

# Campaign Finance Reform

I am fed up with the role of big money in political campaigns. Attempts to limit the influence of money on American political campaigns date back to the 1860s. Today, thanks to Supreme Court decisions and overturning much of the legislation regulating campaign contributions, big money dominates U.S. political campaigns to a degree not seen in decades. Super PACS have proliferated, and concern over the influence corporations have on elections is growing and have allowed billionaires to pour unlimited amounts into campaigns, drowning out the voices of ordinary



Americans. Dark money groups mask the identities of their donors, preventing voters from knowing who's trying to influence them. Races for any governmental seat regularly attracts tens of millions in spending. It's no wonder that most people believe the super-wealthy have much more influence than the rest of us.

Furthermore, the ability to influence electoral outcomes

with infusions of cash poses a significant challenge to the idea of equality. If the outcome of elections can be determined by the amount of money spent on the political campaign, then special interest donors have greater power to influence elections than the average voter. Such a situation unjustly violates the principle of equality that is fundamental to democratic government.

The high cost of running any serious campaign shrinks the pool of able individuals willing to become candidates, limiting the field to those with personal wealth or the stomach for nonstop fundraising. Expensive campaigns also lead elected government officials to become consumed (if not obsessed) with raising money. Fundraising has become a way of life for them, adding to the frenetic quality of their schedules, distorting how they would otherwise allocate their time, and diminishing opportunities for face-to-face deliberation on serious problems confronting the country. The money chase has added to the tendency to commit to positions early, often eliminating the prospect of debate and deliberation changing minds or shaping outcomes.

The campaign finance system is broken. We need to work on building a better system and instituting regulations to eliminate illegal foreign spending as well as overturning misguided Supreme Court rulings that weaken crucial protections.

We need limits on campaign finance, transparency, and effective enforcement of these rules. Elections at every level also require fair and effective enforcement, beginning with a better-functioning Federal Election Commission. Congress should overhaul our nation's dysfunctional campaign finance regulator so that it can effectively enforce the law. The U.S. campaign finance system unfairly favors a small handful of wealthy donors.

To combat the inequality of our current campaign financing system, I believe, for the most part in small donor public financing to put power back in the hands of individuals. This is the most effective and promising solution to the problem of big money in politics: small donor public financing, a system in which public funds match and



multiply small donations. Small donor public financing incentivizes candidates to seek out many supporters, not just a few big donors. It enables more candidates from diverse backgrounds to run and it amplifies the voices of regular people. Designed right, small donor public financing also permits candidates to raise and spend what they need to compete. Individual contributions limits of \$1,000 (already devalued 75% by inflation over the two decades since they were set in law) should be raised to \$10,000. This would lower the barrier to entry for potential challengers who could persuade ten well-to-do donors to give them a chance.

I advocate for stricter rules limiting political spending by non-candidates and ensuring they are really independent of candidates. In addition, I advocate for greater transparency of who pays for political ads, because voters deserve to know. There absolutely should be reasonable limitations on the size of political contributions, public financing of political campaigns, and restrictions on total campaign spending including stricter limits on Super-PAC and non-profit campaign donations or spending that is comparable to individual limits.

To encourage competent new candidates to challenge incumbents, we should severely restrict incumbents' access to the use of paid staff and free postage for political purposes. Use of these

items disguised as normal business should be highly regulated. These encouragements, when accomplished together, would be a great incentive for bright new citizens entry in the political realm that genuinely care about the people and not just the next election cycle.

**America! What a great place to live.**

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*Thanks, Semper Fi, and Stay Safe !*

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