Campaign Finance Essay, Research Paper

?No matter what your social issue, if you want to solve it get the money out

of politics. Only then will lawmakers vote for their people rather than their

pocketbooks.? Jack E. Lohman. Money corrupts politics, and when contributions

are being made to candidates it is not in the best interest of the American

people. Campaign Finance is out of control in today?s political races.

Candidates are taking money from wherever and whoever they can get it. Soft

money is flowing through elections without care or caution. People who make

these contributions do not share the views of the average citizen, so

politicians end up representing the wrong people. Money decides races, sometimes

leaving the better man but lighter spender out of a position. Candidates make

decisions based on what will help them financially that what is better for the

people. Contributions by industry are made not in the interest of the people,

sometimes hurting them in ways they don?t even know. No matter what the

opposition may say campaign finance reform is needed urgently to keep our

democracy as our founders intended it. People and corporations that make the

largest donations to campaigns do not share views with the general population.

Politicians will listen to those who give them money so that they can depend on

that money being there again when it is time for reelection. Yet individual

donors making a $200 dollar or more contribution make up only .33% of the

population. This extremely small percentage of mostly wealthy individuals gain

the power to influence politicians to their liking. The idea that these people

should have power to affect government more than those with less money goes

against the concept of equality for all, which is what made this country great.

People who make large donations do not share the same views on most issues as

the general population. Robert L. Borosage and Ruy Teixeira report that while 53

percent of voters want stricter regulations on businesses and corporations, to

give workers a fair salary and working conditions, 58 percent of campaign donors

want to see less control over the businesses and corporations of America. Donors

also want less government spending with lower taxes, while the majority of

citizens want a larger, more powerful government. A very tiny part of our

population is giving money to campaigns telling candidates what they have to do

to continue getting campaign contributions, yet these people do not represent

the ideology and sentiment of the people as a whole. There must be a change in

the way that campaigns are financed if democracy is to survive. If we do not

reform campaign finance we will have politicians working only for those who can

afford to contribute. Money is the major factor in any political race. It can

sway a decision very strongly depending on how well it is used. In the House,

the candidate who spends the most money on his or her campaign wins 92% of the

time. Things are no different in the Senate, here 88% of the time the bigger

spender wins. Incumbents are usually the tip money spender, because they raise

more money. Paul Starr, writer for The American Prospect , estimates that it

would take $1,000,000 for a challenger to defeat the incumbent. The only way a

challenger could get this kind of money would be to appeal to big business and

the wealthy, who have radically different ideas about government than the

general public. A challenger, to even have a chance, would have to turn to

business and wealth to win. With this great difficulty to de-seat an incumbent,

turnover in congress drops, and members become stagnant, winning on name alone.

All the while, they are giving breaks to the corporations and wealthy people who

got them there. With campaigns finance reform, we could get challengers and

incumbents on a level playing field so that the candidate with the better ideas

who will honestly help the majority will end up the victor. It would not matter

much where candidates got the money from for their campaigns except that when

elected, politicians act on in accordance to the wishes of those who have made

donations. 71% of citizens say that a politicians choices and votes are made on

the basis of money. 61% of donors agree with this. Its been explained that a

small percentage of people make donations, and these people do not represent the

population as a whole. If politicians make decisions based on this small group

of people they are not representing the entire population ,or doing what is best

for the majority, as they were hired to do. Politicians realize where they get

funding and work to please those with the money. Robert Reich estimates that

half of all Americans with a million dollar a year income or greater have had

their picture taken with the president. All this attention is going to a group

that consists of less than 90,000. This cannot be healthy for a government that

is supposed to work for all Americans. When congress persons make decisions

based on whether it will fill their campaign fund, it is not representative of

the people that they should be representing. The decisions that they make may be

harmful to the people, but that does not matter to some politicians. All that

matter to them is dollars. The people don?t know this though because those

dollars are sepnt trying to convince everyone that their representative did a

good job and worked for their best interest. Money does matter to politicians

and they remember and reward those who get them into office. Donations made by

corporations often hurt individuals either financially or even medically.

Corporations make up a large portion of the groups that give generous donations.

These corporations do not care what is good for the people, all they care about

is their own bottom line. If this means shipping unsafe or unhealthy products,

that is what will be done. Food companies have donated $41 million dollars on

the promise by candidates, that once in office, will not make stricter

regulations on e-coli protection. E-coli is a deadly bacteria that infects

numerous people every year. But as a result of donatoins by food companies,

goverment will not regulate these companies to protect Americans. Food companies

are not alone, the cotton industry is also at fault. Safety standards that some

companies include on night wear voluntarily because of the great risk of burns,

are not national law. The cotton industry gives generous contributions to

Congress in hopes that any legislation concerning safety standards will be shut

down. These are safety standards that have already saved dozens of lives and

could save many more. Campaign money from industries stops laws that would help

out every American. New drugs are released into the market for public use

everyday. The company that originated the drug holds a patent on that drug for

an amount of time, after this time any company can make this drug and offer it

at a competitive price. Competitive prices would be of great help to those who

are on a fixed income, such as the elderly population, and cannot afford the

high price of medications. Contributions of !8.4 million going to campaigns and

8.4 million in soft money from medicine developing companies have influenced

politicians to lengthen the amount of time that patents on drugs last, costing

Americans millions. These are just three examples of how industries hurt the

people of America by donating to campaigns. There are many more hurting average

citizens everyday, without them even knowing it. In the end taxpayer pay for

these contributions that hurt them so much anyway. When a large business makes a

donation, they must make up for the lost money. They do this by raising the

prices that they charge consumers. Congress gives the contributions back to

companies through corporate welfare. 167 billion dollars a year is given to

companies that donated to campaigns. This money has to come from somewhere. It

comes from the taxes every year of John Q. Public. So we are not only paying

higher prices as a result of campaign contributions, but we are paying the

corporations again through corporate welfare. Consumer safety is commonly

ignored because of special interest industries. Higher prices are put upon us a

the cash register every time we buy something from a company that funds

campaigns. Taxes are high because of corporate welfare. Reform is needed to save

Americans from this kind of treatment from the big businesses. Opponents of

Campaign finance reform have many reasons that they feel reform is bad. But most

of these arguments boil down to; contributions are an expression of freedom of

speech, and reform would not help as illegal contributions take place now and

would only be increased with more laws. The voices of those who fund

advertisements that do not go on campaign reports are those of a small minority.

These voices are being heard above all the voices of the greater majority of

people who cannot afford to have their voices heard. Letting one persons opinion

be louder than another goes against the ideas of equality for all, infringing

upon the rights of others. If reform is to take place we must enforce the laws

that we set in place. Laws that are not enforced are worthless. We must be ready

to punish a candidate and make him or her face the consequences, whether it be

elimination from the race or removal from office. Reform is needed to fix our

crooked and corrupt congress, and we must be willing to punish those who break

the law. One option that we should consider is that of Jack E. Lohman, a

business man from Milwaukee, WI. Under his plan special interest and corporate

donations would be eliminated. Instead, taxpayers would fund political

campaigns. Special interests and corporations spend 750 million on campaigns. As

it was explained, this hurts taxpayers when purchasing goods and when paying

taxes for corporate welfare. By eliminating these donors politicians would not

be affected by outside interests and would be free to do what is best for the

people. The 750 million dollars for campaigns would come from the taxpayers and

only cost $5 dollars a year. After cuts from corporate welfare and wasteful

government spending this would save taxpayers 495 to 995 dollars a year, not to

mention price drops as a result of reduced corporate spending on political

campaigns. This would put more money in the hands of the taxpayer to buy more

products helping the economy. Most important, politicians would not be swayed by

monetary interest offered to them for help in other areas. Donors not

representing the public, money, not people and issues deciding races,

politicians voting for campaign funds instead of the public, corporations

risking the safety of people, these are all problems that could be fixed by

reforming campaign finance. Campaign finance is an urgent problem that must be

remedied soon or we will be facing a situation in government where the power

lies in the hand of those who have money to donate to campaigns. If something is

not done we will be heading straight into a corrupt and contemptible government

whose only care is that of being reelected. Action must be taken now before it

is too late and scandalous congressmen will only support scandalous policy. If

our government is to be saved, we must have campaign finance reform.