

By JOHN PUDNER

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Two years ago, I was sludging through New Hampshire snow drifts, just before the first-in-the-nation presidential primary. As I talked with Granite State voters, I kept hearing the same thing: everyone was concerned about the influence of “Big Money” campaign donors.

Once the primary results were in, it was clear that “Money In Politics” was a deciding issue for voters. The two primary winners – Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders – had used very different slogans, but both had campaigned on the promise of returning government to the people.

In a shocking study after the election, the [Campaign Finance Institute](#) determined that President Trump raised more small-dollar donations (only people who gave a total of less than \$200) than both Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders combined, and even more than President Obama in 2012, who was widely viewed as the master of the small-dollar appeal.

It was the same dynamic in Virginia, two years earlier, when *National Review* [announced](#) that I had launched the campaign of a relatively unknown college professor named Dave Brat to take on U.S. House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, a race that Brat won despite trailing in fundraising \$5 million to \$18,000 in early March. The question of public officials’ loyalty – to Big Donors? Or to their constituents? – was the issue that people used to decide how to vote.

Eric Cantor’s campaign outspent ours by a 40-to-one ratio; we won that election. Hillary Clinton outspent Donald Trump by a two-to-one margin; Donald Trump is now our president. But even though “donor-focused politics” has become a voting issue, it hasn’t slowed the fundraising. It seems like every special election sets new records for out-of-state, special-interest political spending. The politicians are still listening to their donors, not their voters.

A series of Supreme Court decisions, beginning with *Buckley v Valeo* and continuing through *McCutcheon*, created this problem. It’s time for American citizens to unite and fix it. We need to clarify that the original intent of the Founders when they wrote the 1st Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was to protect free speech – not to forbid any state from determining if they wanted to place any requirements on the practice of giving politicians and lobbyists campaign donations in exchange for your tax dollars. To say otherwise would be to completely undermine the “Live Free or Die” state by practically inviting taxation to fund political donors.

New Hampshire has the opportunity to once again lead the country by starting the movement to pass the “Fix It America” constitutional amendment. The amendment would require Congress and state legislatures to address “the role of money in elections and governance to ensure transparency, prevent corruption,

and protect against the buying of access to or influence over representatives.” It would also prohibit legislative redistricting plans from favoring or disfavoring any political party, and restore the system where voters pick their elected representatives (rather than elected officials being allowed to choose the voters in their districts).

The state House of Representatives will hold a hearing on this new proposed constitutional amendment Wednesday, Jan. 17, at 10 a.m. We hope that a cross-section of Granite State voters will attend and tell the Legislature it’s time to get Congress to act on this issue.

The vast majority of New Hampshire voters, no matter what their political leanings, agree that this system of donor-focused politics needs to end. By passing House Bill 1524, New Hampshire’s state Legislature can lead the way to restoring Government By The People for all the citizens of our United States.

(John Pudner is executive director of Take Back Our Republic.)