

# VOX POP Newsletter

## of Political Organizations and Parties

A official section of the American Political Science Association  
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### Soft Money

Herbert E. Alexander, Director, Citizens' Research Foundation  
University of Southern California

Soft money was much in the news in 1988 because of the highly visible, widely reported competition for such dollars on behalf of the presidential campaigns. The chorus of criticism of soft money masked its value to the electoral system. Its wide use was a healthy development because it spurred citizen participation and helped to revitalize state and local party committees.

Soft money refers to money raised from sources outside the restraints of federal law but spent on activities intended to affect, at least in part, the outcomes of federal elections.

In 1988, both parties at the national level sought soft money contributions to supplement the public funds each presidential and vice-presidential ticket received. It was raised not by the parties directly but by the same Bush and Dukakis finance people who raised the candidates' prenomination funds. And much of it was raised in large individual contributions. Some 267 Bush backers personally gave \$100,000 or more, and some 130 Dukakis supporters gave or were responsible for raising \$100,000 each.

Soft money was sanctioned by the 1979 Amendments to the federal Election Campaign Act, and it was raised and spent in the 1980 and 1984 presidential campaigns,

growing from about \$19 million in 1980 to \$43 million in 1988. Soft money also is used in Senatorial and congressional campaigns. A study of five states that requires disclosure of soft money indicated at least \$3.3 million was raised and spent in the 1985-86 election cycle.<sup>1</sup> Soft money has been channeled into small states in key U.S. Senate campaigns where a few hundred thousand dollars can make a difference, for example, a party coordinated campaign assisted in the 1986 election of Thomas A. Daschle in South Dakota.

Federal law restricts soft money usage to spending related to voluntary activities. Its purpose is to allow state and local party committees to undertake such activities as registration and get-out-the-vote drives, phone banks and the like—activities directed at stimulating citizen participation. Soft money also can be used for generic party advertising—vote Democratic or vote Republican—without reference to federal candidates specifically, and it can be used for items such as bumper strips and local canvassing materials. In contrast, the public funding provided by tax checkoffs to the candidates is used directly on advertising by the presidential tickets. To some extent, soft money

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**Chair:** Frank Sorauf, University of Minnesota

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# From Headquarters

Dear Colleagues:

Please try to make room on your busy convention schedules in Atlanta for the Section's annual business meeting. It takes place on Thursday, August 31, at 5:30 in the afternoon; I promise you that we will adjourn by 6:30 to protect your "subsequent commitments."

The Agenda is full, beginning with the election of new officers. A committee composed of Lorn Foster, Pomona College; Robert Huckshorn (chair), Florida Atlantic University; and Mildred Schwartz, University of Illinois, Chicago Circle, propose the following candidates:

Chairperson: Dr. Margaret Conway, University of Florida  
Program Chair: Dr. Ruth Jones, Arizona State University  
Secretary-Treasurer: Dr. Charles Hadley, University of New Orleans

In addition, we will have to have the latest installment of our continuing discussion on the state of the Section and the state of the entire section system within the Association. We collectively do not seem to have resolved any

of the problems in the section structure, and we have already lost our position on the official program committee (see Jim Gibson's excellent letter elsewhere in this *Newsletter*). There isn't much we can do about that—although we've tried—but we do need to puzzle out ways of dealing with the continuing unplanned growth of sections and with sections and unorganized scholars with interest touching ours.

Finally, the good news: we are solvent, and I'll report briefly on those finances. BUT we also seem to be unconstitutional!—that is, we have for some time been operating at odds with the charter we seem to have adopted in the dim past (i.e., less than a decade ago). In honor of revolutionary and constitutional bicentennials, the Nominating Committee will propose ways of resuming a constitutional regime.

See you in Atlanta.

Frank Sorauf, Chair

## The 1989 POP Awards

**Allan Kornberg**, Duke University, winner of the Samuel Eldersveld award for a lifetime of distinguished scholarly and professional contributions to the field.

**Anthony Downs**, Brookings Institution, winner of the Leon Epstein award for a book that has made a distinguished contribution to the field (for his *An Economic Theory of Democracy*).

**Robert Salisbury**, Washington University, winner of the award for an article of unusual importance and significance to the field (for his article, "An Exchange Theory of Interest Groups," in the February 1969 *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 12(1): 1-32).



The members of the committee that made the selections will preside at the awards ceremony. They are Frank Feigert (chair), University of North Texas; Allan Cigler, University of Kansas; and Sarah Morehouse, University of Connecticut-Stamford.

## Soft Money *(continued from page 1)*

expenditures frees up more of the public money for advertising, travel and other expenditures directly associated with the presidential campaigns.

Soft money critics have proposed extensive changes in the regulation of campaign finance. Common Cause has urged the Federal Election Commission to promulgate rules regulating soft money. Testifying before FEC hearings on soft money held after the election, Common Cause sought remedies to: prohibit national party committees from setting up disclosure-exempt, nonfederal accounts, and permit such committees to collect and spend only FECA-regulated monies, excepting for money raised for party committee office facilities; require state and local party committees to disclose all soft money received by their nonfederal accounts; change definitions of "contribution" and "expenditure" to cover all soft money activities affecting federal elections; require allocation of at least 50 percent of the cost of volunteer campaign materials featuring federal, state and local campaigns as the "federal share" of such costs.

Other reformers would go further and regulate lobbying and tax-exempt organizations that give or receive soft money. One organization, the Center for Responsive Politics, has proposed that all states be required to standardize their disclosure laws.

It is true that soft money is raised and spent outside the restraints of federal law, but there are compensating benefits of soft money activities in presidential campaigns.

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# Selective Incentives

Dear Colleagues:

There appears to be some continuing confusion about the process through which the program for the APSA Annual Meeting is constructed. The confusion centers on the respective roles of the organized sections and the official program committee in putting the program together. Since I am the Program Chair for the Section for 1989 and 1990, I have some understandings of the process that I ought to share with you.

I should begin with some caveats. First, this entire question of the relationship between the Section and the Program Committee is controversial and is currently under study within the APSA. Second, my understanding of current and past practices is far from perfect. Finally, I have some views of these issues that are entirely my own—when I offer my normative observations I do not purport to speak for anyone other than myself.

The traditional role of the Section has been to supplement the panels established by the Program Committee. The Section Program Chair is selected at the business meeting of the Section, and typically serves for two years. The organizer for the Program Committee has traditionally been selected by the Program Chair. Practice in the past (largely developed by Alan Gitelson) has been to have an informal working arrangement between the two chairs. This procedure seems to have worked reasonably well.

Last year (i.e., for 1989) Nelson Polsby decided to turn the official program over to the sections. Thus, I served both as a member of the Program Committee and as the Section Program Chair. I organized about 20 panels for the Atlanta meeting. Whether this has proved a satisfactory arrangement will only be determined when you peruse the scheduled panels, but I have been pleased with the process.

For 1990, the traditional division will be reestablished. Jane Mansbridge has named Bernie Gofman and Byron Shafer as the chairs for the “Political Organizations” section, which includes parties, interest groups, elections, media, (and) social movements.” I will serve as the Section Program Chair. We are in the process of working out a division of labor for the program. I suspect that the process will be not unlike that of the pre-1989 convention. In terms of guidelines for 1990, you should submit your ideas for

the meeting to any of us. The details for the 1991 meeting are yet to be worked out, but will probably be dictated by the APSA.

The issue of how the program gets set up is perhaps less crucial to our section than it is to others where the official program chairs have been unrepresentative of their fields. For my part, however, I favor section control of the program. The advantage is, quite simply, accountability. While we have been well served by previous official Program Chairs, the Chairs are occasionally selected by a Program Chair who knows little of what is going on in the field. This may even contribute to the strength of “old-boy” and “old-girl” networks that tend to under-represent active researchers. The Section Program Chair is potentially directly accountable to the Section (or is as accountable as the Section wishes her or him to be). I have no illusions about the degree of democraticness of the internal procedures of the Section, but I would submit that ordinary researchers have more access to the decisions of the Sections than they do to the decisions of the Program Chair. From the point of view of structuring the program so as to represent the field, Section control seems desirable.

If you have not been following this debate closely, you have wisely allocated your time. Whatever process is used to set up the meeting will result in a marginal increment or decrement in the quality of the meeting. Ultimately, the strength of the panels is much more strongly correlated with the quality of research in the field than it is with the structure of the program committee.

From the point of view of those seeking to present their work at the annual meeting, the structure of the 1990 committee should pose no obstacles. I encourage you to submit your proposals to either Bernie, Byron or me, and you can do so even without a great deal of thought as to which of us is likely to be most receptive toward your ideas. As for the structure of the various committees, stay tuned (and keep an eye on PS this summer for a report from Jane Mansbridge).

Sincerely yours,

James Gibson

## Soft Money *(continued from page 2)*

They play an important role in both voter outreach and party renewal. And soft money was not devised to be a loophole; rather it was a conscious effort by the Congress to empower state and local party committees in federal campaigns. If soft money were not sanctioned by federal law, forms of organized state and local party fund-raising would have to be invented.

What happened in the 1988 presidential campaigns

could be conceptualized as “floors without ceilings,” that is, giving public funding assistance that permitted candidates to have access to the electorate but not complying with the spending limits. While “floors without ceilings” has not gained popular acceptance, the notion is based on the belief that in a pluralistic society expenditure limits cannot be effective. Indeed, our experiences with soft money

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# Early Returns

## Prospects for Congressional Finance Reform

David B. Magleby, Brigham Young University\*  
Candice J. Nelson, The Brookings Institution\*

Ethics dominated the agenda for the first six months of the 101st Congress, and an important part of the ethics debate is what, if anything, to do about congressional campaign finance. Both parties and both houses advocate reform, but the partisan and institutional barriers which have blocked past reforms remain.

To understand the prospects for campaign finance reform it is necessary to understand the partisan, philosophical, and institutional perspectives which Democrats and Republicans, Congressmen and Senators, bring to the discussion.

House Democrats have the most to lose by campaign finance reform. They are firmly in the majority and have mastered the current system; benefiting heavily from PAC contributions. Nevertheless, while their self-interest argues against any interest in reform, their philosophical position has always been in favor of reform.

House Republicans face just the opposite situation. Their self-interest argues in favor of reform, but their philosophical position opposes reform. House Republicans would be the largest beneficiaries of one reform proposal which would increase funds for challengers—namely, public funding. However, Republicans have consistently opposed public funding. It is unclear whether they will pursue a strategy of attacking individual Democratic incumbents or find ways to make challengers more competitive.

Senate Democrats took the lead in campaign finance reform in both the 99th and 100th Congress, and continue to press for comprehensive reform. For Senate Democrats the single most important issue is the cost of running for office, and hence spending limits are the cornerstone of any package of campaign finance reform.

Senate Republicans were caught on the defensive in the 100th Congress, forced to oppose the Democratic leadership proposal. However, as the Congress wore on, Senate Republicans began to define their own reform agenda which involved a unified opposition to spending limits. Senate Republicans believe that the only way they can regain the majority is to spend as much money as they can raise. Thus they support higher contribution limits for individuals and parties.

Thus, House Republicans and Democrats can't agree on what the problems with the current system are, and thus can't begin to address reforms proposals. There is more agreement on at least some problems in Senate, but there is not agreement on solutions to the problems. It is possible that a much more modest reform agenda, such as a ban on honoraria and a limit on PAC receipts, could be enacted, but even these reforms face severe obstacles. Given

these disagreements, the prospects for comprehensive reform in the near future appear bleak.

\*David Magleby and Candice Nelson are the authors of *The Money Chase: Congressional Campaign Finance Reform*, to be published by The Brookings Institution this fall.

## Campaign Finance Conference

Margaret Nugent,  
Bradley Institute, Marquette University

The Bradley Institute for Democracy and Public Values at Marquette University conducted a conference, "Campaign Finance Reform and Representative Democracy," February 24-25, 1989. The conference papers are being revised and reorganized into a book to help scholars, students, and policy makers consider the issues at stake in any reforms. Here's what went on at the conference and can be expected in the book.

Several authors focused on problems arising from the sources of campaign funds. Ruth Jones indicated that past reforms and technological advances in fund-raising have not significantly broadened citizen participation. Candice Nelson explained that *independent* spending has not proven to be the dangerously corrupting loophole as many have feared, and Anne Bedlington analyzed many other loopholes and abuses in the campaign finance system. Finally, David Adamany focused specifically on accountability in raising and spending campaign funds.

Other scholars explored specific consequences of the campaign finance system. Sandy Maisel argued that the system so stacks the deck against challengers as to undermine competition. Janet Grenzke found little evidence that roll call votes are routinely for sale. Clyde Wilcox examined the trend toward "personal PACs" among congressional leaders. Larry Sabato explored the symbiotic relationship between PACs and parties.

Finally, we considered the problems to be faced in reforming the system. Frank Sorauf found public opinion on reforms to be mixed, grounded in a basic distrust of money in politics but lacking salience for most voters. Kenneth Gross argued that enhancing enforcement of current laws could help restore legitimacy and effectiveness to the campaign finance system. David Magleby concluded this pessimistic assessment of the prospects for reform by clarifying the institutional and political obstacles to reform that arise from the different interests of members of Congress, depending on their party affiliation or presence in the House or Senate.

Inquiries about the conference or book should be directed to Margaret Nugent, The Bradley Institute for Democracy and Public Values, 401 Monitor Hall, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53233.

# Scholarly Precincts

## National Party Campaigning in the 1988 Congressional Elections

Paul S. Herrnson, University of Maryland

The 1988 election is the first contest in 32 years in which the party of the victorious presidential candidate lost congressional seats. National party campaign activity may have contributed to this result. Drawing upon interviews with National Party Staff, this essay briefly examines the influence of political conditions and events on national party efforts in the 1988 Congressional elections.

The Republican national party organizations began the election cycle with less money than they had in the previous two elections and were unable to overcome their initial short-fall of revenue. The party's loss of control over the Senate in 1986, Republican defeats in special elections, the Iran-Contra scandal, and controversies surrounding the party committees themselves hurt party fund-raising.

Fund-raising difficulties forced the Republican national party organizations to enact staff and program cuts. The NRCC scaled back its professional staff by 50 workers and reduced its field staff from 18 to 10. In contrast, the Democratic party committees were successful in fund-raising, which enabled them to enlarge their professional staffs and introduce new election programs. Nonetheless, the Democratic national parties in 1988 still had less than half the resources of their Republican counterparts.

### *House Campaigns*

Republican strategy was shaped by the party's fund-raising problems and the difficulties it encountered in candidate recruitment. NRCC recruitment efforts were hampered by the same factors that hurt party fund-raising. They frequently had to settle for inexperienced House challengers and open seat candidates.

NRCC fund-raising and recruitment problems encouraged the committee to adopt a "wait and see" approach toward its nonincumbent candidates. In a break from its previous practice of furnishing heavy support early in the election cycle, the committee withheld campaign support from nonincumbents until they met fund-raising and organizational goals.

In another retreat from established practice, the NRCC did not compile a list of "opportunity races" or tout its candidates to PACs early in the election cycle. Committee staff believed that PACs had become so incumbent-oriented that party-sponsored activity would not improve fund-raising prospects.

The Democrats' fund-raising success and organizational growth enabled them to expand their existing election programs and institute new programs similar to those developed by the Republicans. Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) enlarged staff of eight field workers successfully recruited top challengers and open seat candidates. The committee gave the maximum allow-

able in contributions and made large coordinated expenditures in most of these campaigns and furnished competitive candidates with technical assistance.

Contrary to the noncommunicative approach of its Republican rival, the DCCC circulated an abundance of information about its competitive candidates to PACs early in the election cycle. The committee regularly mailed "Candidate Updates" to keep PACs informed of favorable developments in the campaigns of Democratic candidates.

The strategies selected by the two parties had important consequences for their House candidates' campaigns. The NRCC's "wait and see" approach was not as effective as the DCCC's early investment strategy in accelerating the development of candidate campaign organizations. The paucity of information distributed by the NRCC early in the election worked to the advantage of the Democrats, producing a lopsided distribution of PAC money in favor of Democratic nonincumbents and Democratic House candidates in general.

### *Senate Campaigns*

Both senatorial campaign committees were active in candidate recruitment during the 1988 election. Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC) staff maintain the committee played a decisive role in recruiting candidates in Connecticut and Rhode Island. NRSC staff believe they had a decisive impact on recruitment in Montana and in Florida.

Although the NRSC had a much larger budget and spent nearly \$4.2 million more in Senate elections than did the DSCC, the Democratic committee set up almost as impressive an array of programs. For the first time, the DSCC spent the legal maximum in the campaigns of all of its competitive candidates and furnished these campaigns with computerized issue research, in-house polling, and assistance with direct-mail fund-raising. The committee also gave \$250,000 to selected state parties for the purpose of strengthening their voter mobilization programs.

While the DSCC distributed less campaign money and services to candidates and state party organizations than did the NRSC, the DSCC staff maintain that competitive Democratic and Republican Senate candidates received similar levels of support. NRCC staff believe they provided more campaign support to candidates, but acknowledge that the Democrats have narrowed the gap between the committees substantially.

In 1988, the Republicans may have captured the Presidency, but they lost three seats in the House and one seat in the Senate. The campaign illustrates the impact of environmental factors on party resources and activity, and these in turn, influence election outcomes.

## Campaign Finance Laws: Unraveling from the Start

Herb K. Schultz, Project Director,  
Campaign Finance Center for Responsive Politics

The comprehensive campaign finance laws enacted in the early 1970s have dramatically changed the way federal campaigns are financed in this country. But these reforms have failed to provide, as reformers had hoped, a comprehensive overhaul of the way political money is raised and spent.

The FECA reforms were designed to restore the public's faith in our electoral process, which had diminished sharply because of the Watergate scandal. Most of these reforms, however, have failed to achieve this objective. In fact, just the opposite has occurred. The demand for increasing sums of money in federal elections has led to an unending spiral of campaign spending and to "innovative" ways of funding elections. PACs and individual contributors who feel constrained by contribution limits are turning to independent expenditures. Presidential aspirants and congressional leaders are attempting to enhance their influence by forming "Leadership" PACs that make contributions to other campaigns. Both national parties and their state affiliates are raising millions of dollars in "soft money." The list of ways to stretch the campaign finance laws to the limit is growing—and as it grows, so too grows the specter of a return to the largely unregulated days before Watergate.

The system today is not the one that lawmakers originally designed. The Supreme Court eliminated the FECA's overall limits on congressional spending, so it is no wonder the law doesn't work or that it has taken off in unanticipated directions. One unintended consequence is that PACs have become the dominant force in financing congressional elections. Congressional challengers have been locked out of the system, with PAC money going overwhelming to incumbents. In the 1987–88 election cycle, House incumbents received 80.5 percent from PACs, as compared to 9.8 percent for challengers. Senate incumbents received 62.9 percent from PACs, compared with 17.5 percent for challengers. This imbalance has helped incumbents amass huge war chests—even those without serious contests are raising big sums of money—and has contributed to their near total electoral security. In the last two congressional elections, more than 98 percent of House incumbents running for reelection won their races. In 1988, 85 percent of the Senators running for reelection won their races.

The presidential election system, like the congressional system, has not turned out as reformers had envisioned. Presidential general election campaigns are supposed to be funded exclusively with public funds. It is estimated that in 1988, at least \$130 million was raised, much of it nationally, by individuals associated with the Democratic

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## Six Theses on Campaign Finance Reform

John McAdams, Marquette University

If one wishes to reach correct conclusions, it help to start with correct premises. While I believe the *logic* of most of campaign finance reform proposals is sound enough, they start from wrong premises. Let me suggest a minimal list of the propositions reformers ought to take to heart.

**Thesis 1—The amount of money spent by the challenger is the key thing.** Gary Jacobson's early work showed that challenger spending seems to "buy votes" but incumbent spending doesn't. While this conclusion has been challenged somewhat by Green and Krasno (AJPS, 1988), there is no doubt that incumbents spending faces diminishing marginal utility: after some point, the amount the incumbent is spending becomes ineffective and a (potentially damaging) campaign issue. Thus very high levels of incumbent spending are not something to be feared. Low levels of challenger spending are.

**Thesis 2—It is easier to redistribute inequality than to achieve equality.** If the history of socialism shows anything, it is that supposedly egalitarian policies may have the effect of replacing one privileged class with another. What sort of people are likely to constitute a privileged political "New Class" in a reformed regime of campaign finance? It depends on the nature of the reforms. For example, reducing the amount of money candidates can spend taking their case to the people, vastly increasing the power of the news media. Likewise, increasing the importance of small contributors will increase the power of direct-mail fund-raisers.

**Thesis 3—People who care about equality should think about elections, not campaign finance.** Elections are inherently egalitarian: "One man, one vote" is the operative principle. Equality in elections is promoted by well-financed candidates waging vigorous campaigns. If rich "fat cats" or political action committees do things that promote vigorous electoral competition then (from an egalitarian perspective), more power to them.

**Thesis 4—Money is the source of corrupt influence and unjust privilege only when it is scarce.** Reforms that outlaw certain sources of money only guarantee that those sources that remain legal (or that are willing to risk illegal behavior) will have much more influence. This is a simple matter of economics: when a few people control a valuable resource they are able to extract a very high price for it. Ironically, many reform proposals will allow members to be bought much more cheaply.

**Thesis 5—A whole army of people who are very clever, quite ingenious, and more than a little devious will work to undermine any reform.** Neither economic interests nor issue-oriented activists will stand idly by while their power is taken away. Reduce the amount a single

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## Campaign Finance Laws *(continued from page 6)*

and Republican presidential nominees over and above what the U.S. Treasury provided each presidential ticket. The private money raised was spent on voter registration and get-out-the-vote activities—activities which benefit federal and nonfederal candidates alike. More than a third of this money was federally unaccounted for—soft money. Not only does this soft money fly in the face of the FECA's prohibition on its use in federal elections, all of this additional money directly contradicts the idea of publicly funded presidential contests.

The FEC is in part responsible for this state of affairs, and has in fact become a toothless tiger. Its lack of independence has meant that on most important issues to have come before the Commission, a partisan 3-3 split occurs, and no action is taken. Its advisory process is slow, and its penalties are so insignificant, that many candidates simply do not look to the FEC for guidance on campaign finance matters. Disclosure at the FEC, as opposed to compliance activities, has been one of the very few aspects of the law that has been successful—most of the sources and uses of political money at the federal level are disclosed. But even journalists are overwhelmed by the data, and it is largely ignored.

Congress is once again attempting to make basic changes in our campaign finance laws. The leadership in the House and Senate both stated at the beginning of the 101st Congress that campaign finance reform was a priority. A bipartisan task force has been established in the House to address the issue, and to come up with recommendations. The Senate has once again held a series of hearings on the issue. No major breakthroughs have yet occurred.

As long as the current situation persists, Congress will be caught up in the incessant raise-and-spend cycle. And, a substantial proportion of Americans will continue to believe that Congress has been sold to the “highest bidder.” The adverse implications for the health of our democratic system cannot be overlooked or overstated. Reform is needed now.

## Six Theses *(continued from page 6)*

PAC can contribute, and PACs will proliferate. Outlaw PACs, and the interests that worked through PACs will encourage and coordinate individual contributions. Outlaw all private contributions to campaigns, and independent expenditures will proliferate. Institute public financing, and the politicians will manipulate the rules to benefit the party in power or (more likely) incumbents generally.

### **Thesis 6—Pluralism ought to be encouraged.**

The existence of multiple sources of campaign money

provides a powerful check on the abuses that might accompany reliance on any single source. Unfortunately, many of the reforms reduce pluralism by regulating campaign finance centrally. Improving the system will involve more individual contributors and interests giving larger amounts to more campaigns. It may involve the additional complication of public financing. It will require the rough and tumble of electoral competition with well-financed organizations to bypass media and to take their case to the people.

How likely is Congress to reform the process in a way that encourages vigorous electoral competition? Given that such reforms are contrary to the interests of members of Congress and alien to the mind set of the middle-class reformers, the odds are pretty bleak. If the system is to become more pluralistic, it is likely to be the result of unorganized interests becoming better organized, of political entrepreneurs finding ways of tapping new contributors, of interest group staff finding new ways around current restrictions. Pluralism, in other words, is more likely to come from the bottom up than from the top down. But this, of course, is the way pluralism has always worked.

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money in 1988 demonstrates the ineffectiveness of spending limits. The “floors without ceilings” formula represents a realistic way of accommodating both candidate public financing and party support activity.

At the least, disclosure of soft money should be required by federal law. Disclosure probably will not deter its use in the future. The precedent of disclosure that was made voluntarily by both national parties of the 1988 soft money activities should ease the way to federally mandated disclosure. But any more comprehensive legislation, such as that proposed by Common Cause or the Center for Responsible Politics, would be certain to diminish levels of local political participation by citizens who are paid to or volunteer to participate in soft money activities.

The development of soft money testifies to the resourcefulness of American political candidates and their supporters in assuring that they obtain the financial resources they seek to conduct their campaigns. Moreover, the many ways that have been found to use non-FECA-regulated money to pay for campaign-related activity underlines the futility of attempting to impose a strict system of limitations on campaign financing in the United States.

<sup>1</sup> *Spending in Congressional Elections: A Never-Ending Spiral* (Washington, DC: The Center for Responsible Politics, 1988), pp. 36-49; and Herbert E. Alexander, *'Soft Money' and Campaign Financing* (Washington, DC: Public Affairs Council, 1986).

# Special Interests

## PAC Money and Congressional Voting

Janet Grenzke, ABACUS Associates and the Graduate School of Political Management

The following assessment of the relationship between PAC contributions and congressional voting is based upon my own research (see Grenzke, *AJPS* (33), 1989) as well as reflections on the money-and-votes controversy.

PACs contribute to campaigns with the clear intent of influencing elections and the voting and priorities of members of Congress once they are elected. With this purpose in mind, it is not surprising that three-fourths of PAC contributions went to incumbents in 1987–88. PACs are more likely to give to incumbents with supportive voting records, especially those in close races, and all but one of the PACs I examined were more likely to contribute to incumbents with power over the PAC's agenda, regardless of the incumbents' previous voting records or level of electoral competition.

Whether PACs succeed in their attempts to use campaign contributions to influence the political process is much more difficult to assess. With respect to PAC money and electoral outcomes, we know from Gary Jacobson that money is particularly important to challengers, who, without a minimum of money, cannot communicate their message. Because PAC contributions may accentuate the advantages that incumbents already enjoy, PAC money may contribute to the lack of electoral competition.

With respect to PAC money and member votes in Congress, the controversy is particularly heated. While the popular literature abounds with claims that PACs purchase access and votes in Congress, my research indicates the relationship is more complex. The access and influence

interest groups have with members of Congress derives from two sources that are separate from contributions.

First, regardless of the contribution, candidates will be influenced by groups that can mobilize voters in their districts, for or against them and second, legislators respond to grassroots lobbying. Because of the coincidence of these factors and contributions, money may appear to be more important than it really is.

Another consideration that is critical to interpreting the coincidence of pro-PAC voting and high PAC contributions is the extent to which PACs react to member voting rather than influence member votes. When a methodology is used that accommodates a simultaneous relationship between PAC money and member votes, most of the impact of PAC money or member votes disappears. Members of Congress vote in response to constituent pressures, their party, the President and their own ideology, and PACs generally reward members for voting that would have occurred in the absence of PAC contributions.

I am not arguing that PAC money never influences congressional votes. Undoubtedly particular members are influenced, especially in low-publicity settings and on low-publicity bills, where members are likely to hear only one perspective on a problem. However, interest groups use their resources more effectively mobilizing their members and voters at the grassroots. Those concerned about political equality should focus on the broader differentials in lobbying and networking, and not narrowly on campaign contributions.