

**QuickStudy****ACADEMIC**

# You Can Make a Difference

## HOW SIMPLE ACTIONS CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

### What Are Advocacy Groups?

- Advocacy is the pursuit of influencing outcomes—including public policy and resource allocation decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions—that directly affect people's lives.
- Advocacy is led by advocates or, when they are organized in groups as it is the case most of the time, advocacy groups.
- Advocacy groups, as defined by L. Young and J. Everitt, are different from political parties which "seek to influence government policy by governing."
  - These particular groups are "any organization that seeks to influence government policy, but not to govern."
  - This definition includes social movements, sometimes network of organizations which are also focused on encouraging social change.
- Social movements try to either influence governments or, like the environmental movement, to influence people's ideas or actions.
- Today, advocacy groups contribute to democracy in many ways. They have five key functions:
  - Give a voice to (misrepresented) citizen interests.
  - Mobilize citizens to participate in the democratic process.
  - Support the development of a culture of democracy.
  - Assist in the development of better public policy.
  - Ensure governments' accountability to citizens.

### Types of Advocacy Groups\*

#### 501(c) Group

- A non-profit, tax-exempt group organized under section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code that can engage in varying amounts of political activity, depending on the type of group.
- 501(c)(3) groups operate for religious, charitable, scientific or educational purposes.
  - These groups are not supposed to engage in any political activities, though some voter registration activities are permitted.
- 501(c)(4) groups are commonly called "social welfare" organizations that may engage in political activities, as long as these activities do not become their primary purpose.
  - Similar restrictions apply to Section 501(c)(5) labor and agricultural groups, and to Section 501(c)(6) business leagues, chambers of commerce, real estate boards and boards of trade.

#### 527 Group

- A tax-exempt group organized under section 527 of the Internal Revenue Code to raise money for political activities, including voter mobilization efforts, issue advocacy and the like.
- Currently, the Federal Election Commission (FEC) only requires a 527 group to file regular disclosure reports if it is a political party or political action committee (PAC) that engages in either activities expressly advocating the election or defeat of a federal candidate, or in electioneering communications. Otherwise, it must file either with the government of the state in which it is located or the Internal Revenue Service.
- Many 527s run by special interest groups raise unlimited "soft money," which they use for voter mobilization and certain types of issue advocacy, but not for efforts that expressly advocate the election or defeat of a federal candidate or amount to electioneering communications.

#### Non-Federal Group

- A group set up to raise unlimited contributions called "soft money," which it spends on voter mobilization efforts and so-called issue ads that often criticize or tout a candidate's record just before an election in a not-so-subtle effort to influence the election's outcome.
- 501(c) groups and 527 groups may raise non-federal funds.

#### Political Action Committee (PAC)

- A political committee that raises and spends limited "hard" money contributions for the express purpose of electing or defeating candidates.
- Organizations that raise soft money for issue advocacy may also set up a PAC.
- Most PACs represent business, such as the Microsoft PAC; labor, such as the Teamsters PAC; or ideological interests, such as the National Rifle Association PAC.
- An organization's PAC will collect money from the group's employees or members and make contributions in the name of the PAC to candidates and political parties.
- Individuals contributing to a PAC may also contribute directly to candidates and political parties, even those also supported by the PAC.
- A PAC can give \$5,000 to a candidate per election (primary, general or special) and up to \$15,000 annually to a national political party.
- PACs may receive up to \$5,000 each from individuals, other PACs and party committees per year.
- A PAC must register with the FEC within 10 days of its formation, providing the name and address of the PAC, its treasurer and any affiliated organizations.

\*From <http://www.opensecrets.org/527s/types.php>

### Examples of Advocacy Groups that Affect College Students

#### American Conservative Union (ACU)

- Founded in 1964, the ACU is the nation's oldest and largest grassroots conservative lobbying organization.
- The ACU supports the commitment to a market economy, the doctrine of original intent of the framers of the Constitution, traditional moral values and a strong national defense.
- Besides publishing an annual "Rating of Congress" report, as well as a quarterly newsletter and a selection of legislative guides, the organization hosts an annual three-day Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC).
- ACU Web site: [www.conservative.org](http://www.conservative.org)



THE  
AMERICAN  
CONSERVATIVE  
UNION

#### Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE)

- The 501(c)(3) AASHE is an association of colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada, founded in 2006 with a mission to promote sustainability in all sectors of higher education—from governance and operations to curriculum and outreach.
- The organization's services include conferences, workshops, training, a free weekly e-bulletin with top campus sustainability stories, a resource center with specialized online resources and directories, interest groups and topical discussion lists.
- AASHE Web site: [www.aashe.org](http://www.aashe.org)



#### Center for Environmental Citizenship (CEC)

- CEC is a national group founded by young activists in 1992 to encourage college students to be environmental citizens.
- CEC addresses how environmental changes can be made on a personal, local, national and global level.
- The group encourages participants to offset their carbon emissions, use solar panels and solar power in their own homes, and write to their senators and representatives asking for change.
- CEC Web site: [www.envirocitizen.org](http://www.envirocitizen.org)

#### College and University Recycling Council (CURC)

- Formed in 1992 and serving as a technical council of the National Recycling Coalition, CURC is a network of campus-based recycling professionals.
- CURC's mission is to organize and support environmental program leaders at institutions of higher education in managing resource, recycling and waste issues.
- The council helps provide technical assistance, education and training; networking opportunities; and an expanding member base.
- CURC Web site: [www.nrc-recycle.org/curc.aspx](http://www.nrc-recycle.org/curc.aspx)



#### Collegiate Society Foundation (CSF)

- CSF strives to bring more college students into America's democratic process and increase awareness about the important political issues facing the nation; the non-partisan organization was founded in 2007.
- CSF operates the Collegiate Society of America, a student-run network of debate and public affairs clubs that foster leadership among its participants.
- CSF Web site: [www.csamerica.org](http://www.csamerica.org)



## Examples of Advocacy Groups that Affect College Students continued

### Democracy for America (DFA)

- DFA is a PAC founded in 2004 that provides training and organizational support to state and local groups nationwide in order to create a grassroots network that promotes fiscally responsible, socially progressive Democrats at all levels of government.
- The organization features various workshops designed to train grassroots activists with the skills and strategies needed to elect Democratic candidates for office.
- In addition, DFA offers year-round internships to college students in their Burlington, Vermont office.
- DFA Web site: [www.democracyforamerica.com](http://www.democracyforamerica.com)



### Focus the Nation (FTN)

- A project of the Green House Network, a 501(c)(3) non-profit founded in 1999, FTN is dedicated to empowering young people to accelerate the transition to a clean energy future.
- The organization operates through FTN teams putting together various events in order to discuss climate and energy solutions with their elected representatives.
- FTN Web site: [www.focusthenation.org](http://www.focusthenation.org)



### Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI)

- Founded in 1953, the non-profit ISI's purpose is to give college students a better understanding of the values and institutions that sustain a free and humane society.
- The group focuses on teaching about limited government, individual liberty, personal responsibility, the rule of law, market economy and moral norms.
- ISI utilizes an integrated program of lectures, conferences, publications and fellowships for both students and faculty members.
- ISI Web site: [www.isi.org](http://www.isi.org)



### MoveOn

- MoveOn is a non-profit liberal group, started in 1998, which has raised millions of dollars for candidates of the Democratic Party in the United States.
- MoveOn comprises two legal entities, each organized under a different section of U.S. tax and election laws:
  - MoveOn.org Civic Action, a 501(c)(4) non-profit organization, formerly known as MoveOn.org, primarily focuses on education and advocacy on national issues.
  - MoveOn.org Political Action, a federal political action committee formerly known as MoveOn PAC, gives contributions to candidates across the country to advance causes in Congress and help elect selected political candidates.
- MoveOn uses email as its main conduit for communicating with members, sending action alerts at least once a week. The organization collaborates with groups like Meetup.com in organizing street demonstrations, bake sales, house parties, and other opportunities for people to meet personally and act collectively in their own communities.
- MoveOn Web site: [www.MoveOn.org](http://www.MoveOn.org)



### National Organization for Women (NOW)

- Founded in 1966, NOW is the largest American feminist organization that works to secure political, professional and educational equality for women.
- The organization's priority issues include advancing reproductive freedoms, promoting racial and ethnic diversity and ending racism, stopping rape and domestic



violence, ensuring economic justice, winning lesbian rights, and achieving constitutional equality.

- NOW draws its broad grassroots strength from a nationwide network of local chapters, which engage in a wide variety of action programs in their communities.
- NOW Web site: [www.now.org](http://www.now.org)

### ONE Campaign

- Started in 2004, the ONE Campaign is a non-partisan, non-profit organization which aims to increase U.S. government funding for and effectiveness of international aid programs.
- The organization supports a broad variety of international development and relief issues, including debt relief; clean water; increasing the quantity and efficiency of aid; lessening corruption in the governments of the aid-recipient countries; providing basic education for all; making trade more fair; reforming the farm bill to make it more fair for farmers in developing countries; slowing deadly diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis; and increasing the international affairs budget.
- ONE is a largely Internet-based campaign and, therefore, has multiple online communities throughout cyberspace; the organization also has field organizers around the country to support grassroots mobilization and advocacy.
- ONE Campaign Web site: [www.ONE.org](http://www.ONE.org)



### Secular Student Alliance (SSA)

- Founded in 2000, the non-profit SSA's mission is to organize, unite, educate and serve students and student communities that promote the ideals of scientific and critical inquiry, democracy, secularism and human-based ethics.
- The group offers a variety of resources that include leadership training and support, guest speakers, discounted literature and conference tickets, and online articles and opinions.
- SSA Web site: [www.secularstudents.org](http://www.secularstudents.org)



### Stand Up

- Started in 2006, Stand Up is a massive global mobilization and advocacy effort of individual events held annually to put pressure on world leaders to take action on poverty and to meet and exceed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)—eight goals to be achieved by 2015 that respond to the world's main development challenges.
- During each event, an organizer, mayor, group leader, society president, CEO or other relevant figure ("an announcer") asks everyone gathered to come together and sit/kneel down.
- The announcer then asks the gathered crowd to count down from 10 and, at 0, everyone stands up together for one minute as a symbolic gesture against poverty.
- Stand Up Web site: [www.standagainstopoverty.org](http://www.standagainstopoverty.org)

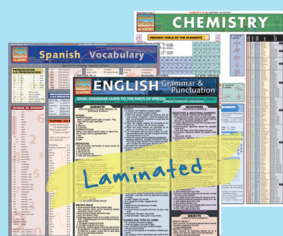


### Youth Guardian Services (YGS)

- YGS, officially incorporated in 1997, is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that provides support services on the Internet to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, questioning and straight supportive youth ages 13-25.
- The group offers three email mailing lists—separated by age groups—where participants can talk with each other concerning such issues as coming out, schools, parents, friends, relationships, and other gay-related and non-gay-related youth issues.
- YGS Web site: [www.youth-guard.org](http://www.youth-guard.org)



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