

Interest Group Positions

Interest Group A

National Research Council

Your group was responsible for producing the report “Possible Health Effects of Exposure to Residential Electric and Magnetic Fields.” Your committee concluded that there is “no conclusive and consistent evidence” that ordinary exposure to EMFs causes cancer, neurobehavioral problems, or reproductive and developmental disorders. However, three of your members did not agree with the conclusions of the committee report and prepared their own statement indicating that they were not convinced that EMFs posed no danger. Those committee members argued that the question of whether or not EMFs threaten health is still an open question.

The majority of the group feels that the legislation is not necessary. Of course, the three members of the group who feel otherwise should still be allowed to participate in your deliberations. Unless those three members can convince the remainder of the group otherwise, your job will be to identify convincing evidence and to argue against the legislation. (The committee chairperson should ask for three volunteers to play the role of the dissenters.)

Interest Group B

Electrical Appliance Council of America

As a member of this group, you are strongly against enacting a bill that would in any way limit the use of electrical appliances. In your group are “management” people (owners of companies that manufacture electrical appliances) and “labor” people (those who work in the industry as employees of electrical appliance manufacturers). If any type of legislation is enacted that curtails the use of electrical appliances, the industry will certainly suffer: profits will plummet, stockholders will sell, and many jobs will be lost.

Surely the Senators will have to recognize that the authors of the National Research Council report—a group of scientists convened by the U.S. Department of Energy and the Congress—are the tops in their field. If the scientists feel that there is no danger associated with EMFs, then certainly the Senators will agree that legislation limiting the use of electrical appliances, or instituting surcharges or taxes, is not necessary. You must convince the Senators that such a bill would have a negative effect on all segments of society.

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Interest Group C

Council of Electric Utility Companies

As a member of this group, you are strongly against passing any legislation that could limit the use of electricity. In addition, to get electricity across the country at a reasonable price, high tension lines are used to span the country. If legislation were enacted that forced electric utility companies to resort to using underground transmission lines, or that required compensating homeowners within a certain distance of the transmission lines, or—as some have suggested—that required purchasing all residences within a certain distance of the power lines, the electric companies that you represent could face serious financial impacts. If legislation were enacted, companies would probably have to charge higher rates to customers and might have to lay off employees to try to reduce costs.

The Council of Electric Utility Companies (CEUC) believes that by reducing the number of employees, unsafe conditions at plants would be created, and loyal workers would lose their jobs. Those people would have to collect unemployment benefits and might become part of the welfare roles. The CEUC is also concerned about showing the board of directors that electric utility companies can earn a profit. Many private investors have put money into those companies. You must convince the Senators how bad things will be if this legislation is passed.

Interest Group D

American Medical Association

As a member of this group, you are most concerned with the health of people. If there is a *reasonable chance* that EMFs pose a health risk, then legislation should be passed. You want to convince the Senate committee to introduce and pass legislation that would eliminate, if possible, the potential dangers associated with EMFs. Of primary concern to you are children. At the least, research has shown that the link between childhood leukemia and EMFs merits further investigation.

You believe that there is reason to be cautious. As members of the medical community, your group feels that you must argue in favor of enacting legislation controlling EMF exposure. You must come up with convincing evidence and arguments to support your position.

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Interest Group E

Committee for a Better Environment

As a member of this group, you are in favor of enacting legislation to control EMFs. Your group is deeply concerned with the need to keep our environment a healthy place to live. A large number of your group members feel that although they would have liked to have seen more conclusive evidence linking EMFs and health problems, the evidence from studies conducted thus far provides sufficient reason for caution.

You also feel that time is of the essence and that you cannot wait for additional research to be completed before something is done. In your judgment, enough evidence points in the direction of damages caused by EMF exposure, and it is time for citizens and government to join forces and mitigate further damage to our health. Develop a strong and convincing argument to support your position. The opposition is formidable.

Interest Group F

The Bioelectromagnetics Society

As part of this 700-member organization of EMF researchers, you are strongly in favor of enacting legislation and imposing strict controls on EMFs. You and your colleagues feel that the most important finding of the National Research Council (NRC) report is “a reliable, though low, statistical association between power lines and at least one form of cancer.”

As scientists, you are very much aware of how “uncertainty” plays an important role in determining the significance of statistical data. Nevertheless, you are still concerned about a statement in the NRC report noting that effects from environmental EMFs “cannot be totally discounted,” and you feel that more research is necessary. You also feel that more government money should be made available to conduct additional research. As scientists concerned about public safety, your group feels that you must speak out in the public interest. You and your colleagues must argue strongly to enact a bill that not only will set strong limits on EMFs, but also will make more funding available to reliably research the effects of EMFs on human health.