

# DAILY CAMERA

## Chris Hansen: Elections, law and government

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"I love the law," my lawyer friend said. In retrospect, years later, I could see evidence of that affection. He had thrown himself into his legal specialty and as a result, the corporation he worked for had found new money. After the praise, bonuses, and a little swagger, there was an alert. Members of Congress were considering closing this loophole, and a trip to Washington, D.C. was needed. Sufficient political contributions had been made, and access to the relevant congressman was established. The argument was that "innovation" (identifying a loophole in the law and profiting from it) "should be rewarded."

While you and I may not be persuaded, a politician who depends upon political contributions to keep his job plays the game, and that's what happened in this case. It's not illegal, but it's not what the founders of our country intended. Corporate welfare (like this) costs us almost \$100 billion a year, according to the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank. For much less money (\$3 billion a year), we could substitute public financing of political campaigns.

Members of Congress, no matter what their party affiliation, devote 30 percent to 70 percent of their time to raising money for their campaigns. The Supreme Court case, *Citizens United v. FEC* (2010), and a growing army of lobbyists in Washington, D.C. have drawn attention to this problem. The lens that members of Congress look through prevents them from establishing a safe and secure financial system, addressing climate change, and eliminating costly, unnecessary federal programs. The job approval rating for Congress stands at 14 percent because the system is broken, but there are solutions, and they require involved citizens, not politicians. Join an organization ([Represent.Us](#) or [Mayday.Us](#)) designed to make government responsive to us, not just big donors.

Chris Hansen

Boulder