



## Religion lobbying is big business, study reveals

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A [major study by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life](#) released Monday finds that advocacy on behalf of the religion has increased more than fivefold in the past 40 years. The report—“Lobbying for the Faithful: Religious Advocacy Groups in Washington, D.C.”—reveals that there are now more than 200 groups with offices in the District of Columbia. In 1970, there were fewer than 40.

The issue agendas of the various groups cover a wide range of interests. Domestically, the most common matters are church-state relations, civil rights and religious liberty, bioethics and life (including abortion, capital punishment and end-

of-life concerns), and marriage and family (such as the definition of marriage, domestic violence and fatherhood initiatives). The most commonly addressed international issues are human rights, economic issues (debt relief, for example), as well as the promotion of peace and democracy.

Moreover, despite taking a hit after the economic meltdown of 2008, spending on religious activism in the nation's capital now totals at least \$390 million. The report notes that financial data were available for just 131 of the groups, so the actual figure is likely quite a bit higher. While the median annual expenditures by the groups stands at approximately \$1 million, 40 of the groups, roughly one-fifth, accounted for more than \$330 million (nearly 85 percent) of total spending on religion-related lobbying. Seven percent reported spending between \$5 million and \$10 million; another seven percent spent more than \$10 million.

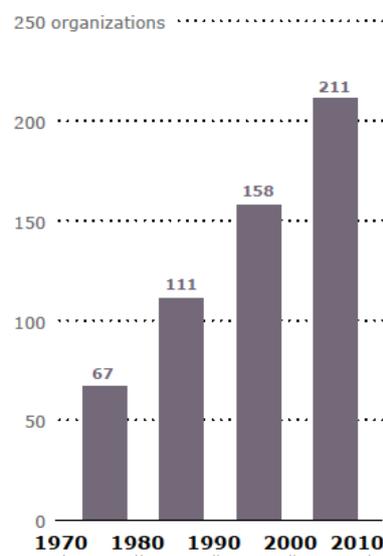
Among the largest advocacy expenditures are those of groups that support Israel, including both Jewish and Christian-based organizations. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee, for example, spent nearly \$89 million, the highest reported annual expenditure, in 2008, and the American Jewish Committee spent more than \$13 million.

Also well represented among the top 40 groups are those that support or oppose abortion, including the National Right to Life Committee, Americans United for Life, the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice and Catholics for Choice.

Groups that support conservative or traditional values have a combined annual spending of more than \$64 million, according to the report. These include the Family Research Council, Concerned Women for America and the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics

### Growth of D.C.-Based Religious Advocacy Organizations

Number of organizations in each decade



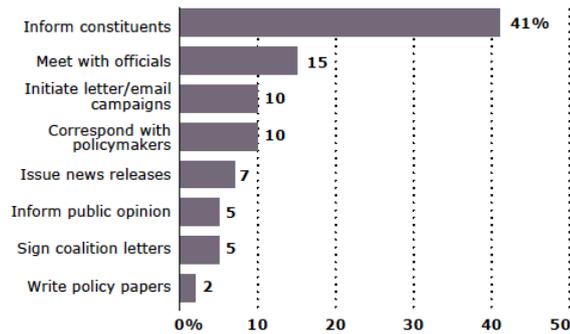
The year of D.C. arrival is unknown for one of the 212 groups in the study.

Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life  
Lobbying for the Faithful, November 2011

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### Most Frequent Advocacy Methods

Percentage of groups that say their most frequently used strategy is to ...



Based on the 61 groups that completed a questionnaire.

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religion-related lobbying in Washington has grown over the past four decades. Indeed, lobbying in general has increased during that period, as well.

The United States, however, is a highly religious society, with only 5 percent of the population reporting that they do not believe in God or a universal spirit, and the Pew Forum's report demonstrates that religious advocacy in Washington has kept pace with, or even surpassed, advocacy on other issues.

& Religious Liberty Commission. Groups that stand in opposition to religious conservatives, such as People for the American Way and Americans United for Separation of Church and State, also appear among the top 40.

Finally, religion-related organizations that advocate for what are known as "social justice" issues—hunger, poverty, peacemaking, for instance—make up a significant slice of the biggest spenders, and they include Bread for the World, World Vision and Sojourners. Such groups spend approximately \$30 million in combined annual expenditures.

The breakdown by religious affiliation shows a wide variety of faiths, with 156 groups (74 percent) describing themselves as based in a particular religious tradition. Catholics and evangelical Protestants are the most predominately represented, at 19 percent and 18 percent, respectively. While significant, these proportions are somewhat lower than the percentages of those two groups in the American population. According to the Pew Forum's "U.S. Religious Landscape Survey," Catholics (23.9 percent) and evangelical Protestants (26.3 percent) make up a little more than half of the religiously affiliated.

In contrast, minority religious groups maintain a higher representation among the lobbying groups when compared with their actual constituencies. Muslim groups account for eight percent of the groups, while they make up just 0.8 percent of the overall population. And while there are 25 Jewish advocacy groups (12 percent of the total), Jews make up only 1.7 percent of the U.S. population.

While the actual impact of religious advocacy is difficult, if not impossible, to measure, the study, thought to be the most comprehensive of its kind, sheds an important light on the extent to which