

Money in Politics: The Problem



American government no longer works for the American people. Citizens of all stripes agree that Washington is incapable of addressing our nation's most pressing problems because special interest

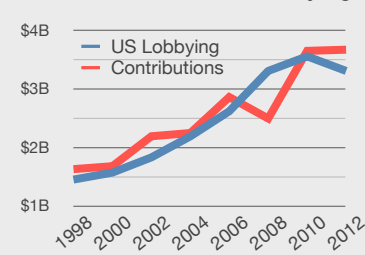
money has infected the political process. On climate, taxes, healthcare, education, poverty, the deficit and more, ordinary people are paying the price for systemic corruption in Washington.

Corruption is written into the way we fund campaigns. Four years after *Citizens United* opened the floodgates to unlimited spending in elections, private interests on both the Left and Right have invested billions of dollars to shape the national debate and influence who gets elected. Politicians spend the bulk of their time raising money from a wealthy few rather than completing the job for which they were elected. Meanwhile, ordinary citizens are effectively excluded from policy-making process for lack of funds, and tens of millions face outright disenfranchisement at the polls.

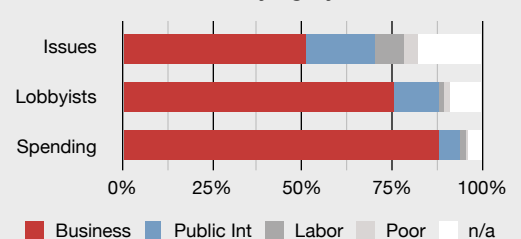
Campaign Finance & Lobbying Facts

- ★ Wealthy individuals and interest groups contributed nearly \$4 billion to federal candidates in 2012, the most expensive election in US history
- ★ 0.4 percent of the American population gave two-thirds of all campaign contributions in 2012
- ★ The largest single donor in 2012 spent more money on politics than the bottom 98 percent of Americans combined
- ★ The average cost of winning a seat in Congress rose to \$1.6 million for House and \$11.5 million for Senate in 2012
- ★ Incumbent Members of Congress out-raise challengers by a factor of 9 to 1 and 6 to 1 for Senate and House, respectively
- ★ Outside "independent" spending by SuperPACs and dark money organizations topped \$1 billion in 2012, five times the amount in 2010

US Contributions and Lobbying



Federal Bills and Lobbying by Sector, 2012



- ★ Business interests, led by financial firms, accounted for roughly 70 percent of all campaign contributions and 88 percent of all lobbying expenditures in 2012
- ★ Academic analyses of the relative influence of elite interest groups and affluent Americans compared to the general population finds that the majority exerts no discernible influence over national policy decisions when their stated preferences diverge from elites

Sources: Center for Responsive Politics; U.S. Senate Ethics Office; Gilens, Martin and Benjamin Page, "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens," Perspectives on Politics. Volume 12. Issue 3. September 2014