of average

Americans, then the percentage of that group that voted in the indicated fashion was included to the right of the vote.

*Table 1: NRA Contribution Recipients' Voting Records Compared to Senate and the Public*

Bills	Final Vote	Thad Cochran (R-MS)	John Cornyn (R-TX)	Mitch McConnell (R-KY)	Average American	Gun Owners
A	Y (46%)	Y	Y	Y	N (68.4%)	Y (47%)
B	Y (65%)	Y	Y	Y	N (73.2%)	N (62.9%)
C	N (53%)	Y	Y	Y	N (88.8%)	N (84.3%)
				For	Against	Abstained
Measure A: Banning high-capacity magazines of over 10 bullets. (Apr 2013)				46	54	0
Measure B: Prohibiting lawsuits against gun manufacturers. (Jul 2005)				47	25	28
Measure C: Requiring background checks at gun shows. (May 1999)				41	37	22
Key:						
Y	pro gun vote					
N	anti gun vote					

On all three issues outlined in this table, the average American took an anti-gun stance, favoring a ban on high-capacity magazines, opposing legal immunity for gun manufacturers, and favoring required background checks and gun shows. On two out of these three issues, gun owners aligned with the average American's views. However, the three senators, representative of congressional NRA contribution recipients, were in direct opposition to these views. All three of them opposed a high-capacity magazine ban, supported legal immunity for gun manufacturers, and opposed required gun show background checks. Even worse, the Senate as a whole acted more often in alignment with these extremist views than it did with the views of the average American, their votes coinciding with the NRA recipients two-thirds of the time and with the average American only one-third of the time.

This research made clear that not only is the average senatorial NRA recipient out of touch with their peers, but they are out of touch with voters. When polled concerning issues identical to the ones discussed in the included bills, the public's beliefs were in direct opposition to those of Senators Cochran, Cornyn, and McConnell. However, it can be argued that as representatives of their home states, these senators should not be as concerned with the views of

the entire country as they should with their constituents. For example, in Senator Cochran's home state of Mississippi, a whopping 54.3 percent of households own guns. In Senator Cornyn's state of Texas and Senator McConnell's state of Kentucky, those percentages fall only slightly to 35.9 percent and 48.0 percent, respectively (Timmons). Because of these high gun ownership rates, it would make sense for these senators to look out for pro-gun interests in order to best represent their constituents. While it is true that the three states represented in this data are heavily pro-gun, it has already been established in Figures 3 and 4 that NRA members only make up a small fraction (only around 6 percent) of total gun owners, and that these two distinct groups' interests are often at odds. Looking at the "Gun Owners" column in Table 1, the vast majority of them (84.3 percent) wanted to require background checks at gun shows (Measure C), while all three senators, acting on NRA interests, didn't want to require these background checks. This divide was also clear for Measure B, which would prohibit lawsuits against gun manufacturers. Even though 62.9 percent of gun owners opposed this measure, the three senators all voted for it. By isolating the views of the average gun owner from those of the average American and compare them to the decisions made by these three senators, it's clear that these senators in no way accurately represent their constituents.

A potential weakness in this data would be the lack of specificity in terms of the average American voters as they represent the discussed senators' constituents, as it would have been more effective to find each state's respective views on gun control for comparison. However, despite extensive research, clear data separated by state was not readily available. Also, because not all senators are required to vote on all bills, it was difficult to include a multitude of examples of senators because not all of them voted on the same bills. Had a more consistent pattern been established to help determine which senators were studied, the results of this

research might have been significantly strengthened. Although the findings of this study align with the findings of previous research, only analyzing three senators and three issues does not provide enough of a basis to solidly confirm that these findings hold true for all senators and all gun issues. More research must be done to include both more senators and more issues in this analysis in order to arrive at a sound conclusion. As they exist presently, the findings of this study are only representative of a small fraction of the pool of active U.S. senators and contested gun control issues.

### **Part V: Conclusions**

What these results point to is that public and interest group opinion differ tremendously on a number of issues, but especially on gun control, which has always been a historically divisive issue. This divide has only increased in the wake of recent mass shootings and the subsequent push for gun legislation reform. Because the only reason an interest group would need to exist would be if it opposed public opinion and had an uphill battle to fight, this is somewhat to be expected. However, it presents a problem, as corporate interest groups have so much more political power than average citizens, taking it away from some of the groups who should have it.

Presumably, as the results of the study of collective interest group influence in America were consistent, the results found indicating the extent of the NRA's political reach are not outliers. It is highly likely that for the multitude of groups similar to the NRA that exist in the political sphere, the interests being represented to legislators in Washington are not the same as the ones valued at home. This is a widespread national problem that must be resolved in order for American democracy to be fully functional.

Looking into the future, more research must be done on potential solutions to this pandemic political inequality. If the Citizens United decision sparked in other interest groups the same level of spending increase it sparked in the NRA, then repealing it could potentially reverse those effects. Whatever the approach, something must be done to combat this significant discrepancy in beliefs between the majority of Americans and the groups and officials they trust to honestly represent them. As Robert Borosage asserted in “The Politics of Money,” “A system that relies on private campaign financing tends to produce candidates who reflect the views and values of those who have the money. And in an economy of growing inequality... the views of those who pay for the parties are likely to be increasingly divorced from those expected to vote for them” (Borosage 23). This is to argue that the current money-driven American democratic system, spoiled by disproportionate interest group and economic elite domination, is not a sustainable democracy, if it even can be considered a democracy at all. When minority groups like the NRA are given free reign over national policy, American democracy as it was originally intended ceases to exist, because the interests of the many are overshadowed by the interest of the few. If part of what is giving this disproportionately influential minority all its power is the amount of money it is able to invest in supporting its policies, then the first reasonable course of action would be to remove money as the deciding factor in federal elections and in lobbyist influence. This could be done in a variety of ways, such as spending and contribution caps for political candidates, more publicized and transparent campaign contributions lists, and the reversal of the Citizens United decision.

Until this happens, however, and the distribution of political influence heavily favors groups that don't accurately represent—and sometimes even oppose—the interests of the majority of Americans, citizens are left with a crippled democracy. Despite all outside



appearances that this is not the case, all empirical evidence points to interest groups not representing the interests of the people they claim to represent, discrepancy which is only worsened by the disproportionate political power of these groups. With this power, interest groups influence legislators to align with policies that only benefit small minorities of Americans, perpetuating a cycle of an unrepresentative government. As cynical as this conclusion may seem, it is true nonetheless: a special interest-dominated American government does not at all represent the interests of the American people.

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**Appendix 1:**

Table 1. Public Support for Gun Policies in 2013, Overall and by Gun-Ownership Status (N = 2703).\*

Item	Overall (N=2703)	Non- Gun-Owners (N=913)	Non-Gun-Owner, Gun in Household (N=843) <i>percent in favor</i>	Gun-Owners (N=947)	NRA Members (N=169)
<b>Assault-weapon and ammunition policies</b>					
Banning the sale of military-style, semiautomatic assault weapons that are capable of shooting more than 10 rounds of ammunition without reloading	69.0	77.4	67.7‡	45.7§	14.9§
Banning the sale of large-capacity ammunition clips or magazines that allow some guns to shoot more than 10 bullets before reloading	68.4	75.5	69.2†	47.8§	19.2§
Banning the sale of large-capacity ammunition clips or magazines that allow some guns to shoot more than 20 bullets before reloading	68.8	75.6	69.9	49.4§	19.9§
Banning the possession of military-style, semiautomatic assault weapons that are capable of shooting more than 10 rounds of ammunition without reloading if the government is required to pay gun-owners the fair market value of their weapons	56.0	63.3	52.6‡	36.9§	17.0§
Banning the possession of large-capacity ammunition clips or magazines that allow some guns to shoot more than 10 bullets before reloading if the government is required to pay gun-owners the fair market value of their ammunition clips	55.0	61.9	51.6‡	37.0§	22.9§
<b>Prohibited-person policies</b>					
Prohibiting a person convicted of two or more crimes involving alcohol or drugs within a 3-year period from having a gun for 10 years	74.8	76.1	74.8	70.5†	64.2
Prohibiting a person convicted of violating a domestic-violence restraining order from having a gun for 10 years	80.8	82.9	79.1	75.6‡	61.5‡
Prohibiting a person convicted of a serious crime as a juvenile from having a gun for 10 years	83.1	84.4	81.3	80.0	70.0
Prohibiting a person under the age of 21 from having a handgun	69.5	76.4	63.6§	52.3§	42.3§
Prohibiting a person on the terror watch list from having a gun	86.0	87.5	85.6	82.2†	75.5
Prohibiting people who have been convicted of each of these crimes from having a gun for 10 years:					
Public display of a gun in a threatening manner excluding self-defense	71.1	69.8	78.7‡	71.3	58.5
Domestic violence	73.7	72.4	80.4‡	73.7	61.4
Assault and battery that does not result in serious injury or involve a lethal weapon	53.0	54.6	53.4	48.5†	33.1
Drunk and disorderly conduct	37.5	39.7	36.6	32.1†	29.1†
Carrying a concealed gun without a permit	57.8	60.3	61.3	49.0§	43.3‡
Indecent exposure	25.9	28.1	23.7	21.2†	27.1†
<b>Background-check policies</b>					
Requiring a background check system for all gun sales to make sure a purchaser is not legally prohibited from having a gun	88.8	89.9	91.5	84.3‡	73.7†
Increased federal funding to states to improve reporting of people prohibited by law from having a gun to the background-check system	66.4	67.8	65.5	63.4	60.9
Allowing law enforcement up to 5 business days, if needed, to complete a background check for gun buyers¶	76.3	79.8	79.2	67.0§	47.1§
Requiring health care providers to report people who threaten to harm themselves or others to the background-check system to prevent them from having a gun for 6 months	74.5	75.4	76.1	72.0	66.0

**Table 1. (Continued.)**

Item	Overall (N = 2703)	Non- Gun-Owners (N = 913)	Non-Gun-Owner, Gun in Household (N = 843) <i>percent in favor</i>	Gun-Owners (N = 947)	NRA Members (N = 169)
<b>Background-check policies (continued)</b>					
Requiring states to report a person to the background-check system who is prohibited from buying a gun either because of involuntary commitment to a hospital for psychiatric treatment or because of being declared mentally incompetent by a court of law	85.4	85.3	86.5	85.6	80.7
Requiring the military to report a person who has been rejected from service because of mental illness or drug or alcohol abuse to the background-check system to prevent them from having a gun	78.9	79.6	79.7	76.2	67.5
<b>Policies affecting gun dealers</b>					
Allowing the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms to temporarily take away a gun dealer's license if an audit reveals record-keeping violations and the dealer cannot account for 20 or more guns	84.6	86.4	84.1	78.9‡	64.0‡
Allowing cities to sue licensed gun dealers when there is strong evidence that the gun dealer's careless sales practices allowed many criminals to obtain guns	73.2	77.0	72.2	62.9§	43.5§
Allowing the information about which gun dealers sell the most guns used in crimes to be available to the police and the public so that those gun dealers can be prioritized for greater oversight	68.8	74.1	64.3‡	56.5§	41.2§
Requiring a mandatory minimum sentence of 2 years in prison for a person convicted of knowingly selling a gun to someone who cannot legally have a gun	76.0	77.7	76.3	70.7‡	69.8‡
<b>Other gun policies</b>					
Requiring people to obtain a license from a local law-enforcement agency before buying a gun to verify their identity and ensure that they are not legally prohibited from having a gun	77.3	83.5	76.4‡	59.4§	37.6§
Providing government funding for research to develop and test "smart guns" designed to fire only when held by the owner of the gun or other authorized user	44.2	47.4	43.4	35.3§	23.0§
Requiring by law that a person lock up the guns in the home when not in use to prevent handling by children or teenagers without adult supervision	67.2	75.3	62.6§	44.4§	32.2§
Allowing police officers to search for and remove guns from a person, without a warrant, if they believe the person is dangerous because of a mental illness, emotional instability, or a tendency to be violent	52.5	55.3	53.4	43.6§	31.1‡
Allowing people who have lost the right to have a gun because of mental illness to have that right restored if they are determined not to be dangerous	31.6	31.6	28.9	34.0	41.6

\* Responses among non-gun-owners with a gun in their household, gun-owners, and National Rifle Association (NRA) members were compared with responses among non-gun-owners (no gun in household) using chi-square tests; P values are for this comparison. We asked respondents whether they favored or opposed each policy using a five-point Likert scale (strongly favor, somewhat favor, neither favor nor oppose, somewhat oppose, strongly oppose). We coded strongly favor and somewhat favor responses as being in support of a given policy.

† P < 0.05.

‡ P < 0.01.

§ P < 0.001.

¶ The question informed respondents that under current federal law, most background checks for gun buyers are completed in just a few minutes. But if law enforcement needs additional time to determine whether a gun buyer is not legally allowed to have a gun, they may take only a maximum of 3 business days to complete the check.