

Fair Elections Now Act Summary

Members of Congress spend too much time fundraising and too little time working on solutions to the country's problems. The American people want their representatives focused on jobs, the economy, and health care. Instead, elected officials in Washington must devote enormous energy each day raising money from the lobbyists and industries they're supposed to oversee.

The problem is getting worse. In every election this decade, candidates for Congress have raised more money from big donors and political committees and less money from small donors giving \$200 or less. The 2008 election was the most lopsided yet: wealthy interests put in \$8 for every \$1 from small donors.

The public suffers from the results of this pay-to-play system. Inaction, a lack of progress, and handouts to big industries have become the norm. Wall Street spent over a billion dollars in campaign cash and lobbying in Washington and kept Congress and regulators at bay—until it was too late. When Congress reformed Medicare, the only clear winners were the pharmaceutical companies. These wealthy industries invest in pay-to-play politics and see a big return on their investment at our expense.

The American people strongly support Fair Elections as a way to change pay-to-play Washington politics.

- By more than three-to-one (67% to 20%), voters support a citizen-funded Fair Elections system.
- Most voters (73%) believe that large campaign contributions from the banking industry to Congress were a major factor in causing the current crisis on Wall Street.
- Four out of five (79%) are worried that Congress won't be able to tackle important issues like the economic crisis, energy, health care, and global warming because of the influence of large campaign contributors.

It's time to get federal officials out of the money chase and let them do the job we elected them to do: tackle tough problems and represent their communities. The bipartisan bill was introduced by Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Arlen Specter (D-PA) in the Senate (S. 752) and Reps. John Larson (D-CT) and Walter Jones (R-NC) in the House (H.R. 1826).

It's time to pass the Fair Elections Now Act.

Policy Snapshot: Fair Elections

The Fair Elections Now Act would allow candidates to run for office on a blend of small contributions and limited public funds.

Candidates qualify by raising a certain number of small contributions of \$100 or less from their home state. They receive a grant of Fair Elections funds for the primary and general election, and can continue raising unlimited small contributions. Those contributions will be matched 4-to-1 with Fair Elections up to a cap, to ensure that candidates can run a competitive race even if they face a well-financed opponent.

Several states and cities use citizen-funded election systems with great success. The Fair Elections Now Act takes those successes, with the lessons on small donors from the 2008 elections, and applies them to Congress.