Taking Sides: Party Competition, Interest Group Strategy, and the Polarization of American Pluralism

Book Proposal

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Book Overview

The traditional depiction of American organized interest groups casts them as "special interests"—that is, parochial-but-pragmatic pursuers of narrow policy agendas. Special interests introduce challenges to American democracy: corruption, unequal representation, and difficult-to-penetrate issue networks that make government inefficient and unresponsive. At the same time, they offer expertise on policy issues, representation to specific causes, communities that transcend geographic boundaries, and the pragmatism necessary to build cross-partisan coalitions within our Madisonian system. Thus, groups have historically occupied a unique role in American democracy, dating back to the Founding and extending to present-day. In the classic pluralist vision, these organizations are not just nuisances to be tamed but key intermediaries in a large, diverse republic: they translate disparate "group interests" into concrete policy demands, aggregate voices that would otherwise be inaudible, and supply information that helps elected officials govern a complex society. As Schattschneider famously argued, however, the danger was that public policy would reflect organized, parochial interests rather than the broader public interest. Reformers long hoped that stronger, more disciplined parties would force groups to broaden their appeals and compete on public-regarding terms.

In this book, we argue that such reformers got their way – and that the result has created unintended consequences for American governance.

While most interest groups in the United States still describe themselves as non-partisan, they have, in practice, aligned themselves with one of the two major political parties. They attend their chosen party's conventions, make partisan campaign contributions, share donor lists, and encourage their members to vote exclusively for that party's candidates. It is not difficult to imagine how parties benefit from these changes, as the relationships they cultivate grant them access to funds and voters. Yet, given their traditionally narrow and pragmatic posture, it is far less clear why interest groups go along with this. Indeed, by aligning with one party, groups risk alienating the other party in an era characterized by alternating political control. Moreover, groups who "go partisan" risk alienating some of their own *members*–the lifeblood of many interest groups–who may believe in the group's cause but do not share its party label.

So, why do groups "go partisan," and what happens when interests are no longer "special?" These are not only strategic questions for organizational leaders; they are democratic questions as well. When groups trade pragmatic, cross-cutting advocacy for partisan alignment, they reshape who is represented in Washington, how coalitions form, and which interests can ever hope to win a hearing within our party system. Although scholars debate how powerful parties (and their various facets) are today, they nevertheless present as are more unified, programmatic, and capable of steering the advocacy that surrounds them than in decades past. We posit that this has produced a new democratic challenge: once drawn into partisan coalitions, interest groups no longer operate as independent advocates for their members' priorities. They become partisan interests—extensions of party networks rather than autonomous representatives of diverse constituencies.

Taking Sides: Party Competition, Interest Group Strategy, and the Polarization of American Pluralism documents a 50-year growth in interest group partisanship, examines why and when groups have grown more partisan, and explores the consequences of this growing trend for American government and democracy. Leveraging a massive new dataset on interest group positions on congressional legislation, 1973 to 2021, as well as innovative preference scaling and text analysis to partisan issue dynamics, we offer the first examination of how modern party competition influences interest group strategy and lobbying success—and what that means for the structure and quality of democratic representation in Washington and federal policymaking moving forward. We reveal how the pressure to "go partisan" compromises interest group representation, ultimately trading short-term access at the expense of long-term independence and influence and eroding the fluid, cross-cutting coalitions that pluralist theories of democracy assume.

While groups pursue policy objectives in many ways, groups' bill positions are critical for understanding their intentions with respect to other political actors. Public positions help groups build brands and communicate with their own members, with other groups, and with the policymakers they try to influence. Thus, the bills on which groups take positions reveal their goals and priorities–from which we can measure and test groups' strategies. Moreover, position-taking is not just internal bookkeeping for advocates; it is a core mechanism by which organized interests make their priorities legible to citizens and officeholders, and by which they feed domain-specific information into an otherwise generalist legislature. We analyze over 200,000 such positions, taken by several thousand organizations, on the full range of issues that Congress has addressed over the past five

decades, making *Taking Sides* the first-ever quantitative examination of interest groups' federal policymaking behavior over this breadth of historical coverage.

Our key theoretical insights focus on how party competition affects interest group strategies and influence. We argue that party competition, rooted in the rise of insecure majorities in the 1980s, and solidified during the Gingrich Revolution, has ensnared many organized interests into a feedback loop in which partisanship gets groups' priorities onto the legislative agenda–but only when the group contributes to their party's political brand. We advance a theory of group strategy whereby groups sometimes find themselves caught up in party competition over issue brands and feel pressure to respond in two ways: taking positions that are more consistently aligned with one party than the other, and, crucially, taking positions on a *wider range* of issue areas–known in Washington circles as "mission creep." Our theory incorporates these dynamics into three common interest group behaviors: taking positions on bills, making campaign contributions, and joining lobbying coalitions attempting to influence the advancement of bills.

We use our extensive data to test these expectations about how party competition affects these behaviors. First, we demonstrate that, despite some claims that interest groups themselves drive polarization, polarization among interest groups emerged *after that of* elected elites. Second, we show that a significant number of groups began expanding the set of issues on which they took public positions over the course of our observed time period–and that this expansion exploded in the immediate aftermath of the Gingrich Revolution. Third, we show that such issue expansion is more likely to occur when a group's core issue becomes more closely tied to a party's brand, using new measures of issue partisanship based on how Republicans and Democrats speak about issues on the congressional floor. Fourth, we show that displays of partisan loyalty extend to campaign contribution patterns if a group's core issue becomes "partisan" enough. Finally, we conclude by showing that groups who expand their issue focus enjoy fewer legislative victories over time, particularly because they join lobbying coalitions that provide less useful information to agenda setters about the policy stakes of bills.

Our book makes several major contributions to the study of American politics. First, we document and explain how party competition can induce interest groups to become more or less partisan, contributing to a major debate on the relationship between parties and groups. Second, we introduce the most comprehensive database to date on interest groups' positions on congressional legislation, over a time period rarely covered by studies of interest group behavior. Our data not only includes actual support or opposition to specific bills, but it also contains other information to facilitate merging with datasets on issue areas, bill- and legislator characteristics, and campaign finance. Finally, our book provides a single, unifying explanation for several critical developments in modern advocacy–from the "K Street Project" in the 1990s to today's debate over "The Groups" on the left. By revealing the extent to which groups have become partisan, how such partisan organizations lobby and represent differently from traditional special interests, and the consequences of these changes for what makes advocacy influential, our book clarifies how partisanship "locks in" a form of advocacy that is *both* less representative and less impactful. In doing so, the book revisits a foundational debate over the proper relationship between parties and groups. Although programmatic parties can and do root out the distributive

excesses of interest group pressures, parties in an era of insecure majorities have absorbed and repurposed organized interests, transforming them into partisan interests. This shift undermines the pluralist ideal of shifting coalitions and issue-based alliances, replacing it with stable partisan camps that narrow the scope of representation and the informational value groups once provided to lawmakers.

Chapter Synopses

Current Manuscript Length: anticipated 75,000 to 80,000 words; Number of Figures: 3-4 per chapter; Number of Tables: approximately 2 per chapter.

The draft is 90% complete. We held a book conference in February 2025 at Purdue University, receiving extremely positive and constructive feedback from Beth Leech (Rutgers), James Curry (Utah), Jeff Harden (Notre Dame), Timothy LaPira (James Madison), and Jacob Hacker (Yale). We have made extensive revisions to chapters 1, 2, 3, and 5, and we are finalizing revisions to the remaining chapters.. The book is currently organized as follows:

Chapter 1: Pragmatic or Programmatic? For most of American history, critiques of organized interests focused on their narrowness: "special interests" could distort policymaking toward parochial goals or privileged constituencies. Chapter 1 argues that the central problem has changed. Rather than behaving as pragmatic brokers who pursue policy wherever they can find allies, many interest groups today have become partisan interests—organizations that consistently align with one major party and adopt party-congruent positions even on issues far outside their original missions. Through cases such as the Sierra Club's expansion into LGBTQ+ advocacy and the American Farm Bureau's opposition to same-sex marriage, we show how groups increasingly engage in what we term "off-core position-taking"— position-taking on issues outside of a group's traditional issue area — as a costly, visible signal of partisan loyalty in an era of intense party competition. We locate this transformation in a longer narrative of American political development. Congressional reforms in the 1970s, Southern realignment, the Reagan coalition, and the Gingrich "revolution" ushered in an era of insecure majorities, in which control of national institutions shifts frequently and by narrow margins. Parties responded by strengthening message discipline and prioritizing brand differentiation. Under these conditions, they reward interest groups that reliably amplify the party's programmatic agenda and penalize those that hedge their bets by working across the aisle. The result is a system in which interest groups—long expected to represent specific constituencies and provide policymakers with specialized information—are increasingly pressured to behave like partisan affiliates, with consequences for their membership, their access, and the informational value of their advocacy. In the chapter, we preface how such dynamics create major challenges for representation and governance. The chapter concludes by introducing the book's empirical strategy—an original dataset of group positions on congressional legislation from 1973 to the present—and previews how subsequent chapters show that interest groups polarized only after members of Congress, that parties pressure groups into off-core partisan signaling, and that this transformation ultimately makes groups less influential even as they become more central to party politics.

Chapter 2: Primary Mover or Primarily Moved? Interest groups today appear to have sorted into left- and right-leaning poles, but it remains unclear whether this reflects a longstanding regularity in group behavior or a recent change. This chapter examines the timing and character of this development. Some popular accounts of U.S. political parties argue that extreme group interests have driven partisan polarization, implying that groups have always been polarized and programmatic. By contrast, we posit that interest group polarization is a *recent* response to broader forces in American politics—especially the rise of insecure congressional majorities and party-centered competition. Thus, we hypothesize that groups polarized over time, and in particular after polarization among elected officials.

To test these competing expectations, we introduce our expansive new dataset of interest group positions on bills before Congress from 1973 to 2021. Using these data, we develop a new set of dynamic ideal points for interest groups and members of Congress. These ideal points capture revealed preferences for the largest set of both donating and non-donating federal-level interests available to date, while also tracking how groups' preferences and issue agendas broaden as they take positions outside their historical domains. Using these scores—dIGscores—we show that interest groups were once far less sorted, often advocating across party lines and exhibiting substantial heterogeneity that cannot be reduced to a single ideological dimension. Only in the 1990s do groups begin to polarize sharply, and this change coincides with both congressional polarization and the expansion of off-core issue position-taking–a change we highlight through additional, qualitative examples. Crucially, we argue, interest groups polarize after members of Congress move apart from one another, suggesting that groups were not initially a polarizing force but instead adapted to a more polarized and competitive party system.

Chapter 3: Lobbying Competitive Parties: Extant theories view lobbying as a dyadic relationship between individual lawmakers and interest groups, in which groups trade information or electoral resources for access. In this chapter, we introduce a new logic of lobbying that goes beyond these dyadic, legislator–group exchanges, emphasizing how lobbying operates in a competitive, party-centered environment. When legislators prioritize party brand maintenance and collective partisan objectives, access depends not only on shared policy goals but also on whether an interest group can credibly signal that it is a reliable partner in the party's broader competition for majority control. Because such signals must be public and costly to be credible, groups increasingly take partisan-aligned positions on bills outside their core issue domains—what we term off-core position-taking.

This theoretical framework explains both the timing and nature of interest group polarization observed in Chapter 2 and generates three central empirical predictions. First, groups will broaden their issue agendas, taking positions in areas unrelated to their founding missions as a way of demonstrating partisan loyalty. Second, as a consequence, groups' revealed preferences will become increasingly well-captured by a single dominant ideological dimension. Third, groups' expressed preferences will grow more extreme as they align themselves more closely with a party's programmatic agenda.

Chapter 4: Mission Creep: How Groups Get to the Party. The timing of interest group polarization suggests it is unlikely that extreme interest groups are solely responsible for the polarization characterizing the modern American political system. But while this finding rules out one of the most important alternative explanations for interest group polarization, it does not itself evince our own account. We thus begin in Chapter 4 by using our new position-taking data to demonstrate several test macro-level implications that are distinctive to our theory of party-driven lobbying.

As detailed in Chapter 3, we posit that, under intense party competition, interest groups take positions outside their core issue areas to signal partisan loyalty. Empirically, this "mission creep" shows up as groups expanding the range of issues on which they take public positions, especially from the late 1980s onward. We then show that groups that diversify in this way increasingly come to resemble partisan lawmakers in the aggregate: as they broaden their position-taking, their revealed preferences shift toward the ideological poles and are better summarized along the dominant left–right dimension of conflict. In periods of intense party competition, the organizations that have diversified their agendas thus appear more extreme and more consistently aligned with one party's program. We argue that these global trends—rising issue diversity paired with growing ideological extremity and unidimensionality—are better explained by our theory of partisan signaling than by alternative accounts, and they set up the group-level analyses that follow in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 5: Issue Politicization and Mission Creep. This chapter investigates why some interest groups become partisan while others remain relatively nonaligned. Building on our theory that groups take off-core positions to signal loyalty under conditions of party competition, we argue that groups experience this pressure unevenly depending on the partisan contentiousness of their core issue area. When a group's core issue becomes a site of intense party differentiation, legislators have stronger incentives to demand visible demonstrations of partisan alignment, prompting groups to expand their lobbying agendas and to do so strategically.

To test these expectations, we develop new time-series measures of issue politicization for each Comparative Agendas Project major topic, derived from both party-line voting and party-distinctive rhetoric in the *Congressional Record*. After showing that issue politicization varies substantially across issues and over time, we demonstrate that groups whose core issues politicize are significantly more likely to diversify their position-taking by engaging issues on which they were not historically active. Moreover, groups do not diversify indiscriminately: they take off-core positions disproportionately on contentious bills—those receiving roll-call votes, characterized by high party unity, or exhibiting strong ideological discrimination—precisely where partisan signals are most valuable.

These results show that mission creep reflects a strategic response to partisan incentives rather than broad normative or membership-driven changes. As groups adapt to issue politicization, they increasingly behave less like parochial "special interests" and more like programmatic partisan actors, with important implications for representation and for the growing centrality of party conflict in American policymaking.

Chapter 6: Campaign Contributions and Partisan Positions–Complements or Substitutes? Whereas issue polarization represents an external factor driving groups to become more partisan, there are internal factors that condition this process as well. That is, we explore in this chapter whether specific group features and resources may insulate a group from partisan pressures. In particular, we investigate whether groups can avoid mission creep when they have access to campaign funds they can offer to partisan candidates.

A potential implication of our theory is that the strength of a group's partisan affiliation might serve as a substitute for other means of gaining access to partisan actors, such as making campaign contributions; thus, we might expect low resource groups to be more inclined to engage in off-core, party consistent position taking than high resource groups who can use those resources to pursue access and influence. However, we argue that this dynamic flips for groups with partisan core-issue areas, for which complementary, heterogeneous signals of party loyalty would be especially valuable. Joining our position-taking to information on groups' campaign contributions, we find evidence of this "conditional" complementarity expectation. Position-taking diversity is higher among groups giving more campaign contributions, but only when their core issue area is more partisan. For groups with less partisan core issue areas, position-taking diversity is lower for groups that give greater campaign contributions.

Chapter 7: Partisan Interest Groups in, and as, Lobbying Coalitions. What are the ramifications of interest group partisanship for lawmaking in the U.S. Congress? Do partisan interests get the policies they want? Partisan interests broaden their position-taking into off-core issue areas, but what groups actually gain or lose in policy *outcomes* – particularly as other interests play the partisan "game"--remains an important empirical question.

In Chapter 7, we show that lobbying coalitions on congressional bills have grown less ideologically diverse over time. Consistent with our theory, this trend is especially pronounced among groups whose core interest area is the most politicized. We theorize that, inasmuch as groups are less committed to and less certain of the policy consequences of their off-core positions than their core positions, their collective support for a bill decreases the information value that a support coalition can provide. We show that an important attribute–namely, diversity in the industries, causes, and other interests represented in a lobbying coalition–matters *less* when incentives for partisan signaling are at their *highest*. However, when coalitions combine diversity of interests with genuine cross-partisan appeal, they remain strongly associated with legislative outcomes. While we confine our analysis to specific bill outcomes, we conclude the chapter by considering how other institutions–e.g., legislative oversight of the executive branch, bureaucratic implementation, and federalism–might be affected when the informational value of lobbying is diminished.

Chapter 8: When Interests are No Longer Special. This book endeavors to describe the role of partisanship in the American interest group system as it has developed since the 1970s. It shows that, in the modern era of insecure majorities, American interest group partisanship has arisen in response to that of *other* actors. In this chapter, we summarize the dynamics that the book has revealed: namely, that interest groups have changed their position-taking, contribution-giving, and coalition-building strategies to signal the partisan teamsmanship

required by the policymakers they seek to access and influence–and that these changes have real consequences for policymaking outcomes.

In this chapter, we further trace the ramifications of our findings, underscoring the mutually reinforcing feedback loop by which lawmakers learn less from groups and groups have less ability to build effective advocacy coalitions. In doing so, we place our contributions within debates about the role of organized interests in American politics, and we speculate about how the forces we uncover here could be relieved through institutional reforms.

Anticipated Readership and Reception

We anticipate that this book will be of great interest to scholars and students of American politics, broadly construed. However, the book will appeal particularly to four sets of distinct but related scholars: those who study legislative politics, political parties, interest groups, and American political economy, as the manuscript presents a new theoretical and empirical treatment of the interactions between legislators and the policy-demanding interest groups in an era of high partisan polarization. To Congress and parties scholars, the book will detail how increasing polarization and party competition has led to legislators altering their access-granting behavior beyond previous dyadic-relationship considerations, to encompass considerations of broader party-brand maintenance. Scholars of interest groups will be drawn to our explication of the strategic consequences of these partisan-coalitional demands by legislators on interest group advocacy strategy. Because our analysis sits at the nexus of legislative and interest group interactions it will be particularly relevant to scholarship on lobbying, interest group representation, money-in-politics, and information provision. Moreover, our contention that interest group access is conditioned on demonstrating good teamsmanship suggests new conditions under which groups should or should not be effective, offering a mechanism for unpacking previous inconsistent findings. Finally, we anticipate that our unique historical interest group position-taking data spanning nearly 50 years (1973-2021), which we plan to make publicly available following the publication of *Taking Sides*, will serve as a vital source of data for legislative and interest group scholars moving forward. We expect that scholars in these areas will engage deeply, read, cite and assign this book.

Our expectations about the reception this book will receive are informed by the recognition our work in this area has already garnered in the field:

- Our own scholarship ("Polarized Pluralism," *American Political Science Review*) established the empirical basis for the primary puzzle this book aims to address: how and why did interest groups become polarized?
- The paper referenced above won the *Best Paper Award from the section on Political Organizations and Parties of the American Political Science Association* at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association in 2019.
- The manuscript has already been profiled in Matt Grossmann's *Science of Politics* podcast.
- Interest in this project has led to numerous invitations to present this work at selective conferences and top political science departments across the country including: Yale University (2x), Princeton University, The

Hoover Institute at Stanford University, The Consortium on American Political Economy, Congress and History Conference, University of Utah, University of Wisconsin - Madison, Arizona State University, Notre Dame University, Oberlin College, University of Chicago, and Baylor University. We have received constructive and universally enthusiastic feedback.

- The data collection that underlies this book has been funded by the Dirksen Congressional Center, New America Foundation, Amazon, the Carl Albert Center, and the National Science Foundation.

As the sections above detail, our book answers the question raised by our *APSR*, developing a theoretical explanation for the polarization of interest groups in response to demands from legislators under pressure to maintain the party brand in an increasingly competitive political landscape. We test this theory with new interest group position-taking data extending back to 1973. While we employ cutting-edge measurement techniques including latent-variable estimation and text-as-data methods, the text is interspersed with motivating qualitative examples, and written to be accessible to an educated, generalist audience beyond political science. We focus particularly on the narrative impact of clear and easily interpretable data-visualization, which we believe will substantially expand the reach of this work. Thus, we expect the substantive focus and accessible style to cultivate a readership among members of the public interested in the development and dynamics of polarization, parties, and interest groups in the US; the sort of educated consumer that reads Ezra Klien, Noah Smith, The Bulwark, Matt Yglesias' *Slow Boring,* or listens to podcasts like *The Weeds*. Furthermore, because of Furnas' prior work in the government reform community in Washington D.C. and connections with some of these authors, we anticipate the book will receive favorable attention from these sorts of outlets.

This book is likely to be assigned reading in both introductory and advanced undergraduate and graduate courses, particularly those focused on American Politics—including Congress, American political institutions, interest groups, lobbying, polarization, policymaking and agenda-setting, and political parties—as well as Methods courses, such as text-as-data and applied quantitative methods. Chapter 1 provides a comprehensive theoretical treatment of scholarship on interest group representation and pluralism, tracing its foundations back to the influential work of E.E. Schattschneider and David Truman. This chapter is especially useful for instructors aiming to familiarize students with the foundational literature in this field. Chapters 6 and 7 test our theoretical insights regarding campaign finance and coalitional lobbying, situating our findings within both the extensive historical literature and recent scholarly developments related to money in politics, lobbying, and policy change. Beyond presenting original research that advances these areas, these chapters will serve as valuable resources for instructors to provide their students with a broad understanding of these important topics.

Review of Market

Taking Sides represents the first book-length, large-N account of the interplay between interest groups, political parties, Congress, and polarization written to date. As summarized below, many books have examined the historical roots of contemporary polarization: several influential books have sought to explain the rise of polarization in Congress, and others have examined polarization in the context of the party system. Similarly, a series of important recent manuscripts have examined the relationship between interest groups and political

parties in the U.S. *Taking Sides* is the first book to connect all of these strands of literature, contributing to research on political polarization by shining a light on the dramatic evolution in the interplay between interest groups and political parties since the 1970s.

Taking Sides builds upon, and complicates, the "UCLA School" of political parties, which holds that political parties are fundamentally coalitions and constellations of interest groups–and not merely collections of politicians seeking office. This perspective traces back to *The Party Decides* (2008, University of Chicago Press), which made way for the broader theory of political parties posited in a 2012 *Perspectives on Politics* article by Kathleen Bawn, Seth Masket, and the authors of *The Party Decides.* In the years since the publication of this seminal work, a series of important books have built upon this perspective, including Sam Rosenfeld's *The Polarizers* (2017, University of Chicago Press), Daniel Schlozman and Rosenfeld's *The Hollow Parties* (2024, Princeton University Press), and David Karol's *Red, Green, and Blue* (2019, Cambridge University Press).

In each case, the authors place interest groups in a clear place of agency within the party structure, including in several cases being in a position to *polarize* American politics. LaCombe's *Firepower* (2021, Princeton University Press) provides an especially vivid example, and La Raja and Schaffner's *Campaign Finance and Political Polarization* (2015, University of Michigan Press) demonstrates how campaign finance enables particular interests to polarize politics. Indeed, one reason for the observed asymmetry in political polarization, argue Grossman and Hopkins in *Asymmetric Politics* (2018, Oxford University Press), is that the relative diversity of the Democratic Party's coalition of interests, relative to the Republican Party, leads to asymmetric polarization. *Taking Sides* builds upon and differentiates from this work by underscoring key tensions between victory-focused party leaders/politicians and policy-focused interest groups within the party.

In doing so, *Taking Sides* builds directly upon Frances Lee's seminal work in *Insecure Majorities* (2016, University of Chicago Press), in which Lee shows that party leaders in government are acutely aware of and concerned with the public "brand" of their party, as they compete with and differentiate from the opposition party. Protecting the brand has wide-ranging implications for how Congressional parties communicate, make policy, and interact with one another–and even the sorts of information they seek out (Ban et al. forthcoming, Cambridge University Press). Gregory Koger and Matthew Lebo's *Strategic Party Government* (2017, University of Chicago Press) places Lee's contribution in broader theoretical and historical context in the history of congressional parties, while Heersink's recent book, *National Party Organizations and Party Brands in American Politics* (2023, Oxford University Press) underscores the importance of party brand for understanding the development of party organizations more broadly.

Taking Sides differs from these works in its careful consideration of the role that *interest groups* play in *both* the maintenance of party brands and in federal policymaking. Research on interest groups has seen a recent resurgence of book-length treatments of the role that groups play in federal politics, building upon Baumgartner et al.'s seminal *Lobbying and Policy Change* in 2009 (University of Chicago Press). While the central finding of Baumgartner and coauthors' work is one of the limits of group effects on policy outcomes, recent work from Amy McKay (*Stealth Lobbying*, 2021, Cambridge University Press) and E.J. Fagan (*The Thinkers*, 2024, Oxford

University Press) have underscored conditions under which under-the-radar interest activities–as well as those by party-aligned think tanks–can indeed affect federal policymaking and politics.

These, like other important recent books on interest groups such as Grossmann's *Artists of the Possible* (2014, Oxford University Press), Holyoke's *Competitive Interests* (2011, Georgetown University Press), and LaPira and Thomas's *Revolving Door Lobbying* (2017, Kansas University Press), are written from the perspective of the interest groups. *Taking Sides*, by contrast, examines how interest groups are acted *upon* and shaped by party competition in modern politics. To date, few books take a similar posture. Clare Brock's *Farmed Out* (2023, Oxford University Press), sheds light on the effects of partisan polarization on agricultural lobbying, providing a glimpse into the broader dynamics we elucidate in *Taking Sides*. Katherine Krimmel's *Divergent Democracy* (forthcoming, Princeton University Press), provides crucial historical background for how political parties shifted from purely elections-focused to competing over policy programs, making way for the dynamics we cover in *Taking Sides.* Finally, Schickler and Pierson's forthcoming *Partisan Nation* (University of Chicago Press) joins insights from *Taking Sides* directly with other key contemporary trends to provide an important and timely warning about the challenges faced by modern-day American politics.

Taking Sides therefore occupies a unique place substantively and methodologically, and it stands to make major contributions to a series of popular and growing topics in American Politics. Our work ties together key strands of research that too frequently are not in conversation; and, among books on interest groups in particular, we are confident that *Taking Sides* constitutes the largest and most comprehensive data collection on federal lobbying since the foundational work of *Lobbying and Policy Change.*

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