

Who Will Fight Big Money and Empower Everyday People?

A candidate briefing book on how to connect with and engage voters to promote workable solutions to reduce the influence of money in politics.

May 2016

We would like you to have the latest in polling, message guidance, and public information about money in politics. Please free to email FightBigMoney@commoncause.org to be placed on a list for updates.

For questions, contact FightBigMoney@commoncause.org.

Table of Contents

*Letter from Common Cause President Karen Hobert Flynn
on behalf of the Fight Big Money coalition*

Introduction

1.	Introduction.....	4
2.	Voters Overwhelmingly Agree (Polling Review).....	5
3.	Best Messages to Use.....	6

The Policy

4.	Overview: The Fight Big Money Agenda.....	7
5.	Policy: Everyone Participates (Empowering Small Donors).....	8
6.	Policy: Everyone’s Voice is Heard (Voting Rights and Contribution Limits).....	9
7.	Policy: Everyone Knows (Transparency).....	10
8.	Policy: Everyone is Held Accountable (The People’s Jurisprudence).....	11
9.	Policy: Everyone Plays by Common Sense Rules (Enforcement of Tougher Penalties).....	13
10.	How to Talk About Money-in-Politics Reforms.....	14

Candidate Campaign Tools and Materials

11.	Responding to Attacks.....	18
	a. Sample Press Releases.....	21
12.	Facts You Can Use.....	22
13.	Examples of Published Op-Eds.....	23
14.	Resources.....	28

Dear candidate:

Congratulations on securing your party's nomination for the 2016 congressional election. As a former elected official, I particularly appreciate your commitment to public service and the sacrifices you're making to pursue it.

By now, I expect you've grown more than weary with the time and effort you must devote to raising money for your campaign. And you're probably more than wary about what the individuals and groups who are writing – or offering to write – big checks on your behalf will want in return for their investments.

This booklet is a guide to a better approach to campaigning and governing. It details a program, the Fighting Big Money Agenda, that in future elections will allow you to compete with political adversaries on the basis of your ideas, not on the size of your and your supporters' bank accounts. The agenda lays out common sense rules for future elections, policies and programs to level the playing field between large- and small-dollar donors, ensure that everyone's voice can be heard, and allow you to focus your attention on ALL your constituents, not just the major donors.

I'm writing today on behalf of allied organizations representing millions of Americans who are fighting big money and working to modernize our political system and create a 21st Century democracy that works for all of us.

I and other Common Cause representatives and our allies will be happy to respond to your questions about the agenda. I encourage you to study it and I promise you'll be hearing more about it between now and Election Day. Common Cause is enlisting our 500,000-plus members and supporters, and working with a broad array of other citizen groups, to advance the agenda in every congressional district in the country. Our polling shows, and I know yours will verify, that the policies it details enjoy overwhelming support from Democrats, Republicans and independents.

The agenda is good politics and good government. I urge you to support it, speak on its behalf, and commit yourself to seeing it enacted into law.

Best wishes,



Karen Hobert Flynn,
President, Common Cause

Democracy 21
Every Voice
Public Citizen
Dēmos Action
Brennan Center Strategic Fund
The Rootstrikers Project at Demand Progress
People for the American Way
Free Speech for People
MayDay.US
Greenpeace
Democracy Matters



Introduction

Americans are deeply cynical about politics and whether the elected officials they vote for actually work for them. They think campaign money buys influence, and all they hear is politicians yelling back and forth that it's everyone else who's corrupt—not them. They hear a lot of promises about “cleaning up” Washington, but no action. Even worse, any discussion of money's influence in the media or even by candidates campaigning to change the system makes the problem feel so big, some Americans give up. Government isn't listening to or acting on everyday voters' needs and they can't afford TV ads, lobbyists, or a super PAC. Many conclude their voice and vote don't matter anymore, and democracy is a thing of the past.

You don't have to convince people the system is broken, but you do need to convince them that it can be fixed.

This book will give you the resources necessary to talk to a jaded public about the problem of our out-of-balance political system and what policies can be implemented to give everyday people a bigger voice.

This briefing book offers everything you'll need to champion an issue that has broad public support among Independents, Republicans, and Democrats. In it you will find:

- Messaging guidance, based on years of research from some of the country's leading pollsters, on how to connect with voters on the issue;
- Policy guidance to develop a comprehensive reform plan, drafted by the country's leading money-in-politics reform experts;
- Sample press releases, letters to the editor, and other materials;
- Responses to attacks from your opponents who prefer the status quo;
- And key facts and resources about the problem of a political system tilted toward the wealthiest among us.

With daily headlines about super PACs and billionaire donors, voters are dispirited and believe that their participation doesn't make a difference. But candidates from all across the country and every political party can connect with those voters and assure them that, together, we can create a democracy that works for all of us.



Voters Overwhelmingly Agree: The System is Broken and Needs to Be Reformed

A broad, bipartisan majority of Americans agrees the current campaign finance system is broken, they support policies to fix it, and they want politicians to show leadership on the issue.

- Three-quarters of the American people believe their government is corrupt (Gallup, September 2015).
- Four out of five Americans—including 80 percent of Republicans—oppose the Supreme Court’s *Citizens United* decision (Bloomberg News, September 2015).
- Eighty-four percent of Americans believe money has too much influence in politics (New York Times/CBS News, June 2015).
- Ahead of the presidential caucuses in Iowa, voters there—arguably some of the most engaged in the political process—are angry about money in politics. A full 93 percent of likely Democratic caucus-goers and 91 percent of Republicans said they were unsatisfied or “mad as hell” about the issue of money in politics. (Bloomberg News/Des Moines Register, August 2015).
- Voters support efforts to reform the system. A full 85 percent of voters think we need fundamental changes or to completely rebuild the system. (New York Times/CBS News, June 2015).
- Seventy-two percent of Americans support small-donor solutions, like matching funds, to overhaul our broken system (Every Voice, December 2015).



How to Connect with Voters on Money in Politics: Top Messages

Americans are deeply cynical about politics and whether politicians actually work for them. As you look to connect with voters on this issue, you no longer need to convince people the current system is broken-- they readily identify the problems with money's role in politics. Instead, you should use inspiring, active language that focuses on lifting the voices of everyday people while pivoting away from over-diagnosis or heated language of the problem. Later in this briefing book, we provide a more in-depth look at messaging on this issue, tied to specific policies. But here are a few ways to talk about the problem more broadly.

Voice

We need to build a democracy where everyone participates, every vote is counted, and everyone's voice is heard; where people from all walks of life can run for and win office, not just the wealthy and well-connected.

America is a nation of teachers, caregivers, inventors, entrepreneurs, and workers, founded on the belief that we are all created equal. That's why we believe every voice should be heard in our political process, not just the wealthy and well-connected.

Barriers

Money's influence in our politics is a significant barrier preventing talented leaders from our community, regular people we know and trust, from seeking office. It keeps regular people like you and me from being elected and representing our communities. To create a more representative government, and to have the ability to elect the best people, we need to address the barriers that prevent ordinary Americans from running for office.

Ideals

In the midst of the Civil War, President Lincoln famously spoke the often paraphrased notion that we must preserve government of, by, and for the people. But right now, we don't have that. There are straightforward steps we can take to raise the voices of everyday people, reduce the influence of big money, and ensure that everyone has an equal say in our government.

We all want to know elected officials hear our voices, especially on decisions that affect our family's future. We want our children and the next generation to have a better life and more opportunities than we did, but there's something wrong when millions of hardworking Americans are scraping by. That's what happens when wealthy special interests have too much power and make the rules—working families get left behind.



The Fight Big Money Agenda

Leading democracy organizations have come together to develop a broad, comprehensive policy agenda to reduce the influence of big money in politics and give everyday people a bigger voice.

It is important to recognize that no single solution will solve all the challenges our democracy faces, but this comprehensive agenda, discussed as a set of solutions, helps policy makers and voters think creatively about what we must do to preserve democracy of, by, and for the people. The next section lays out that agenda, which includes these key strategies:

Everyone participates

Encourage and amplify the voices of everyday Americans by legislating a system of public funding for qualified federal candidates, meaningful contribution limits, and measures to reduce barriers to the ballot box and increase turnout.

Everyone knows who is trying to influence our democracy

Implement robust, real-time disclosure of political contributions and expenditures through legislation, rulemaking at the FEC, FCC, IRS, and SEC; and, if necessary, supporting executive action.

Everyone plays by the same set of common sense rules

Overtake *Citizens United* and earlier cases such as *Buckley v. Valeo* through the Democracy for All constitutional amendment, and Senate confirmation of Supreme Court Justices committed to restoring the people's ability to protect our democracy.

Everyone is held accountable

End the mockery of existing campaign finance rules through legislation to shut down individual-candidate super PACs and effectively prevent coordination between candidates and outside groups; creating and funding a new enforcement agency with real power; and Senate confirmation of FEC commissioners committed to enforcing existing law and an Attorney General who will crack down on violations of campaign finance laws and election laws that protect every voter's access to the ballot box.

Everyone's voice is heard.

The next Congress should commit to a 21st Century democracy where everyone's voice is heard. Reduce barriers to the ballot box and increase turnout. Members of Congress should support meaningful contribution limits so a wealthy few cannot use their economic power to shut out ordinary citizens.



Everyone Participates

Empowering Small Donors

Summary: To give everyday people a bigger voice in politics, we need to encourage policies that put small donors at the center of the process, with matching funds, tax credits, or small-dollar vouchers.

Top Message: We need to provide incentives that encourage the active participation of small donors in our elections so candidates are accountable to the people—not wealthy donors and special interests.

Policy Proposal: The next Congress should commit to a 21st Century democracy where everyone participates. As a Member of Congress, you should endorse, prioritize, and work aggressively to pass legislation to provide public funds that will amplify small donations to federal candidates who agree to lower contribution limits.

With each election cycle, our elected leaders depend on a smaller and smaller share of our population making larger and larger campaign contributions. As a result, our leaders listen to a handful of deep-pocketed interests at the direct expense of everyday Americans.

We need to provide incentives such as matching funds that encourage the active participation of small donors in our elections so candidates are accountable to, and dependent on, the people – not wealthy donors and special interests. Other potential incentives include limited tax credits and small-dollar vouchers.

Providing public funding support to amplify the role of ordinary Americans in financing elections makes elected officials less indebted to a narrow set of funders, allows candidates to spend more time listening to their constituents, gives more people the ability to run for office, elects officeholders more reflective of the community at large, and leads to policies more responsive to public needs and less skewed by wealthy interests.



Everyone's Voice is Heard

Voting Rights and Contribution Limits

Summary: We need to restore the Voting Rights Act after the Supreme Court, in Shelby, stripped it of the enforcement mechanisms that had made it effective and helped it maintain bipartisan support for decades. Everyone's vote must count and everyone's voice must be heard for democracy to work for all of us. So we should pass policies to make voting more convenient and impose common-sense limits on political contributions to ensure the wealthy don't have undue influence on our elections.

Top Message: From equal access to the ballot box to the right not to be silenced by big money, democracy requires everyone to have a voice in the decisions affecting their lives.

Policy Proposal: The next Congress should commit to a 21st Century democracy where everyone's voice is heard. As a Member of Congress, you should endorse, prioritize, and work aggressively to pass legislation to reduce barriers to the ballot box and increase turnout. Members of Congress should support meaningful contribution limits so a wealthy few cannot use their economic power to shut out ordinary citizens.

Our democracy is based on the principle of one person, one vote – not one dollar, one vote. From equal access to the ballot box to the right not to be silenced by big money, democracy requires everyone to have a voice in the decisions affecting their lives.

Our democracy is undermined when elected representatives only hear the policy preferences of the wealthy. We need reasonable limits on using money in politics so our government doesn't just respond to wealthy donors and special interests when it should be responding to all Americans. Limits are most effective when combined with reforms to encourage more small donors to participate.

Our democracy functions best when all eligible Americans participate in the political process, and when the voting system is free, fair, accessible, and free from discrimination. Reforms to modernize our voter registration system would make voting more convenient and secure. They would provide Americans with the options they need to ensure they can register, vote, and make their voices heard. Restoring the Voting Rights Act would ensure that every American is protected against discrimination in voting.



Everyone Knows

Transparency

Summary: The American people deserve to know who's trying to influence politicians and the policy-making process. We need laws to create more disclosure of spending by outside groups and regulatory action by the SEC, FEC, and IRS to make sure outside spending groups and wealthy donors can't hide from voters.

Top Message: Voters have a right to know who is trying to influence our views and our elected representatives.

Policy Proposal: The next Congress should commit to a 21st Century democracy where everyone knows who funds campaigns. As a Member of Congress, you should push to pass legislation enacting new disclosure requirements for outside spending groups, urge the FEC to create regulations responsive to the *Citizens United* decision that would eliminate secret money contributions, urge the SEC to require public corporations to disclose their political spending, urge the FCC to require advertisers to disclose their "true identity," and urge the IRS to more clearly define political activity so organizations cannot abuse the system to keep their donors secret. Congress should support an executive order requiring all federal government contractors to disclose their political spending.

Voters have a right to know who is trying to influence our views and our elected representatives.

Americans should be able to easily look up candidates, online and in "real-time," to see what entities have spent substantial sums on the candidate's behalf, and which donors have provided the funds, both during the election and afterwards.

Congress should enact effective disclosure requirements so outside spending groups cannot hide from voters the wealthy donors and special interest funding them.

If President Obama fails to act, the next president can increase disclosure by signing an executive order requiring all federal contractors to disclose their political spending. Congress should urge the next president to sign such an order. Federal regulatory agencies – the FEC, FCC, IRS, and SEC – also have important roles to play in ensuring transparency. Congress should ensure that these agencies have the funding to enact the policies discussed above.



Everyone Plays by Common Sense Rules

The People's Jurisprudence

Summary: In a series of decisions, the Supreme Court has put our elections more squarely in the hands of big donors. We need justices who'll transform the court's approach to money in politics and a constitutional amendment to correct the fundamentally flawed decisions.

Top Message: The size of your wallet should not determine the strength of your political voice. But, in a long series of decisions beginning with *Bukley v. Valeo* and escalating with *Citizens United v. FEC* and *McCutcheon v. FEC*, the Supreme Court has cemented a flawed reading of our Constitution that strips the ability of We the People to write the rules by which we elect our representatives, such as common sense limits on election spending.

Policy Proposal: As a Member of Congress, you should commit to a 21st Century democracy where everyone plays by common sense rules and should pledge to restore our pro-democracy Constitution by endorsing, prioritizing, and passing the Democracy for All amendment. Senators should confirm justices who will transform the Supreme Court's approach to money in politics and revive the people's ability to protect our democracy. Members of the House should urge their Senate colleagues to confirm such nominees.

The Court in recent years rejects any reason other than fighting quid pro quo corruption (or bribery) as the basis for reining in big money, including leveling the playing field between mega donors and the rest of us, or ensuring the integrity of our democratic system. The Court has struck down strong protections, such as caps on candidate spending, meaningful contribution limits, and bans on corporate political spending. With a change in the Court's composition now upon us, this discussion looms even larger in both who will fill the vacancy left by Justice Scalia's death, and how the reform movement proceeds strategically once a new Justice is sworn in.

Special Note: The Supreme Court in 2016

The death of Justice Antonin Scalia and President Obama's nomination of Judge Merrick Garland to succeed him makes the issues covered in the Fighting Big Money campaign even more important, potentially pivotal in 2016. That makes any debate about the court or of these or many other issues pending before the court more challenging for your campaign, and your opponent's. Keep in mind how you and your opponent debate the important issues of the Supreme Court may well be the most information voters get on the topic. Thus, strive to have a debate that appeals to our shared values, justice, fairness, equality under the law, and what is best for the country, and avoid a debate that is partisan and stuck in the polarized politics of the moment.

Democracy reform is a nonpartisan issue about which Americans from across the ideological spectrum are reaching quick consensus. At the local

and state level, Republicans and Democrats alike are increasingly supporting or sponsoring new reform legislation to check money's influence. Only in Washington, D.C. do these issues feel so polarized. Unfortunately, the Supreme Court vacancy appears to cement that polarization through the 2016 election.

Because of the pressure you and your opponent will face from your leadership to toe the party line on the court nomination, it is important for us to make obvious why we repeatedly say democracy reform is a nonpartisan issue.

Within both major parties, growing numbers of reform-minded candidates and veteran politicians realize we cannot sustain a democracy where money matters more than people. Local and state politicians hear that from voters every day.

Both major parties also include entrenched opposition to reform.

So the fight against big money and for empowering people and strengthening our democracy is not pitting Republicans against Democrats, but rather pro-democracy reformers against the delay, obstruction, and polarization preferred by the money people in both major parties.

The next justices to join the court will review cases that determine if our democracy of, by, and for the people survives. If, instead, the trends continue increasing the power and influence of a few wealthy special interests more than people, then we've all lost far more than what is at stake in any single election, court case, or legislative battle. Our collective failure to put national interests ahead of partisan advantage will be among the reasons we should be prepared to tell our children about what happened to democracy.



Everyone is Held Accountable

Enforcement of Tougher Penalties

Summary: The Federal Election Commission's own members call it dysfunctional, and the partisan nature of many state election boards call their ability to fairly mediate disputes into question. Add to that the fact that many campaigns see violations as something they won't have to deal with until after the election (and the fines as minimal), and what you have is an election system in need of serious reform and real accountability.

Top Message: A fair and accessible election system requires strong enforcement of our laws so those who break them face real consequences.

Policy: The next Congress should commit to a 21st Century democracy where everyone is held accountable. As a Member of Congress, you should endorse, prioritize, and work aggressively to pass legislation to create a new enforcement agency with real power to hold campaign violators accountable and legislation to shut down individual-candidate super PACs and strengthen the rules that prohibit coordination between candidates and outside spending groups. Senators should commit to confirming FEC commissioners who promise to enforce existing law and an Attorney General who will prioritize addressing violations of campaign finance and election laws. Members of the House should urge their Senate colleagues to confirm such nominees.

A fair and accessible election system requires strong enforcement of our laws. Those who break the law must face real consequences.

But the FEC consistently fails to enforce and properly interpret campaign finance laws. As a result, candidates and their political operatives constantly stretch, if not break, the laws with impunity. A new, real enforcement agency is needed to replace the FEC. In the meantime, the Senate should confirm individuals to the FEC who are committed to enforcing existing law.

Individual-candidate super PACs and coordination between candidates and outside spending groups allow federal candidates and their big donors to evade the candidate contribution limits enacted by Congress and upheld by the Supreme Court. Shutting down individual-candidate super PACs and strengthening coordination rules are necessary to ensure accountability.

Given the complete enforcement breakdown, the Department of Justice needs to actively exercise its jurisdiction to prosecute criminal violations of campaign finance laws and election laws that protect access to the ballot box.

10.

How to Talk About Money-in-Politics Reforms

The debate about the influence of money in politics is over. In fact, Americans are so convinced money has corrupted politics and our government that nine in ten don't believe we can do anything about it. To alter this narrative, we must begin to tell a very different story – one that is focused on winning the debate about solutions rather than one that deepens cynicism through broadsides against corrupt politicians and institutions. Voters are looking for candidates willing to talk about solutions.

Based on years of public opinion research, here are key takeaways for pro-democracy reformers who want to make sure they connect with the public when talking about money in politics:

Counteracting cynicism

Polling indicates cynicism cannot be ignored, and confronting the issue doesn't do anything to engage voters. Public opinion experts recommend sequencing messages. Unless people are reminded we have the choice to work together to change the system and begin to believe it is possible, they aren't going to listen to a discussion of solutions, or aren't likely to find them adequate to addressing their perception of the problem.

The good news is that core American values bring us together rather than divide us along party lines. That will serve you well in your campaign by distinguishing you as a genuine reformer, not a party hack mouthing words because they poll well. The formula is simple and familiar to anyone who has had to gingerly break bad news or offer a constructive critique. The “Affirmation Sandwich” is an easy way to remember the importance of sequencing.

Start with a core value that resonates with people and affirms their power, such as:

“When ordinary Americans put their minds to it, we can change things for the better, whether that be a group of volunteers working on a community project, or voters deciding to send a powerful message even congress can't miss.”

Next, weave in a commonly held perception of the problem, such as:

“No matter how you identify politically, Americans agree our democracy is out of balance, with one side of the scale tilting against the interests of regular people in favor of private gain for a handful of wealthy donors. The elite establishment insiders and/or crony capitalists hire lobbyists and make large political contributions to buy access. They then use influence to get special loopholes and other favors only possible for the rich to perpetuate and increase concentration of wealth with no regard for the common good.”

-OR-

“Americans have seen enough and reject the notion that the expense of modern campaigns and TV advertising is what the right to free speech for each individual is really about. It is the content of speech, not the volume of, nor means to circulate that content, that the Constitution protects. It was not a “right to pamphlet” the Framers worried about, but one that protects the ideas in the pamphlet.”

Lastly, affirm core American values about our democracy that unite and inspire people, helping them overcome rampant cynicism and begin to engage again. Knowing we are not alone, we will connect with others, and take a stand to fight big money and to promote a broad set of democracy reforms. For example:

“The 2016 election is pivotal, and Americans from every background and region must work together, regardless of party, and remember that we are the ultimate check when the pendulum swings too far in either direction.”

-or-

“Elections are checks on individual politicians, and they set the overall direction of the country. On Election Day everyone has an equal voice and equal vote, no matter any other distinction. We overthrew a king, healed and united a nation after bloody civil war, and reminded the robber barons that their schemes for private gain might work for business, but we hold the public’s trust to a higher standard.”

-or-

“From Teapot Dome to Watergate, we have repeatedly surfaced, exposed, and prosecuted scandals. Each time new reforms are passed, the lawyers and lobbyists begin exploiting or creating loopholes. So the question isn’t if the people can beat big money again; we always do. This time we’ll make sure the fix sticks.”

Combine elements from each section of the Affirmation Sandwich above and you begin to see the complete message that engages and moves people toward reform and away from a system of big money that threatens democracy. At that point the choice is simple: people can vote to support the big money status quo, or vote for people who will change that direction and offer genuine solutions that restore balance and common sense to our politics.

The price we pay

Don’t dwell on the problem, but to the extent you reference it, do so in relationship to ordinary Americans. Broad majorities of people across all demographics describe our democracy as “out of balance” and “corrupt.” Public polling shows there is broad agreement that the government is dysfunctional. Americans believe donors unduly influence politicians.

That “politicians are corrupt” is cultural common sense and constantly referring to it will do little to increase salience or engagement. A focus, instead, on a democracy “out of balance” gives people an immediate referential sense that there’s a corrective measure or measures needed.

One frame that is useful in moving through the problem quickly is the “price we pay” frame. It helps voters connect the dots between the abstract money of

lobbying or campaign contributions to see how other issues they care about are adversely affected by the big money system. Making this personal for people shows how we all pay a price for the current system. For example:

“When Congress buys weapons systems that the Pentagon and Defense Department did not order, do not want, and cannot stop, we all pay the price in the waste of money, material and time. And our soldiers, military families, and veterans pay a price with cuts to the systems and supports they really need and deserve.”

-OR-

“When crony capitalists get special favors giving their products unfair market advantage, and avoid taxes by shipping money to offshore accounts, we all pay the price with higher prices on their goods, higher individual tax burdens, fewer American jobs, and a rigged system that prevents/discourages entrepreneurs and small businesses from competing in the marketplace fair and square.”

Equal voices

This is about people having their voices heard, and they know that’s not happening now. Recent research finds that an “equal voice” frame motivates the base and engages those persuadable toward reform.

American values

Connect with values. People believe in the American ideal of a government of, by, and for the people. As cynical as they are, they believe that we can come together to solve problems. Research in this field has found deep connections to American history and ideals – and that history is about always moving forward, striving for something better. Money in politics is a barrier to a “more perfect union.”

Core messages

Message 1: Big Money Creates Barriers to Running

Instead of starting the conversation about campaign money as corruption, we should talk about it as a barrier to entry for ordinary Americans. And, in fact, according to Pew, a majority of people believes that “ordinary Americans” could do a better job of solving the nation’s problems.

- To create a more representative government and to have the ability to elect the best people, we need to address the barriers that prevent ordinary Americans from running for office.
- There are a number of straightforward steps we can take to overcome these barriers and allow people like us to run for office, from matching small donations to empower everyday people to limiting campaign contributions and spending.

Message 2: People Want Their Voices to Matter

Voters believe their voices aren't heard above those of big donors and wealthy special interests. Reform is about making their voices heard. Public opinion and messaging experts working with different methodologies reached the same conclusions and suggested an "every voice" frame; the strongest messages from the research are all about voters having an "equal voice."

- We need to build a democracy where everyone participates, every vote is counted, and everyone's voice is heard; where people from all walks of life can run for and win office, not just the wealthy and well-connected. Around the nation there are examples of strong protections successfully curbing the influence of money in politics. Now's the time to strengthen our democracy by providing opportunity, real choices, and an equal voice for all.
- America is a nation of farmers, teachers, caregivers, inventors, entrepreneurs, and workers, founded on the belief that we are all created equal. That's why we believe every voice should be heard in our political process, not just the wealthy and well-connected. We need to strengthen our democracy through policies already working around the country to empower everyday people in the political process.

Message 3: Refer Back to American Ideals

Our American ideal of a government of, by, and for the people still resonates with people. They believe our current political system is not listening to the people, and certainly not taking direction from them. Voters know our democracy is out of balance and are aware that it will take us all working together to restore balance. Using the language of the Founders and other iconic phrases that speak to core democratic and American values continue to test well and resonate with voters, including the Rising American Electorate.

- The Founders envisioned that in a democracy, the government is supposed to be of, by, and for the people. But right now, we don't have that.
- There are straightforward steps we can take to raise the voices of everyday people, reduce the influence of big money, and ensure that everyone has an equal say in our government.
- We all want our children and the next generation to have a better life and more opportunities than we did, but there's something wrong when millions of hardworking Americans are scraping by. That's what happens when wealthy special interests have too much power and make the rules—working families get left behind.
- To make sure our children have a free and fair America, we must come together to make our democracy work for all of us, through commonsense reforms that would empower everyday people and reduce the influence of wealthy donors.



Responding to Attacks

The American people are so fed up with the way things are right now, they are strongly embracing substantial, substantive reforms like the ones outlined above, and they don't trust politicians who refuse to support them. You have an advantage over anyone who prefer the status quo. Respond to attacks about reform by pivoting back to your values. Don't get caught up in the details of a particular proposal. You will be most successful by sticking to values-based messaging and painting a picture of the contrast between the status quo and a 21st Century democracy that works for all of us.

Below is a short set of questions and answers to expected attacks, followed by a few scenarios with sample press releases, modeling how we'd recommend you approach each situation.

Attack 1: We can't afford taxpayer-financed elections, or welfare for politicians. Politicians can raise their own money to run for office.

Response: Have you ever wondered why wealthy special interests are never the ones footing the bill for the really big ticket items government is responsible for, like national defense, or roads, bridges, and other infrastructure? It's the price we pay for the current political system, where Congress protects tax breaks for crony capitalists, but cuts supports for investment in the common good, or for breaks for hardworking middle class families. A small investment in fair rules that ensure regular people are heard in the halls of power will help re-orient our elected officials. It works in Connecticut where the Citizens Election Program is credited with shifting power away from lobbyists and putting it back in the hands of the people. Now going into its fifth successful election cycle, the program is more popular than ever, with 74 percent of elected officials running within the Citizen Election Program. We need a comprehensive set of solutions like the Fighting Big Money Agenda to help secure democracy of, by, and for the people.

Response: We are all paying a huge price for the current system, because decisions made in Washington benefit lobbyists and the special interests they work for. Politicians pay attention to the donors, not regular people. Too many elected officials work for the money at the expense of the many. Until and unless voters' voices are heard, wealthy special interests are going to call the shots, shutting the rest of us out. They exact a far higher price in back room deals than any citizen-funded election program will ever cost. We need a comprehensive set of solutions like the Fighting Big Money Agenda to help secure democracy of, by, and for the people.

Response: We can't afford not to fix the problems in our democracy. Congress has lost the public's trust. Special interests rule Washington. The Supreme Court is building precedent on one of the biggest legal mistakes in history, the fallacy that money is the same thing as the free speech enshrined in the First Amendment. Regular people don't feel like they can make a difference. The middle class won't get a fair shake until Congress cleans up its act and cuts the influence – in a serious way – of lobbyists and other special interests. If that

takes a modest investment in citizen-funded elections, so be it. We need a comprehensive set of solutions like the Fighting Big Money Agenda to help secure democracy of, by, and for the people.

Attack 2: Money will always find a way into politics, so trying to get rid of its influence is a fool's errand.

Response: You can throw up your hands and say a problem is too big to solve, but that's not the America I know. We have to do better; we must do more to make our elections of, by, and for the people, not wealthy donors and super PACs. By having candidates seek their support from citizens back home, we can make the number of people you have on your side count for more than the number of millionaires and billionaires you are beholden to. By giving the Federal Election Commission real power to enforce election law, we can put a cop on the beat to police campaign violations. There are good ideas to improve our elections and together, we can create a democracy that works for everyone, not just campaign donors. We need a comprehensive set of solutions like the Fighting Big Money Agenda to help secure democracy of, by, and for the people.

Response: We can't get rid of it but we can reduce money's influence. Connecticut's Citizens Election Program did just that, shifting the balance of power away from the lobbyists and private agendas of wealthy special interests, back toward the people--specifically the constituents in the districts the candidate is running in. Going into its fifth election cycle, it is the most successful state-based program and is more popular than ever among reform-minded politicians in both parties and the public. Maine, Seattle, New York City, and Los Angeles all have same form of this model, and more jurisdictions are lining up to pass some version of citizen funded election this year. We need a comprehensive set of solutions like the Fighting Big Money Agenda to help secure democracy of, by, and for the people.

Response: I'm not opposed to money in politics. But I am opposed to the dependence Congress has on the wealthy special interests providing it. That's the problem to solve, and until the reform-minded candidates in both parties are freed by their leadership to speak honestly and openly about the problem--instead of being bound to old ways of thinking and funding campaigns--then the moneyed classes in both parties will prevail. This is an issue about the health, well-being, and some say the very survival of our democracy. There is no place for partisan politics on an issue so fundamental to who we are as Americans--the concept of one person, one vote, and the equal voice we all should have in determining our future. We need a comprehensive set of solutions like the Fighting Big Money Agenda to help secure democracy of, by, and for the people.

Attack 3: You criticize outside groups and want them to be transparent, but you're benefiting from that money, too.

Response: I would love for all the outside money to go away, I want the people in charge of elections, not the big spending shadowy front groups who are running more negative ads than the two of us combined can afford. I'm ready to work to make this the last election cycle that voters have to deal with secret money and these unaccountable, secret campaign groups. Are we both willing to commit to making democracy reform a priority and the first order of business for the new congress one of us is about to join? We need a comprehensive set of solutions like the Fighting Big Money Agenda to help secure democracy of, by, and for the people.

Attack 4: There are some good reasons to allow anonymous donations by certain special interests groups, if they fear being targeted or threatened for their political beliefs.

Response: A billionaire funding attack ads in a presidential race is a far cry from a small donor being targeted for intimidation by those holding opposing views. We can craft disclosure laws that protect small and individual donors while still bringing into the light the secret and shadowy figures who are funding the vast majority of independent political TV ads and lobbying our elected officials. The American people deserve

to know who's funding our elections and what those donors expect in return. We need a comprehensive set of solutions like the Fighting Big Money Agenda to help secure democracy of, by, and for the people.

Attack 5: Campaign finance reform always leads to unintended consequences. We pass one reform and another loophole opens up. We pass something to close that one, and a third one opens. There's no stopping the flow of money in politics.

Response: The true challenge of reforming our campaign finance system is not to stop all the money flowing into our elections. It's to bring the people back in. People have lost faith the ability of Congress and Washington to address their concerns because they think our elected officials only listen to the big money donors and special interests. In order to rebuild public trust, we have to turn not simply to efforts to stop money from buying access and influence, but also to efforts to increase the role that regular people can play in our democracy, making use of the public's TV and radio airwaves to provide free time to candidates. The answer is not to throw up our hands and say, "We can't fix this." The answer is to come together, roll up our sleeves, and get to work putting people back in charge of their democracy. We need a comprehensive set of solutions like the Fighting Big Money Agenda to help secure democracy of, by, and for the people.

Attack 6: Organizations should be able to speak out on the issues they and their members care about. That's not just free speech, it's the freedom to assemble and associate. People who want to limit money in politics want to shut down the First Amendment rights of those who simply disagree.

Response: No one is proposing regulating the content of political speech, and it is irresponsible to suggest that they are. I agree that organizations, individuals, and candidates should be able to speak out on issues they care about. But no one should be able to do so in a way that drowns out the voices of everyone else, or in ways that are anonymous and unaccountable, or without being willing to abide by simple rules. Right now, wealthy special interests can dump in a million dollars or more to any campaign and we'd never know who they are. I'm willing to say to anyone and everyone that we need to change this. The answer is in proposing real solutions to address these problems, not throwing up our hands and saying there's nothing we can do to fix it. We need a comprehensive set of solutions like the Fighting Big Money Agenda to help secure democracy of, by, and for the people.

Attack 7: Americans should have the right to contribute to the candidate of their choice or to help elect that candidate without the government telling them whether it's appropriate. When it comes to free speech, we need to err on the side of caution and have fewer limitations.

Response: I stand second to no one when it comes to defending the First Amendment. I believe, though, that it belongs to all of us--not just billionaires able to write big checks. Right now, regular Americans can exercise their free speech rights, but unless they've won the lottery or run a Wall Street hedge fund, few people will hear them. We need a comprehensive set of solutions like the Fighting Big Money Agenda to help secure democracy of, by, and for the people.

Responding to Attacks from Outside Groups:

Situation 1: Your campaign is attacked by a shadowy group called Americans for Freedom in a \$500,000 television ad buy running for two weeks in your district.

Advice: Don't debate Americans for Freedom. Turn it into an argument for reform. Also, don't let the fact that they're not disclosing their donors stop you from talking about where political money comes from. And always remember: Pivot back to the values of your campaign.

For Immediate Release
 Contact:

Special Interest Money Floods into [CITY/DISTRICT/STATE]; Secret Donors Trying to Buy Election [GROUP] Trying to Keep the Status Quo in Washington

City, State – With [OUTSIDE GROUP] trying to influence the outcome of this race, voters in [DISTRICT/STATE] now have a clear choice this November. Are they going to send someone to Washington who condones big money special interests or are they going to elect a Representative who believes democracy should not be for sale to the highest bidder? My opponent can repudiate this outside spending now and demand the ads stop, or tell the voters what they plan to do for these special interests if elected.

[ADD QUOTE]: “I am running because I believe we need a government that represents the people, not big money campaign donors. I want to rebalance our elections to get the money out and the people back in. This election, we have a chance to reject the pay-to-play system that has dominated politics for too long and send a representative to Washington who will fight to give everyday people a bigger voice.

[ADD BACKGROUND ABOUT THE GROUP ATTACKING YOU.]

For more information on my plan to empower everyday people in politics, please visit: [ADD WEBSITE]

###

Situation 2: You would like to announce your support for the “Fighting Big Money, Empowering People Agenda,” a bold platform to return American democracy to the American people.

Advice: Go big or go home. Voters don’t want to have a slightly smaller amount of corruption in politics. They want bold, fearless leaders in today’s seemingly lawless world of money in politics. They want to trust that you have a plan and that your plan is primarily about giving them a voice.

For Immediate Release
 Contact:

[ADD YOUR NAME] Announces Support for the “Fighting Big Money, Empowering People Agenda,” to Address Political Corruption in Elections and Clean Up Washington

[Candidate]: “I’ll push for Government by the People, Strong Disclosure Laws, and Strict Enforcement of Campaign Laws”

City, State– [ADD YOUR NAME] today announced support for the “Fighting Big Money, Empowering People Agenda,” a bold, comprehensive plan to give everyday people a bigger voice in politics, including stronger disclosure laws and real nonpartisan enforcement of the laws governing our elections.

[ADD QUOTE – SAMPLE] “Our current campaign finance system creates barriers for everyday people to be heard in our elections. It forces politicians to spend too much time raising money from wealthy special interests, and too little on the needs of their constituents. That’s why today, I am pledging to fight and lead in Congress for a bold plan to put us on a path back to real democracy where every vote matters, regardless of the size of your wallet.

[ADD YOUR NAME’s] plan to reduce the influence of big money and empower everyday people includes:

[ADD BULLET POINTS ABOUT YOUR PLAN HERE]

For more on the plan, please visit [ADD LINK]

[Add information on polling, if available.]

[Background paragraph of your opponent’s record on the issue]

###



Facts You Can Use

A billion dollars here and a billion dollars there, and soon---you're talking about unimaginable sums of money. Here are some facts about our current system that you can use to make the problem real to people.

- On average, members of Congress raised \$1.7 million for their races in 2014, an increase of 40 percent from just a decade ago. ([Center for Responsive Politics](#))
- The finance sector donated \$221 million directly to congressional candidates in the 2014 cycle. ([Center for Responsive Politics](#))
- One person can donate up to \$334,000 directly to the RNC or DNC per cycle. That's equal to 22 years of full-time pay for a minimum wage worker.
- Through the first part of 2015, just 158 families made up nearly half of the money raised for the 2016 presidential race. They could all fit on a Boeing 737. ([New York Times](#), October 2015)
- The big donors funding our elections don't look like the rest of America. The top givers in the 2014 election were overwhelmingly white, male, and had an average age of 66 ([Center for Responsive Politics](#)).
- The use of undisclosed money in politics, or "dark money," has exploded in the 2016 cycle, with over \$200 million spent on elections through January—three and a half times what was spent by this time in 2012 ([OpenSecrets](#)).



Examples of Published Op-Eds

The Conservative Case for Campaign Finance Reform

New York Times | February 3, 2016

By: Richard W. Painter, Professor, University of Minnesota

ALL Americans should be alarmed about the effects of money in politics. But it is conservatives who should be leading the fight for campaign-finance reform. Unfortunately, none of the Republican candidates for president have taken on this issue.

Why should conservative voters care? First, big money in politics encourages big government. Campaign contributions drive spending on earmarks and other wasteful programs — bridges to nowhere, contracts for equipment the military does not need, solar energy companies that go bankrupt on the government's dime and for-profit educational institutions that don't educate. When politicians are dependent on campaign money from contractors and lobbyists, they're incapable of holding spending programs to account.

Campaign contributions also breed more regulation. Companies in heavily regulated industries such as banking, health care and energy are among the largest contributors. Such companies donate with the hope of winning narrowly tailored exceptions to regulations that help them and disadvantage their competitors. Politicians sometimes say they want to roll back regulations wholesale, but they rarely follow through because they know that less regulation will remove the incentive for future contributions. Some would call it extortion, but that is how the regulatory game is often played.

Social conservatives and faith-based voters should care about big money in politics because it drowns out their voices on issues from abortion and euthanasia to gambling and pornography. Churches and other charitable groups are prohibited from contributing to campaigns or even endorsing candidates. Politicians pay them lip service, but their influence pales in comparison to large for-profit enterprises. Values don't pay for campaigns; health insurance companies, entertainment businesses, the gambling industry and its online counterparts do.

Remember the poor widow in the Gospel of Luke [who contributed coins](#) to the temple treasury? She is the values voter of today. If religious conservatives want to accomplish their goals, they first need to drive the big spenders out of the temples of our democracy.

Our campaign-finance system is also a national security risk. In a global economy, corporate wealth is no longer mostly American. American companies are owned by, borrow money from, and do business with foreign governments, companies, sovereign wealth funds and oligarchs. Equating corporate wealth with free political speech, as the Supreme Court did in its 2010 [Citizens United decision](#), means that global economic power will help choose our government. Organizations that are not required to disclose the identities of their donors use

their “free speech” rights to produce election ads; only the most naïve can believe the money behind those organizations is all American.

It is, of course, illegal for foreigners and foreign companies to contribute to American political campaigns. Those restrictions, however, are as easy to evade as underage drinking laws on college campuses. There is a big money party going on in Washington and telling well-heeled foreigners that they can’t attend simply won’t work. They may act more discreetly than their American counterparts, but they will be there, and that so little of what goes on at the party is disclosed makes foreign participation that much easier.

All this is a betrayal of conservative values. Conservative political leaders from Edmund Burke in the 18th century to [Senator John McCain in the 21st](#) have expressed dismay over the cost of elections and the corrupting influence of money in politics. The 1964 Republican presidential nominee, Senator Barry Goldwater, in his 1960 book “[The Conscience of a Conservative](#),” wrote: “In order to achieve the widest possible distribution of political power, financial contributions to political campaigns should be made by individuals and individuals alone. I see no reason for labor unions – or corporations – to participate in politics.” He also strenuously objected to the Supreme Court’s obstruction of campaign finance reform beginning in the 1970s.

More important, the system is a betrayal of the vision of participatory democracy embraced by the founders of our country. They rebelled against oligarchy and corruption in England. They tossed the British tea into Boston Harbor in 1773 and demanded taxation only with representation. We should do the same.

Taxation in the United States should be conditioned on every individual taxpayer’s being allowed to designate the first \$200 of his or her taxes to support a political candidate. Such a “tax rebate for democracy” would bring billions of small donations to political candidates, who would no longer depend on a tiny sliver of the population for the money they need to get elected. Government contractors and other beneficiaries of wasteful spending would have less influence, and ordinary voters would have a fighting chance to make sure the rest of their tax dollars were spent conservatively and responsibly.

This and other reforms, including greater transparency about who is paying for election ads, and a less activist Supreme Court that would allow Congress and state legislatures to address campaign finance, would go a long way toward restoring the republican form of government that our founders embedded in the Constitution.

Bipartisan case for a constitutional amendment on campaign finance

The Hill | September 8, 2014

By: Sen. Tom Udall (D-N.M.) and former Sen. Alan Simpson (R-Wyo.)

Following recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions dismantling our nation’s campaign finance laws, all Americans are certainly not equal on Election Day. With 5-4 split decisions, the court has given corporations the ability to spend unlimited money to persuade voters, and also declared limits on large donations to be the equivalent of infringement on speech. The result is an electoral system in which a billionaire can influence elections across the country, while regular voters have just one shot – by casting a single ballot.

This is surely not the equality as envisioned by our founders, who would be appalled by corporate spending in elections and unlimited personal donations by billionaires. The solution is to clarify the Constitution so that the people may decide how, when and why to regulate campaign finance. This week, the Senate will vote to begin debate on a constitutional amendment which now has the support of nearly half the Senate, 16 states and over 550 municipalities, including large cities like New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and Philadelphia – all of whom are sick of out-of-control spending in elections and disturbed at the direction the court has taken.

The original and honest intent of our campaign finance laws is to rein in the culture of money in politics and ensure that a few donors can't buy an election by spending to benefit one candidate over another. They are rooted in the public's disgust with political corruption. Yet the court's rulings indicate we are headed back to that pre-Watergate era of corruption. We were troubled that Chief Justice Roberts wrote in the *McCutcheon* decision that quid pro quo corruption – bribery – is the only sufficient justification for Congress to pass regulations. As a result, we are likely to see new challenges against laws that limit the amount an individual may contribute to a candidate, or laws prohibiting contributions to candidates from corporations. The largest corporations are multi-national organizations worth hundreds of billions of dollars and the Supreme Court is leaving us with no way to set reasonable standards.

McCutcheon is the most recent case, but there is a history of the court narrowly overturning reasonable campaign finance laws. In 2010, *Citizens United v. FEC* gave free speech rights to corporations and special interests. But this problem goes all the way back to 1976, when the court held in *Buckley v. Valeo* that restricting independent campaign expenditures violates the First Amendment right to free speech. In effect, the court said money and speech are the same thing.

This is tortured logic that leads to an unacceptable result – that a citizen's access to a constitutional right is dependent on his or her net worth. A result that says the wealthy get to shout, but the rest of you may only whisper.

The constitutional amendment would make it clear that campaign finance regulations are up to voters who elect Congress and state legislatures. It would not dictate any specific policies or regulations, but instead would protect sensible and workable campaign finance laws from constitutional challenges.

Critics have claimed that the amendment would repeal the First Amendment's free speech protections. But it does the exact opposite – the proposal is an effort to restore the First Amendment so that it applies equally to all Americans. When a few billionaires can drown out the voices of millions of Americans, we can't have any real political debate.

The amendment would not simply benefit one party or incumbent. It is similar to bipartisan proposals introduced in nearly every Congress since 1983, when Republican Sen. Ted Stevens (Alaska) was the lead sponsor. Over the years, it has been supported by many Republicans, including Sens. John McCain (Ariz.), Thad Cochran (Miss.), Arlen Specter (Pa.), and Nancy Kassebaum (Kan.), as well as many Democrats. In April, retired Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens said in his testimony before the Senate Rules Committee that campaign finance regulations “should create a level playing field ... to give rival candidates – irrespective of their political party and incumbency status – an equal opportunity to persuade citizens to vote for them.” Most Americans would agree with Justice Stevens. However, until the Constitution is amended, such laws would be struck down by the current court.

The national debate should not be dictated by a handful of wealthy individuals and corporations. After the *McCutcheon* decision wealthy donors can, and many will, contribute up to \$3.6 million in an election cycle. For an average person making minimum wage, it would take 239 years to make that much money. The playing field in our democracy is far from level, and that is driving cynicism, disgust and mistrust of the political process to dangerous levels.

Over the course of our Senate careers, spending on campaigns has gotten out of control. According to a joint study by Brookings and the American Enterprise Institute, outside groups spent \$457 million to influence Senate and House races in 2012. In the 1978 election, when Senator Simpson was first elected, outside groups spent only \$303,000. There is a deeply troubling trend here, and we cannot let it continue.

Amending the Constitution is difficult – as it should be – but it is long past time to have an honest and thoughtful national dialogue about our broken electoral process and how we voters can fix it.

Udall is New Mexico's senior senator, serving since 2009. He sits on the Appropriations; the Foreign Relations; the Environment and Public Works; the Indian Affairs; and the Rules committees. Simpson served in the Senate from 1979 to 1997. In 2010, he was co-chair of President Obama's National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform.

Reversing the grievous error of *Citizens United*

Washington Post | February 5, 2014

By: House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi and Rep. John Sarbanes (D-Md.)

Americans have seen it on their televisions and heard it on their radios: political ads backed by unnamed sources; the work of so-called advocacy groups backed by undisclosed donors; damaging policy agendas orchestrated by special interests; endless money muddying the waters of our debate with confusion and voter suppression.

This has been the impact over the past four years of the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision. The narrow court majority, overturning decades of precedent, opened the floodgates to millions of dollars in secret, special interest spending on elections.

Indeed, *Citizens United* shook the foundation of our democracy: the principle that, in the United States of America, it is the voices of the people, not the bank accounts of the privileged few, that determine the outcome of our elections and the policies of our government.

Our Founders established a government of the many, not a government of the money. That's what the American people deserve.

Most people who run for public office do so out of a sincere desire to help others and make a difference in their community and in our country. Many of us are deeply frustrated at the huge amounts of money it takes to run for office and the distorting effect money has on the functioning of government.

We know that if the role of money in our elections were reduced and the level of civility in our politics increased, the result would be the election of more women, more minorities, more young people and more people dedicated to serving the public interest, not special interests.

Most members of Congress would leap at the chance to fund their campaigns without having to turn to a familiar cast of big donors and entrenched interests. Today, that's virtually impossible.

But it doesn't have to be that way. We can and must break the grip of special interests on our politics. Those of us inside and outside the Capitol who support this kind of major change are rallying around H.R. 20, the Government by the People Act, which is to be introduced Wednesday. This sensible, straightforward legislation would:

- Encourage the participation of everyday Americans in the funding of campaigns by providing a refundable \$25 My Voice Tax Credit. This would bring the voices of the broader public into the funding side of campaigns and democratize the relationship between money and speech.
- Establish a Freedom From Influence Matching Fund to boost the power of small-dollar contributions. To be eligible for these matching funds, a candidate would have to agree to a limit on large donations and demonstrate broad-based support from a network of small-dollar contributors. Amplified by the Freedom

From Influence Matching Fund, the voices of everyday Americans would be as powerful as those of big donors.

- Provide candidates with an opportunity to earn additional resources in the homestretch of a campaign so that the voices of the people are not completely drowned out by super political action committees and other dark-money interests. In the wake of *Citizens United*, this kind of support is critical to ensuring that citizen-backed candidates have staying power.

The funding for these changes should come from closing tax and regulatory loopholes that are the decades-old legacy of special-interest influence in Congress. It's only fair that those responsible for breaking the policymaking machinery in Washington should bear the cost of fixing it.

From Seneca Falls, N.Y., to Selma, Ala., generations of Americans have stood up against seemingly insurmountable status quos that denied their voices and their votes. Today's generation, too, must have the courage to take back our politics.

We must disclose the sources of the money in our campaigns, amend the Constitution to reverse the grievous error of the *Citizens United* decision, reform our broken campaign finance system and empower citizens everywhere to exercise their right to vote.

The Government by the People Act would help build a politics and a government that answer to the people. Together, we can reassert the full promise of our ideals and restore confidence in our democracy.



Resources

[Center for Responsive Politics](#)

Center for Responsive Politics is the nation's leading nonpartisan research group, tracking money in politics and publishing their findings on their award winning website opensecrets.org.

[MapLight](#)

MapLight is a nonpartisan research organization that provides citizens with transparency tools that enable them to track data demonstrating money's influence on politics in the U.S. Congress and in the California and Wisconsin state Legislatures.

[FEC's Campaign Finance Disclosure Portal](#)

The FEC's Campaign Finance Disclosure Portal provides a single point of entry to campaign finance data.

[Sunlight Foundation's Influence Explorer](#)

Influence Explorer connects the dots of political contributions on the federal and state level, allowing you to track influence by lawmaker, company, or prominent individual.

Contact: FightBigMoney@commoncause.org