

FAIR ELECTIONS NOW

PEOPLE ACTION DEMOCRACY
www.commoncause.org/FairElectionsNow



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PAY-TO-PLAY IS UNHEALTHY POLITICS

The pharmaceutical, insurance, and health services industries are some of the world's largest and most profitable. They've spent hundreds of millions on campaign contributions and lobbying in Washington, including nearly \$10 million already in the first half of 2010.

Members of Congress spend hours each day raising money—and they often turn to these health-related industries for help. But big money comes with strings attached. The prescription drug, insurance, and other lobbies worked aggressively to protect their interests in the health care debate. Their efforts helped kill a “public option” that would have injected more competition into the health care industry.

During the year-long struggle over health care reform, the industry demonstrated that it has more access and power in Washington than the 47 million people who lacked health insurance in 2009.

The public sees the connection: In a February 2009 poll, four out of five voters agreed that big contributions may prevent Congress from attacking major issues like health care.

CASE STUDY:

LOBBYIST DOLLARS DOMINATE DIALOGUE

President Barack Obama's health care reform was pitched as the Administration's answer to unaffordable health insurance, high deductibles and administrative costs. But the bill's development was largely the product of hidden deals between the administration, members of Congress and lobbyists.

From December 2008 through April 2010, health insurance, health services and drug companies gave nearly \$63 million to political candidates and parties. About 56 percent of that went to Democrats, and 44 percent to Republicans, according to the non-partisan Center for Responsive Politics (CRP).

This figure does not include the \$1.2 billion which 1,750 organizations spent to hire 4,525 lobbyists (eight for each member of Congress) in 2009.

With Fair Elections, candidates “run without any money from interests who want favors from state government. Candidates compete for office based on their ability to raise ideas, not campaign cash.”

Richard Kirsch
Healthcare for America Now



<< Seniors are left paying higher prices for prescription drugs, thanks in large part to a pay-to-play political system.

Industry Groups Find Opportunity in Confusion

As industry groups like the American Medical Association publicly claimed that it was vital for the nation to “get around the partisan bickering” over health care reform, they exploited the prolonged period of confusion and hostility to mount a huge lobbying effort to mould the final bill.

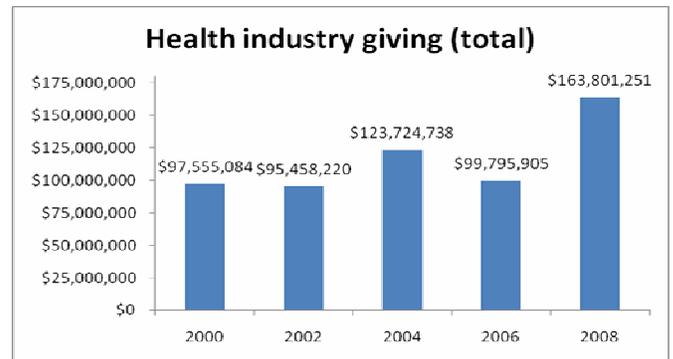
Health-related industries — doctors, hospitals, nursing homes, insurance companies, drug companies — spent \$545 million on lobbying during 2009, according to CRP.

Non-health industry groups were recruited, and spent additional millions, to help the successful effort to kill the public insurance option. They argued that the public coverage would decrease the need for small- and medium-sized business to carry private insurance plans, and thus increase rates for larger companies.



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THE SOLUTION

THE FAIR ELECTIONS NOW ACT

The Fair Elections Now Act, sponsored by US Sen. Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Reps. John Larson (D-CT) and Walter Jones (R-NC), would allow candidates for Congress to run for office on small donations and public funds.

Members of Congress spend too much time fundraising and too little time working to solve the country's problems and listening to constituents. The citizen-funded Fair Elections system would get elected officials out of the fundraising race and let them do the job we elect them to do.

How it works:

- ✓ Candidates who swear off corporate political action committee contributions and limit individual gifts to people in their states giving \$100 or less could qualify for Fair Elections funding.
- ✓ Qualified candidates would receive Fair Elections funding in the primary, and if they win, in the general election to run a competitive campaign.
- ✓ The Fair Elections funds would come from a fee imposed on large government contractors, with no impact on the federal deficit.
- ✓ Once in office, elected officials would no longer be beholden to powerful special interests.