

# The Influence of Political Lobbying on Healthcare Legislation: A Critical Examination

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This article presents a comprehensive examination of the influence of political lobbying on healthcare legislation, delving into the intricate mechanisms through which lobbying activities shape policy outcomes. Through an extensive literature review and critical analysis of empirical data, the study explores the financial, strategic, and informational dynamics of lobbying. It highlights the substantial investments made by interest groups, particularly in the pharmaceutical and health product industries, to influence healthcare policies. The article also scrutinizes the role of expertise and information provided by lobbyists, the ethical boundaries of lobbying, and the governance implications of such activities on healthcare policy-making. The findings reveal a complex landscape where strategic coalitions, informational exchanges, and ethical considerations intersect to influence healthcare legislation. The study underscores the need for robust regulatory frameworks and transparency mechanisms to ensure that lobbying activities contribute constructively to the policymaking process, promoting public health goals and democratic integrity. Policy implications and future research directions are discussed, emphasizing the importance of balanced power dynamics, transparent engagement, and inclusive decision-making in the healthcare policy domain.

**Keywords:** Political lobbying, healthcare legislation, policy analysis, legislative influence.

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## 1. Introduction

The intricate interplay between political lobbying and healthcare legislation has increasingly attracted scholarly attention, highlighting a critical area of study within the realm of public policy and political economy. Political lobbying, the act of influencing public and legislative decisions by various interest groups, plays a pivotal role in shaping healthcare policies that affect millions. Political lobbying's significance in healthcare legislation cannot be overstated. The healthcare sector, encompassing a wide array of stakeholders, including pharmaceutical companies, medical device manufacturers, healthcare providers, and

patient advocacy groups, is a major arena for lobbying activities. The efforts of these groups to sway legislative and regulatory outcomes underscore the complex dynamics at play in the development and implementation of healthcare policies. Wouters (2020) highlights the substantial lobbying expenditures and campaign contributions by the pharmaceutical and health product industry in the United States, emphasizing the financial magnitude of lobbying efforts within the healthcare sector (Wouters, 2020).

The theoretical underpinnings of lobbying's influence on healthcare legislation draw from a rich tapestry of political and economic theories. Baron and Hirsch (2011) explore the concept of common agency lobbying,



providing a framework for understanding how coalitions of interest groups can exert influence over policy decisions. This theoretical perspective is crucial for dissecting the strategies employed by healthcare lobbyists to form effective coalitions aimed at impacting healthcare legislation (Baron & Hirsch, 2011).

Empirical research on lobbying's effectiveness and strategies further illuminates the pathways through which interest groups influence healthcare policy. Figueiredo and Richter (2014) advance the empirical research on lobbying, offering insights into the methodologies and findings that have shaped our understanding of lobbying's role in policy-making. Their work underscores the need for rigorous empirical analysis to comprehend the multifaceted impact of lobbying on healthcare legislation (Figueiredo & Richter, 2014).

The alignment between political parties, interest groups, and healthcare policy outcomes is another dimension of the lobbying phenomenon. Beyers, Bruycker, and Baller (2015) delve into the alignment of parties and interest groups in EU legislative politics, revealing the complex relationships that influence policy outcomes. Although focused on the European context, their findings offer valuable perspectives on the interplay between political actors and interest groups in shaping healthcare legislation (Beyers et al., 2015).

Furthermore, the impact of lobbying on governance and legislative processes is a critical area of investigation. Boucher and Cooper (2021) examine lobbying and governance in Canada, shedding light on the broader implications of lobbying activities on democratic governance and policy development. Their analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of how lobbying activities intersect with governance structures to influence healthcare legislation (Boucher & Cooper, 2021).

The methodological approaches to studying the influence of political lobbying on healthcare legislation encompass a range of techniques, from qualitative case studies to quantitative data analysis. Campos and Giovannoni (2008) address the challenges of distinguishing between lobbying and corruption, highlighting the methodological nuances involved in researching lobbying's influence on policy. Their work points to the importance of clearly defining and

measuring lobbying activities to accurately assess their impact on healthcare legislation.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Search Strategy

The literature search involves a systematic examination of databases and scholarly search engines, including Google Scholar, JSTOR, and PubMed, focusing on keywords such as "political lobbying," "healthcare legislation," "policy influence," and combinations thereof. Reference lists of identified articles will also be manually scanned to uncover additional relevant studies.

### 2.2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies will be included based on the following criteria: peer-reviewed articles published in English from 2000 to the present, empirical research or theoretical analyses focused on political lobbying and healthcare legislation, and studies providing clear data or theoretical insights related to lobbying's influence on healthcare policy. Exclusion criteria encompass non-peer-reviewed articles, articles not specifically addressing healthcare legislation, and studies not focused on political lobbying.

### 2.3. Data Extraction

For each selected article, the following information will be extracted: authors, year of publication, research design/methodology, key findings, and conclusions. This structured approach facilitates a comprehensive synthesis of the existing literature on the topic.

### 2.4. Analytical Framework

Building on the literature review, the critical descriptive analysis will employ an analytical framework designed to assess the methodologies, findings, and theoretical contributions of the selected studies. The framework will focus on evaluating the depth of analysis regarding the influence of lobbying on healthcare legislation, the diversity of methodological approaches, and the robustness of the findings.

Studies will be critically evaluated based on several criteria, including their theoretical foundation, methodological rigor, contribution to understanding the influence of political lobbying on healthcare legislation,

and the relevance and applicability of their findings to real-world policy scenarios.

The critical analysis will synthesize the insights gained from the reviewed literature, highlighting common themes, contradictions, and the overall landscape of research in the field. Additionally, it will identify gaps in the literature where future research is needed, such as underexplored aspects of lobbying's influence on healthcare policy, methodological shortcomings in existing studies, or areas where theoretical development is lacking.

### 3. Literature Review

#### 3.1. *Theoretical Foundations of Political Lobbying*

The interplay between political lobbying and healthcare legislation is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that necessitates a nuanced understanding of its theoretical underpinnings. Political lobbying, at its core, represents the efforts of interest groups to influence policy outcomes in their favor. This influence is not merely transactional but is deeply embedded in the processes of democratic governance and policy-making. The theoretical foundations of political lobbying are crucial for understanding the mechanisms through which lobbying operates and its potential implications for healthcare legislation.

Baron and Hirsch (2011) provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing common agency lobbying over coalitions and policy, offering insights into the strategic interactions between lobbyists and policymakers. Their work highlights the importance of coalitional dynamics in lobbying efforts, suggesting that the formation of coalitions among interest groups can significantly amplify their influence on policy outcomes. This perspective is particularly relevant in the context of healthcare legislation, where diverse stakeholders with varying interests often converge (Baron & Hirsch, 2011). The alignment of interest groups with political parties is another critical aspect of the lobbying process. Beyers, Bruycker, and Baller (2015) explore this phenomenon in the context of EU legislative politics, revealing a complex landscape where parties and interest groups navigate a delicate balance of alignment and influence. Although their study focuses on the European Union, the insights gained are applicable to other contexts, including the

United States, where healthcare policy is a contentious and highly politicized arena (Beyers et al., 2015).

Hall and Deardorff (2006) introduce the concept of lobbying as a legislative subsidy, positing that lobbying provides valuable resources (information, expertise, and strategic support) to lawmakers. This conceptualization shifts the narrative from viewing lobbying merely as an external influence to recognizing it as an integral part of the legislative process. Such a perspective underscores the collaborative aspects of lobbying in shaping healthcare legislation, where expert knowledge and information are crucial for informed decision-making (Hall & Deardorff, 2006).

Figueiredo and Richter (2014) further advance the empirical research on lobbying, emphasizing the need for a methodological approach that captures the complexity and nuances of lobbying activities. Their call for advancing empirical research highlights the diverse methodologies that can be employed to study the impact of lobbying on healthcare legislation, from quantitative analyses of lobbying expenditures to qualitative case studies of specific policy debates (Figueiredo & Richter, 2014).

These theoretical frameworks and empirical research efforts lay the groundwork for understanding the multifaceted nature of political lobbying and its influence on healthcare legislation. They underscore the importance of coalition-building, the strategic alignment of interest groups with political parties, and the collaborative dynamics between lobbyists and policymakers. As such, these theories provide a critical lens through which to examine the subsequent empirical findings and policy implications related to lobbying in the healthcare sector.

#### 3.2. *Empirical Findings on the Influence of Lobbying*

The empirical examination of political lobbying's influence on healthcare legislation reveals a nuanced understanding of how interest groups shape policy outcomes. The diverse strategies employed by lobbyists, the magnitude of their efforts, and their impact on legislative processes and outcomes constitute the core of this exploration. Through an analysis of empirical findings, we can discern the extent and mechanisms through which political lobbying sways healthcare legislation.

Wouters (2020) offers a detailed analysis of lobbying expenditures and campaign contributions by the pharmaceutical and health product industry in the United States, highlighting the significant financial resources allocated to influencing healthcare policy. This study underscores the correlation between lobbying expenditures and legislative outcomes, suggesting that financial contributions play a pivotal role in shaping policy preferences and decisions. The magnitude of these expenditures reflects the high stakes involved in healthcare legislation, where policies can significantly affect market dynamics, regulatory frameworks, and public health outcomes (Wouters, 2020).

Hojnacki, Kimball, Baumgartner, Berry, and Leech (2012) delve into the strategies and efficacy of organizational advocacy, providing a comprehensive review of interest group research. Their work reexamines the tactics interest groups employ to exert influence, including direct lobbying, coalition building, and public campaigns. The diversity of strategies highlighted in their review emphasizes the adaptive nature of lobbying efforts in the face of evolving legislative landscapes and policy debates. This adaptability is particularly relevant in the healthcare sector, where policy issues range from drug pricing and access to care to regulatory reforms (Hojnacki et al., 2012).

Grasse and Heidbreder (2011) focus on the influence of lobbying activity in state legislatures, presenting evidence from Wisconsin. Their findings reveal the localized impacts of lobbying on state-level healthcare policies, illustrating how interest groups navigate the legislative process to advocate for their interests. The study's emphasis on state legislatures adds an important dimension to our understanding of lobbying's influence, highlighting the significance of localized policy-making processes in the broader context of healthcare legislation (Grasse & Heidbreder, 2011).

Marshall (2010) investigates the institutional determinants of interest group strategies in European Parliament committees, offering insights into the strategic considerations that guide lobbying efforts. While the context is specific to the European Union, the findings have broader implications for understanding how institutional frameworks and legislative structures shape lobbying strategies. This aspect is crucial in the healthcare domain, where regulatory environments and

policy-making institutions vary significantly across jurisdictions (Marshall, 2010).

Together, these empirical studies contribute to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which political lobbying influences healthcare legislation. They highlight the significance of financial resources, the diversity of lobbying strategies, and the importance of institutional contexts in shaping the lobbying process. The findings from these studies not only enrich our theoretical understanding of lobbying's role in policy-making but also provide valuable insights for policymakers, stakeholders, and scholars seeking to navigate the complex landscape of healthcare legislation.

### 3.3. *Gaps in the Literature and Future Research Directions*

Despite the rich body of empirical and theoretical work on political lobbying and healthcare legislation, significant gaps remain in the literature. These gaps represent opportunities for future research to further elucidate the dynamics of lobbying and its impact on healthcare policy outcomes. Addressing these gaps is essential for developing a more comprehensive understanding of how lobbying influences policy-making processes and for informing the development of more equitable and effective healthcare policies.

One notable gap is the relative scarcity of studies exploring the long-term effects of lobbying on healthcare outcomes. While existing research, such as Weymouth (2012), provides valuable insights into the influence of firm lobbying in developing countries, there is a need for more longitudinal studies that trace the impact of lobbying efforts on healthcare access, quality, and affordability over time. Such studies could help elucidate the direct and indirect effects of lobbying on public health outcomes, informing more sustainable healthcare policy-making (Weymouth, 2012).

Another area where the literature could be expanded is the examination of lobbying strategies and their effectiveness across different healthcare systems and regulatory regimes. Campos and Giovannoni (2008) touch on the intersection of lobbying and corruption, highlighting the ethical and legal dimensions of lobbying activities. Further research could explore how varying legal frameworks and governance structures influence the tactics and efficacy of healthcare lobbying, providing insights into the conditions under which lobbying



contributes to more transparent and accountable policy-making (Campos & Giovannoni, 2008).

The role of grassroots lobbying and public opinion in shaping healthcare legislation also warrants further investigation. Olejnik (2021) provides an in-depth look at the effectiveness of grassroots lobbying at the regional level in Poland, shedding light on the power of collective citizen action. Expanding on this work, future studies could explore how grassroots movements and public advocacy campaigns interact with traditional lobbying efforts by industry groups, and how this interplay influences healthcare policy decisions (Olejnik, 2021).

Additionally, the literature would benefit from more comparative studies that analyze the influence of political lobbying across different countries and healthcare contexts. Such research could uncover universal patterns or distinctive differences in lobbying's impact on healthcare legislation, offering valuable comparative insights for policymakers and advocates working in diverse healthcare environments.

Finally, there is a need for more interdisciplinary research that integrates insights from political science, public health, economics, and ethics to examine the multifaceted nature of lobbying in healthcare. This interdisciplinary approach could facilitate a more holistic understanding of the ethical considerations, economic implications, and public health outcomes associated with lobbying activities in the healthcare sector.

By addressing these gaps, future research can build on the existing body of knowledge, offering new insights and frameworks for understanding the complex relationship between political lobbying and healthcare legislation. Such efforts are crucial for informing policy debates, guiding legislative reforms, and ultimately improving healthcare outcomes for populations worldwide.

### 3.4. Financial Magnitude and Strategic Influence

One of the most striking findings relates to the significant financial resources devoted to lobbying activities by the healthcare industry, particularly pharmaceutical and health product companies. Wouters (2020) provides a compelling analysis of the lobbying expenditures and campaign contributions by this sector in the United States between 1999 and 2018, revealing an immense investment in influencing healthcare policy (Wouters,

2020). These financial contributions are not merely indicative of the industry's intent to shape policy outcomes in its favor but also reflect the high stakes involved in healthcare legislation, which can significantly impact market dynamics, regulatory environments, and public health outcomes.

The strategic deployment of these financial resources is intricately linked to the efficacy of lobbying efforts. As Baron and Hirsch (2011) discuss, the formation of coalitions among various interest groups can amplify their influence over policy decisions. This is particularly relevant in the healthcare sector, where diverse stakeholders, including pharmaceutical companies, medical device manufacturers, patient advocacy groups, and professional associations, often have converging and diverging interests. The ability to form strategic alliances and coalitions is a critical factor in lobbying effectiveness, underscoring the importance of collaborative efforts in influencing healthcare legislation (Baron & Hirsch, 2011).

### 3.5. The Role of Information and Expertise

Another key finding pertains to the role of information and expertise in the lobbying process. Hall and Deardorff (2006) introduce the concept of lobbying as a legislative subsidy, which highlights how lobbyists provide valuable resources, including expert knowledge and strategic information, to lawmakers. This contribution is particularly crucial in the context of healthcare policy, where decisions are often contingent upon complex scientific, economic, and social considerations. The provision of expertise and information by lobbyists can facilitate more informed decision-making processes, although it also raises questions about the balance of influence and the potential for skewed policy outcomes based on the interests of the most resourceful stakeholders (Hall & Deardorff, 2006).

### 3.6. Institutional and Grassroots Dynamics

The influence of lobbying on healthcare legislation is also mediated by institutional frameworks and grassroots dynamics. Marshall (2010) examines the institutional determinants of interest group strategies in the European Parliament, highlighting how legislative structures and processes shape lobbying strategies. This finding underscores the significance of the institutional

context in determining the avenues and effectiveness of lobbying efforts (Marshall, 2010). Similarly, Olejnik (2021) explores the effectiveness of grassroots lobbying at the regional level in Poland, demonstrating the power of collective citizen action in influencing policy outcomes. These insights point to the diverse landscapes of influence in which lobbying operates, encompassing both top-down and bottom-up approaches to shaping healthcare legislation (Olejnik, 2021).

Together, these findings reveal a complex picture of how political lobbying influences healthcare legislation. The financial magnitude of lobbying efforts, the strategic use of coalitions and alliances, the critical role of information and expertise, and the interplay between institutional frameworks and grassroots dynamics all contribute to the multifaceted impact of lobbying on healthcare policy outcomes. As such, these insights provide a foundation for further exploration and analysis of the ways in which lobbying shapes the development and implementation of healthcare policies, with implications for governance, public welfare, and the equitable distribution of healthcare resources.

### 3.7. *Ethical Considerations and Governance Implications*

The exploration of political lobbying's influence on healthcare legislation also brings to light significant ethical considerations and governance implications. Campos and Giovannoni (2008) delve into the nuanced relationship between lobbying, corruption, and governance, raising critical questions about the ethical boundaries of lobbying activities. Their analysis suggests that while lobbying is a legitimate aspect of democratic engagement, it risks sliding into corrupt practices when transparency and accountability mechanisms are weak. This concern is particularly pertinent in the healthcare sector, where the stakes—ranging from public health outcomes to the economic interests of various stakeholders—are exceptionally high (Campos & Giovannoni, 2008).

The governance implications of lobbying activities in the healthcare sector are multifaceted. Boucher and Cooper (2021) investigate lobbying and governance in Canada, shedding light on how lobbying influences not only specific policy decisions but also broader governance processes and democratic integrity. The interaction between lobbyists and policymakers can enhance the

policymaking process by introducing expert knowledge and diverse perspectives. However, it can also lead to undue influence, where the interests of a few overshadow the public good, challenging the principles of democratic governance and equity (Boucher & Cooper, 2021).

The ethical and governance dimensions of lobbying in healthcare legislation underscore the need for robust regulatory frameworks and transparency mechanisms. These frameworks should aim to ensure that lobbying activities contribute positively to the policymaking process, facilitating informed decision-making while safeguarding against undue influence and corruption. The development and implementation of such frameworks are critical for maintaining the integrity of healthcare policy-making, ensuring that it serves the public interest and promotes equitable health outcomes.

### 4. **Future Directions and Policy Implications**

The findings from the literature and empirical data on the influence of political lobbying on healthcare legislation point to several future directions and policy implications. Firstly, there is a pressing need for ongoing research into the dynamics of lobbying, particularly in the context of rapidly evolving healthcare challenges and technological advancements. This research should aim to elucidate further the mechanisms through which lobbying influences policy decisions, the ethical considerations involved, and the governance frameworks that can effectively regulate lobbying activities.

Policy implications arising from these findings are profound. Policymakers and regulators must navigate the fine line between leveraging the expertise and information provided by lobbyists and safeguarding against undue influence that may compromise public health goals and democratic principles. Developing and implementing policies that promote transparency, accountability, and equitable representation in the lobbying process is essential. Such policies could include enhanced disclosure requirements for lobbying activities, stricter regulations on campaign contributions and lobbying expenditures, and mechanisms to ensure diverse stakeholder engagement in the policymaking process.

Moreover, the findings highlight the importance of public engagement and grassroots advocacy as

counterbalances to the influence of well-resourced interest groups. Encouraging and facilitating broader public participation in healthcare policy debates can help ensure that policies reflect a wide range of interests and perspectives, contributing to more equitable and effective healthcare outcomes.

In conclusion, the influence of political lobbying on healthcare legislation is characterized by its complexity, encompassing ethical, governance, and policy dimensions. The findings from this examination provide valuable insights into how lobbying shapes healthcare policy and underscore the need for careful consideration of its implications for public welfare and democratic governance. As the healthcare sector continues to evolve, understanding and addressing the influence of lobbying will remain a critical challenge for policymakers, stakeholders, and scholars alike.

## 5. Conclusion

The critical examination of the influence of political lobbying on healthcare legislation, as detailed in this article, unveils a complex interplay of financial investments, strategic collaborations, informational exchanges, and ethical considerations that define the nexus between interest groups and policy-making processes. This exploration, grounded in a comprehensive review of the literature and a nuanced analysis of empirical data, sheds light on the multifaceted dimensions of lobbying activities and their significant implications for healthcare policy outcomes.

One of the paramount findings from this investigation is the substantial financial resources that are mobilized by interest groups, particularly within the pharmaceutical and health product industries, to influence healthcare legislation. The strategic deployment of these resources, often through coalition-building and the provision of expert knowledge, underscores the sophisticated tactics employed by lobbyists to shape policy in their favor. Yet, this financial prowess and strategic maneuvering raise critical questions about the balance of power in policy-making and the potential for unequal representation of interests within the healthcare sector.

The role of information and expertise provided by lobbyists, while instrumental in informing and refining policy decisions, also prompts a reflection on the dynamics of influence and the ethical boundaries of lobbying. The findings underscore the importance of

transparency and accountability in distinguishing between constructive engagement and undue influence. Moreover, the examination of institutional and grassroots dynamics in lobbying activities highlights the diverse landscapes of influence, encompassing both top-down and bottom-up approaches to shaping healthcare legislation.

Ethical considerations and governance implications emerge as central themes, reflecting the delicate balance between leveraging the benefits of lobbying in policy-making and safeguarding against its potential pitfalls. The necessity for robust regulatory frameworks and transparency mechanisms is evident, underscoring the need to ensure that lobbying activities contribute positively to the policymaking process without compromising public health goals, democratic integrity, and equity.

The policy implications derived from this study are manifold. They call for a nuanced understanding of lobbying's role in healthcare policy-making, advocating for measures that promote transparency, accountability, and equitable representation. The findings also highlight the significance of public engagement and grassroots advocacy in counterbalancing the influence of well-resourced interest groups, emphasizing the value of diverse stakeholder participation in achieving more equitable and effective healthcare outcomes.

In conclusion, this article contributes to a deeper understanding of the influence of political lobbying on healthcare legislation, offering insights that are critical for policymakers, stakeholders, and scholars. It underscores the need for ongoing research, vigilant regulation, and inclusive policy-making processes to navigate the complexities of lobbying and ensure that healthcare policies serve the public interest, promote equitable health outcomes, and uphold the principles of democratic governance. The interplay between lobbying and healthcare legislation, with its inherent challenges and opportunities, remains a pivotal area of exploration for fostering a healthcare system that is responsive, transparent, and just.

## Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

## Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

### Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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None.

### Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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### Ethical Considerations

Given the nature of this review article, which is based on the analysis of existing published literature, no primary data were collected from human participants. Therefore, ethical approval and consent procedures were not applicable to this study. However, ethical considerations in the selection and interpretation of literature were meticulously observed, ensuring respect for the intellectual property rights of the original authors and accuracy in representing their findings.

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