



CSLS SPEAKER SERIES

Monday, November 5, 2018

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“The Ethics of Political Lobbying: Power, Influence, and Democratic Decline”

The ability of unelected organisations of one kind or another to seek to influence elected representatives is a crucial aspect of democracy. It is also a profound challenge to it. In this piece, I argue that while in *theory* lobbying can and should be defended as an important aspect of representation, in *practice* it presents a significant problem. I argue that the problem it poses is one of the most urgent and neglected in contemporary democratic theory, and one which normative political philosophers from a wide range of theoretical backgrounds should consider a priority. I argue that liberal democratic states around the world have experienced changes which have resulted in the estrangement of citizens from the democratic system and the rise in number and influence of unelected groups. Lobby groups now dominate governance and policy making, which takes place at the elite level, far removed from citizens. Furthermore, the rise of lobby groups has further entrenched the political dominance of wealthy citizens, and marginalised the concerns of poorer ones. I reject popular critiques of lobbying - for example, that lobbying is a form of corruption, or that lobbyists represent a cabal of anti-democrats at the heart of the system - and argue that the problem is much bigger, much deeper than these critiques suggest. I suggest that lobbying poses a dual challenge: it is a first order and a second order problem. I argue that while it is possible to identify measures which might help the situation, it is currently all but impossible for such measures to be implemented, for reasons I outline.

Professor Parvin's paper is available on our website and in hard copy at the Center.

PLACE Selznick Seminar Room, 2240 Piedmont Avenue
TIME **12:45 – 2:00pm.** Coffee and water provided. Bag lunches welcome.
INFO <https://www.law.berkeley.edu/centers/center-for-the-study-of-law-society/>
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