## Critical Thinking Questions

14.

What are some reasons people might find acquiring information about politics and voting rational, in contrast to rational ignorance theory?

15.

What are some possible ways to encourage voter participation and overcome rational ignorance?

16.

Given that rational ignorance discourages some people from becoming informed about elections, is it necessarily a good idea to encourage greater voter turnout? Why or why not?

17.

When Microsoft was founded, the company devoted very few resources to lobbying activities. After a high-profile antitrust case against it, however, the company began to lobby heavily. Why does it make financial sense for companies to invest in lobbyists?

18.

Representatives of competing firms often comprise special interest groups. Why are competitors sometimes willing to cooperate in order to form lobbying associations?

19.

Special interests do not oppose regulations in all cases. The Marketplace Fairness Act of 2013 would require online merchants to collect sales taxes from their customers in other states. Why might a large online retailer like Amazon.com support such a measure?

20.

To ensure safety and efficacy, the Food and Drug Administration regulates the medicines that pharmacies are allowed to sell in the United States. Sometimes this means a company must test a drug for years before it can reach the market. We can easily identify the winners in this system as those who are protected from unsafe drugs that might otherwise harm them. Who are the more anonymous losers who do not benefit from strict medical regulations?

21.

How is it possible to bear a cost without realizing it? What are some examples of policies that affect people in ways of which they may not even be aware?

22.

Is pork-barrel spending always a bad thing? Can you think of some examples of pork-barrel projects, perhaps from your own district, that have had positive results?

23.

The United States currently uses a voting system called “first past the post” in elections, meaning that the candidate with the most votes wins. What are some of the problems with a “first past the post” system?

24.

What are some alternatives to a “first past the post” system that might reduce the problem of voting cycles?

25.

AT&T spent some $10 million dollars lobbying Congress to block entry of competitors into the telephone market in 1978. Why do you think it efforts failed?

26.

Occupy Wall Street was a national (and later global) organized protest against the greed, bank profits, and financial corruption that led to the 2008–2009 recession. The group popularized slogans like “We are the 99%,” meaning it represented the majority against the wealth of the top 1%. Does the fact that the protests had little to no effect on legislative changes support or contradict the chapter?