

# Data and Methods for Analyzing Special Interest Influence in Rulemaking

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## Abstract

The United States government creates astonishingly complete records relevant to policy creation in executive agencies. In this article, we describe the major kinds of data that have proven useful to scholars studying interest group behavior in bureaucratic politics, how to obtain them, and also the major challenges that we as users have found in working with these data. We discuss established databases such as regulations.gov, which contains comments on regulations issued by executive branch agencies, and new sources of data, such as ex-parte meeting logs, which describe the interest groups and individual lobbyists that bureaucrats are meeting face-to-face about rules, and individually-identified personnel records of nearly all federal employees since 1973. One of the challenges in working with the newer datasets is that the whole databases are often not fully machine-readable. We argue that a productive way forward is to invest in making all the datasets machine-readable and to create consistent way to link them to each other and to outside databases.

**Keywords**— Interest groups, administrative lobbying, bureaucratic politics, data sources

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