



POSITION PAPER

SPECIAL INTEREST MONEY IS LEGALIZED BRIBERY

Members of Congress have managed to create a seemingly lawful system whereby they can legally accept money from lobbyists or other persons who represent special interest groups that are actively involved in trying to influence those same politicians in future votes. The special interest groups that contribute large sums of money to political campaigns want and expect “their politicians” to enact (or help in some way) legislation that favors the group that provided the money. In America today, we are living under a political system that not only allows, but encourages and condones the legalized bribery of members of congress. That is why I believe “America has the best congress that special interest money can buy.”

Compare these two examples:

1. If a known drug dealer gives a police officer in a narcotics enforcement unit a \$1,000. “Contribution” for the policeman’s ball and says “I hope you consider looking the other way when I’m selling drugs on the corner.” Whether or not the police officer takes any kind of official action that benefits the drug dealer, if he accepts the money, he commits the crime of bribery, right?
2. If a lobbyist or member of a special interest group gives a member of congress a \$1,000. “Contribution” for his campaign and says: I hope you consider our position on any upcoming votes that affect us.” Whether or not the congressmen or Senator takes some kind of official action that benefits that person or organization, if he accepts the money, isn’t that still bribery?

Neither of these public servants should be taking money from people or organizations to influence their decisions they will make during the course of performing their official duties. Shouldn’t both situations be considered illegal conduct by those involved? Well, not if you are a member of congress. Bribery is defined as “a corrupt activity in which a person offers or receives goods, money, services, etc. to sway a person’s opinion, action, or decision.” Merely accepting the goods, money, services, etc, is a crime. It is immaterial whether or not the person receiving the benefit, does anything. In the case of members of congress, however, receiving money is only considered to be bribery if the

briber explicitly says to the politician (the one being bribed): "I'm giving you this money as payment for a yes or no vote on the house floor tomorrow."

The reality of political life in America today is that politicians are being bribed every day by special interest groups that want them to legislate in a way that benefits them and not the American people. Americans are bearing the brunt of this horrific situation in ways that affect us all every day of our lives. The current campaign finance laws are built on a legal fiction. The legal fiction is that campaign contributions from special interest groups are considered to be legal and within the law even though they are actually bribes. Money given to members of congress by special interest groups is nothing more than "legalized bribery." Through bundled contributions and PAC giving, industries, labor unions, and other special interest groups pay to persuade lawmakers to vote their way on the issues.

No matter how it is said, Special Interest dollars buys votes and it also buys elections. The real scandal in the nation's capitol is that this everyday bribery remains legal. Candidates who please their special interest money donors through their votes, are usually rewarded with more bribes, I mean more campaign contributions. This legalized bribery system has created a "Privileged Oligarchy" made up of selected members of congress and big donor elites from wealthy special interest groups. This oligarchy is currently governing this country and making decisions that oftentimes are not in the best interests of the American people, but rather in favor of the special interest groups.

Our elections should be about what American citizens want, not about what big special interest donors want.

- I will support any legislation that defines the receipt of special interest money by members of congress as bribery and therefore illegal.
- I also will support legislation that removes the monetary limits on individual contributions to campaigns, as the US Constitution does not give Congress the authority to set such limits because it limits the citizens' free speech rights.
- I support the continuation of legislation requiring the full and immediate disclosure of all contributions to Federal election campaigns. No exceptions or loopholes allowed.

Although I do not fully support the concept of government financing of campaigns, the following two pieces of legislation, currently introduced in both the Senate and House of Representatives, are a step in the right direction and I would support them as well. They are H.R. 1614 "The Clean Money, Clean Elections Act of 2007" and S.936 "The Fair Elections Now Act."

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