

What is lobbying?

Meeting with Congressional members and their staff - primarily their staff - and attempting to influence them through advocacy of a particular point of view. Lobbying doesn't have to include just contact with Congress, it also includes things like monitoring Congressional hearings or working with other like-minded interest groups to coordinate efforts.

Why do companies/organizations lobby?

To educate Congress on issues important to their particular group, with hopes of influencing future decisions. Lobbying isn't just attempting to get Congress to pass bills that would benefit a company, for example, it's also used to stop bills from passing, repeal old laws, and to just educate members of Congress on the important work a group does. Think of something like the Humane Society.

What is the benefit of lobbying? What do lobbyists do?

Most groups lobby all members of committees in Congress that have jurisdiction over their issues. For example, S.807, the Fair BEER Act, is currently pending with the Senate Committee on Finance. It's likely the bill text was drafted by an outside group and presented by lobbyists to a handful of Congressional members. They would argue the positive of the legislation and the harm that is caused if the bill isn't passed. They would continue to take the bill around trying to get other members of Congress to sign onto the bill.

On the other side, you would have lobbyists doing the same things against that same bill. However, it's usually completely lopsided on who is doing the bulk of the lobbying. Those with the biggest pockets spend the most time and money on lobbying. You can also look at which members of Congress groups are donating money to their campaigns. Lots of times this will line up with who in Congress is in charge of their issues.