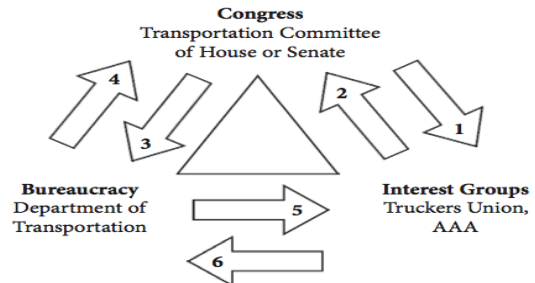


IRON TRIANGLES

Definition: A mutually dependent relationship among interest groups, congressional committees and subcommittees, and government agencies that share a common policy concern.

CONGRESS TO INTEREST GROUPS (ARROW 1):

- Congress could give interest groups positive legislation. Passing/killing legislation that the group favors/opposes or simply tailoring legislation in a way the interest group prefers.
- Congress could give the interest groups access to the legislative arena by inviting them to testify before hearings and giving them appointments to meet with members of the committee.
- Congress could give the interest group information by simply letting them know what is going on and keeping them informed. Congress could tell an interest group when legislation has been proposed that relates to them, when opposing groups are soliciting Congress, and so on.



INTEREST GROUPS TO CONGRESS (ARROW 2):

- The interest groups could give the members of Congress information by letting the members know about the group's membership, its preferences, objectives, concerns, and so on.
- Interest groups could give the members of Congress electoral support by providing their members with information about key votes, who in Congress supports their issue, who is running for reelection, and so on.
- Interest groups could give the members of Congress campaign contributions. Through their political action committees, interest groups could give candidates money and/or encourage their members to contribute.

CONGRESS TO THE BUREAUCRACY (ARROW 3):

- Congressional committee members could give the bureaucracy budgetary support. When the agency's budget is being discussed, the committee could support the agency's budgetary growth—or oppose restrictions or cuts.
- Congress could give the bureaucracy information by keeping the agency informed about what agency-related issues are being discussed in Congress or forwarded by constituents, or telling the agency about the status of pending legislation of relevance to them.
- Congress could give the bureaucracy access to the legislative process. By entertaining the bureaucracy's views and opinions on issues of relevance, permitting them to testify, and being a source of legislative initiative for the agency—so when the agency needs some legislative action, the bureaucratic agency may turn to the members of the committee for authorship of the legislation.
- Congress could give the bureaucracy positive legislation by passing/killing legislation that the agency favors/opposes or by simply tailoring legislation in a way the agency prefers. This may include the giving of interpretation or enforcement discretion to an agency in legislation.

BUREAUCRACY TO CONGRESS (ARROW 4):

- The bureaucracy could give Congress (and particularly the committee) positive legislative enforcement. When the agency goes to enforce the laws passed by Congress, they could make sure that enforcement complies with the intention of the committee members. This can be especially powerful in light of the need for Congress to pass vague legislation in order to achieve compromise. Such passage will provide the agency a great deal of discretion in carrying out the laws of Congress and with it the ability to ensure that committee members are satisfied.
- The bureaucracy could give Congress (and particularly the committee) information. When the committee is considering legislation, the bureaucracy could provide research and technical information valuable to the decision making. Additionally, the bureaucracy could provide information concerning the need for legislative changes, which members of Congress could sponsor for their own personal legislative success.

BUREAUCRACY TO THE INTEREST GROUPS (ARROW 5):

- The bureaucracy could give the interest groups positive legislative enforcement. When the agency goes to enforce the laws passed by Congress, they could provide the interest group information about enforcement (perhaps ahead of time) or make sure that enforcement is done in a way that the interest groups support.
- The bureaucracy could give the interest groups information. When the bureaucracy is making regulatory or other decisions that may affect the interest group, they communicate with the groups.
- The bureaucracy could give the interest groups research. When the agency researches and analyzes problems or situations of relevance to the interest groups, they share the information, research process, and findings with the groups. They may also release this research information to the groups first, then to the general public.
- The bureaucracy could give the interest groups access. When the bureaucracy is considering some regulatory or policy change or other policy decision, the bureaucracy could invite comments and the participation of the interest groups.

INTEREST GROUPS TO THE BUREAUCRACY (ARROW 6):

- The interest groups could give the bureaucracy information (information about their members, the group's concerns, and so on). This information may be of value to the bureaucracy when they are trying to understand the people and companies that use or are affected by their agency.
- The interest groups could give the bureaucracy research. When the group conducts research about the concerns of members, policy implications, and so on, they can provide that to the bureaucracy. This can have the benefit of alleviating the need for the bureaucracy to do their own research on the topic or simply confirming (or calling into question) the research done by the agency itself.
- The interest groups could give the bureaucracy enforcement support by helping the bureaucracy carry out their policies and regulations. The bureaucracy could never enforce the policies and regulations it creates if all of the regulated simply refused to comply. By notifying its members of rule changes, providing members with compliance suggestions, and so on, interest groups in effect make the agency's enforcement task easier. An example is speeding laws—if everyone ignored the speed limit on the highway, then the police would not be able to enforce the law well. They could not stop everyone. But on the other hand, if most people comply with the speed limit, it is much easier for the police to see and catch those who are not in compliance.
- The interest groups could give the bureaucracy budgetary support. When the agency's budget and performance are being discussed in Congress, the interest groups can testify about the importance and value of the agency. This helps the agency's argument for more funds or discretion or the limitation of budget cuts.