

HYDROGEN NEWS

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POLITICAL MONEY

By Harry Braun

We are dealing with the oldest profession in the world

The current efforts at campaign finance reform are analogous to rearranging the deck chairs on the *Titanic*. It has often been said that money is the mothers milk of politics, and given the vast sums that are now needed to seek public office document this fact. As a result, Members of Congress have acknowledged that they are now forced to spend most of their time raising money.

Now the interesting thing about raising money is the fact that most people and companies who give money to political candidates expect something in return. Usually it implies "access" to the elected official, but there is no question that the money is used to influence elected officials. Is there anyone who would disagree with this reality?

The more fundamental question is this: Why are candidates and elected officials allowed to accept any money from anyone for any purpose?

Think about it. We allow, and in effect demand, that candidates and elected officials spend most of their time soliciting bribes. And where do the largest and most influential bribes come from? The obvious answer is wealthy individuals and corporations. This is why the American version of democracy is a government of the wealthy, by the wealthy, for the wealthy.

Bribe-Free Elections

The only way to avoid this obvious conflict of interest is to make it a felony for any candidate or elected official solicits or accept money or gifts from anyone. Only then can the American democracy truly represent all of the people, rather than the privileged class. How would such a system work? Candidates would appear at public forums and debates that would be covered by the news media, just as they are now. Voters would have the opportunity to evaluate how the potential candidates address the issues, just as they do now. The only difference is that bribes will not tolerated.

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