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[The Biggest Protection Racket in History](#)

by texpat · [01/30/2010 11:12 am](#)

I am not opposed to money in politics or the freedom of Americans to donate to whatever amount they choose to any political candidate, as long as there is full disclosure of the funds and source. As Peggy Ellis, of the Cato Institute wrote in her 1997 article, [The Ten Big Lies About Campaign Finance](#)

Reform:

Lie No. 9: Obscene amounts of money are spent in political campaigns. Congressional candidates spent approximately \$740 million in 1996. This is only slightly higher than the approximately \$700 million spent in 1994. It's a lot of money—but not when compared to what we spend as a society in other areas. These congressional totals average less than \$4 per eligible voter. If you look at every race in the country, from dog catcher to president, the amount spent is less than \$10 per eligible voter. As a society, we spend more on potato chips, Barbie dolls, yogurt and a host of other commodities than we do on politics. While many of us may like Barbie dolls and potato chips more than we like politics, only politics has control over every aspect of our lives.

This is 13 years later and while I am sure the amounts have increased, the notion we spend too much on political campaigns continues unabated. The real problem is the threat, the coercion of government in its regulatory and legislative role to literally destroy industries in the private sector, or worse, to pick and choose the winners and losers according to who plays best the statist game.

The people who run American companies have been forced into a defensive posture by a bullying, thuggish bureaucracy which each year extends further its tentacles into the conduct of our daily and business lives. The numbers in the chart below would be significantly smaller, lobbyists fewer in number and campaigns would operate on smaller budgets if the stakes had not been posted so high by our politicians.

There are exceptions, of course, since there will always be the union, the contractor, the plaintiff law firms and players in highly regulated sectors who will do everything they can to game the system, but dismantling the Leviathan, even brick by brick, is a moral challenge we cannot ignore.

The less effect the federal government has on our daily lives, the less money we will be inclined to give politicians.

From OpenSecrets.org:

Who's got the most juice on Capitol Hill? Here's a list of the top industries contributing to members of the 111th Congress during the 2009-2010 election cycle. The first list shows the overall 50 biggest industries. The other two highlight the top 25 industries giving to members of each of the two major parties. In all cases, the Top Recipient listed is the individual member of the 111th Congress who received the most from the industry. *Totals shown here include only the money that went to current incumbents in Congress.*

Rank	Industry	Total	Dem Pct	GOP Pct	Top Recipient
1	Lawyers/Law Firms	\$23,177,613	83%	17%	
2	Health Professionals	\$15,008,652	63%	37%	
3	Retired	\$11,302,353	55%	44%	
4	Real Estate	\$11,223,740	64%	36%	
5	Securities/Invest	\$11,099,803	73%	27%	
6	Insurance	\$9,582,512	57%	43%	
7	Lobbyists	\$7,851,551	69%	31%	
8	Leadership PACs	\$6,928,067	64%	36%	
9	Bldg Trade Unions	\$6,590,345	92%	8%	
10	Pharm/Health Prod	\$6,192,865	61%	39%	
11	Electric Utilities	\$6,007,314	61%	39%	
12	Misc Finance	\$5,584,970	61%	38%	
13	Democratic/Liberal	\$5,255,044	100%	0%	
14	TV/Movies/Music	\$4,881,753	69%	31%	
15	Oil & Gas	\$4,879,648	40%	60%	
16	Transport Unions	\$4,696,160	87%	13%	
17	Commercial Banks	\$4,375,991	51%	49%	
18	Business Services	\$4,320,598	73%	27%	
19	Hospitals/Nurs Homes	\$4,313,104	72%	28%	
20	Public Sector Unions	\$4,265,291	93%	7%	
21	Industrial Unions	\$3,993,530	98%	2%	
22	Air Transport	\$3,848,266	54%	46%	
23	Crop Production	\$3,621,916	61%	39%	
24	Defense Aerospace	\$3,432,940	60%	40%	
25	Misc Mfg/Distrib	\$3,385,594	57%	43%	
26	Computers/Internet	\$3,198,959	70%	30%	
27	Accountants	\$3,144,049	51%	49%	
28	Beer, Wine & Liquor	\$3,080,775	61%	39%	
29	Retail Sales	\$2,944,737	56%	44%	
30	Telephone Utilities	\$2,895,457	55%	45%	
31	Railroads	\$2,887,395	59%	41%	
32	General Contractors	\$2,858,268	52%	48%	
33	Construction Svcs	\$2,789,172	65%	35%	
34	Candidate Cmtes	\$2,618,618	80%	20%	
35	Health Services	\$2,425,688	69%	31%	

Rank	Industry	Total	Dem Pct	GOP Pct	Top Recipient
36	Education	\$2,405,123	82%	18%	
37	Misc Business	\$2,341,856	70%	29%	
38	Defense Electronics	\$2,258,215	62%	38%	
39	Agricultural Svcs	\$2,138,126	55%	45%	
40	Food & Beverage	\$1,852,532	55%	45%	
41	Casinos/Gambling	\$1,846,638	76%	24%	
42	Finance/Credit	\$1,788,728	57%	43%	
43	Misc Defense	\$1,687,509	61%	39%	
44	Automotive	\$1,649,469	47%	53%	
45	Misc Unions	\$1,645,270	100%	-0%	
46	Pro-Israel	\$1,616,430	71%	29%	
47	Telecom Svcs/Equip	\$1,597,919	69%	31%	
48	Chemicals	\$1,544,699	56%	44%	
49	Food Process/Sales	\$1,544,227	53%	47%	
50	Publishing	\$1,333,783	76%	24%	

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Comments

14 Responses to “The Biggest Protection Racket in History”

1. davewolfgang on [January 30th, 2010 at 11:26 am](#)



So basically that shows that most industries (on average) think the Dems are going to affect their business more than Reps.

Things that make others go Hmmmmmmmmm.

2. Phil_M on [January 30th, 2010 at 11:29 am](#)



I have to disagree with Cato somewhat on this one as the money involved in political campaigns IS obscene...at least in the sense that people are willing to spend tens of millions of dollars for what really should be minor and part time citizen-legislator positions.

The numbers have also increased dramatically since 1994 – the tab for last year’s presidential race was somewhere in the neighborhood of \$5 BILLION. It is also generally the case that officially disclosed campaign contributions tend to substantially understate the actual totals received through less direct and less open sources.

That said, I do concur that regulating money is not the answer. The aforementioned all happened under McCain-Feingold, the high water mark of regulation. The real problem is the nature of the offices we elect, and what we empower those officers to do. The obscene amounts of campaign money they attract are merely symptoms.

3. texpat on [January 30th, 2010 at 11:40 am](#)



#2 Phil_M

I agree and want to emphasize again that nobody running a company in America comes to work and says, “Hey, I got a great idea – let’s just give some of our hard earned profits to these guys in DC.”

There is a reason for it and no one does it with a smile.

4. El Gordo on [January 30th, 2010 at 12:51 pm](#)



Companies (presumably the evil “corporations”) typically exist to make money and create wealth for their shareholders. They employ people to leverage their ideas into actions, and if successful, continue to expand and hire more and more people, etc.

Government is dependent upon these companies two fold – (1) the companies themselves pay taxes to the government (too many to list); and (2) the people who work for these companies also pay taxes to the government. The more successful the business, the more government makes as a by-product of that success.

Unions also bleed the companies under the guise of helping out the labor force upon whose backs the success of the business is built (according to the union bosses). But without a successful business to hire these goons, there is no need for the union, so once again, the key to the success of the union is dependent upon the success of the company – it grows, the union grows; it fails, the union fails.

Why in the world would anyone who understands these basic concepts about the success of a free economy decide to bash the companies, rob other companies to pay off the unions, decide to take over and try to run the companies themselves, or take any of the other regulatory stands against the companies that we see being taken? Why can’t government be content just to sit idly by on the sidelines and bleed the companies dry one drop at a