



# **Lobbying America: The Politics of Business from Nixon to NAFTA (Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century America)**

*Benjamin C. Waterhouse*

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*Lobbying America* tells the story of the political mobilization of American business in the 1970s and 1980s. Benjamin Waterhouse traces the rise and ultimate fragmentation of a broad-based effort to unify the business community and promote a fiscally conservative, antiregulatory, and market-oriented policy agenda to Congress and the country at large. Arguing that business's political involvement was historically distinctive during this period, Waterhouse illustrates the changing power and goals of America's top corporate leaders.

Examining the rise of the Business Roundtable and the revitalization of older business associations such as the National Association of Manufacturers and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Waterhouse takes readers inside the mind-set of the powerful CEOs who responded to the crises of inflation, recession, and declining industrial productivity by organizing an effective and disciplined lobbying force. By the mid-1970s, that coalition transformed the economic power of the capitalist class into a broad-reaching political movement with real policy consequences. Ironically, the cohesion that characterized organized business failed to survive the ascent of conservative politics during the 1980s, and many of the coalition's top goals on regulatory and fiscal policies remained unfulfilled. The industrial CEOs who fancied themselves the "voice of business" found themselves one voice among many vying for influence in an increasingly turbulent and unsettled economic landscape.

Complicating assumptions that wealthy business leaders naturally get their way in Washington, *Lobbying America* shows how economic and political powers interact in the American democratic system.

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