



# Talking Points

The **Us** Campaign wants to make sure you have the most up to date and comprehensive talking points to take out with you into the field. That's why we're providing you with:

1. Recent Polling Data and Statistics on Money in Politics
2. Case Studies to help you Connect the Dots
3. An Overview of the Government by the People Act (HR 20)
4. FAQs on HR 20
5. A Comprehensive List of HR 20 Endorsements

## Overview

The **Us** Campaign supports candidates and movements that are committed to reforming our campaign finance system in order to shift power away from big money and towards the people. It was founded by John Sarbanes, principal author of the Government By the People Act (HR 20), which would establish a small-donor matching system to fund congressional campaigns.

## Polling & Statistics

- 85% of Americans believe we need to “fundamentally change” or “completely rebuild” our campaign finance system, according to a NY Times Poll in 2015.
- Three in four people think “wealthy Americans have a better chance than others of influencing the election process,” according to a May 2014 CBS News survey.
- The high-end donor class spent \$1.234 Billion during the 2014 election cycle. This was nearly half of all federal contributions during that cycle and it came from just ¼ of 1% of the U.S. population.
- The average member of Congress has to spend 30% - 70% of their time fundraising and interacting with the donor class in order to raise needed funds.

## Our Earth

- **Climate Change**
  - The oil and gas industry spends hundreds of millions of dollars on political contributions and lobbying to defeat climate change legislation and defend the status quo. Even when 97% of scientists agree that climate change is a real threat and that fossil fuel pollution is a root cause.
  - Even though over 80% of Americans want Congress to take action on climate change and protect our environment for future generations.



## Our Families

- **Fair Pay**
  - The Chamber of Commerce spent \$53 million to stop an increase in the minimum wage in 2007 even though over 10 million working Americans live in poverty.
  - The Big Money donors have a larger voice than the  $\frac{3}{4}$  of Americans who believe that the minimum wage should be calculated to keep a full-time worker out of poverty.

## Our Economy

- **Prescription Drug Prices**
  - In 2003 Big Pharma drug companies deployed their lobbyists and called in their campaign donation chips to win passage of a law prohibiting Medicare officials from negotiating with the industry for fair prices.
    - Taxpayers paid \$137 Billion for the first 10 years of this sweetheart deal.
      - During this same 10 year period the total profits for the biggest pharmaceutical companies was \$711 Billion.
- **Tax Policy**
  - There were 16 mega-companies that funded the majority of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's operations in 2009 to ensure that the Chamber carried water for big corporations.
    - The Chamber has spent millions in political contributions and successfully lobbied Congress on tax policy.
      - No wonder there has been no tax liability over the last four years for companies like Prudential, Mattel and General Electric.

## Our Democracy

- **Running for Congress**
  - The average amount candidates must raise every two years to win a Congressional election is \$1.5 Million. They have no choice but to seek out the big donors.
  - The high-end donor class spent \$1.234 Billion during the 2014 election cycle. This was nearly half of all federal contributions during that cycle and it came from just  $\frac{1}{4}$  of 1% of the U.S. population.
  - The average member of Congress has to spend 30% - 70% of their time on fundraising and interacting with the donor class in order to raise needed funds.



## Our Health

- **Chemical Safety Rules**
  - Chemical companies have spent tens of millions of dollars on campaign contributions and lobbying to ensure a regulatory structure that favors their industry.
    - There are 80,000 chemicals used in consumer products that have never been fully evaluated for public health and environmental impacts.
      - 1976 was the last time Congress updated our nation's chemical safety and testing laws.
  
- **Food Subsidies**
  - Big Agri-Business spends hundreds of millions of dollars annually on campaign contributions and lobbying to tilt government policy in its direction.
    - Big Ag has earned \$19.2 Billion since 1995 in the form of taxpayer subsidies for corn and soy-based sweeteners and starch -- key ingredients in many junk foods.
      - Meanwhile, there has been a 300% increase in the likelihood of childhood obesity since the 1980s.

## The Solution

**Let's Pass H.R. 20**

**The Government By the People Act  
It's about Us.**

It's time to shift the power back to the people. It's time to make it about **Us**. With the Government By the People Act, we can build a new system for funding campaigns that puts **Us** back in charge. We can give a voice to the millions of Americans who feel locked out of their own democracy.



# **The Government By the People Act**

## **Building a Government of the Many, Not the Money**

Introduced by John Sarbanes (MD-03), the Government By the People Act (H.R. 20) would break the dependence on big money so that Congress can focus on the people's priorities. H.R. 20 employs a three-pronged approach:

### **1. EMPOWER EVERYDAY AMERICANS TO PARTICIPATE**

Provide everyday Americans with a \$25 refundable My Voice tax credit to help spur small-dollar contributions to candidates for Congressional office. With Americans newly empowered to participate in campaign giving, candidates will be able to re-engage with everyday voters, improving our representative democracy and reducing Congress' dependence on big money interests.

### **2. AMPLIFY THE VOICE OF EVERYDAY AMERICANS**

Establish a Freedom from Influence Fund to multiply the impact of small-dollar donations (\$150 or less). Everyday Americans will have their small-dollar contributions matched if they give to a Congressional candidate who foregoes traditional PAC money and focuses on earning broad-based support from small-dollar donors. With a match of 6-to-1, a \$50 contribution turns into a \$350 contribution.

### **3. PROTECT THE VOICE OF EVERYDAY AMERICANS AGAINST SUPER PACS**

Prevent super PACs and dark money interests from drowning out the voice of everyday Americans. In the wake of the Citizens United decision, unlimited outside spending has monopolized the airwaves in the final weeks of elections. Citizen-funded candidates who are able to raise at least \$50,000 in additional small-dollar donations within the 60-day "home stretch" of the general election would be eligible for additional resources to help keep their voice on the playing field.

JANUARY 21, 2015: H.R. 20 was reintroduced on the 5-year anniversary of the Citizens United ruling.

For more information on the Government by the People Act, please visit:  
[www.TheUsCampaign.com/govt-by-people](http://www.TheUsCampaign.com/govt-by-people)



# The Government By the People Act

## Supporting Organizations





## HR 20 FAQ

1. **How does this legislation change existing campaign finance rules for those candidates choosing not to participate?**
  - a. The Government By the People Act is a voluntary system. Those candidates opting not to participate would still be subject to the same rules of current election law.
  
2. **Is a solution like this viable in a post-Citizens United environment?**
  - a. Yes. The Government By the People Act has been carefully crafted to provide participating candidates with sufficient resources to compete in even the most expensive elections.
  
3. **What would a solution like this cost?**
  - a. The CBO has not yet formally scored the bill. Experts in this field have assembled a series of cost estimates that are reasonable. Even on the high end of those assumptions, the cost pales in comparison to the special interest handouts and corporate welfare that are the result of our current system. **Somebody's going to own our government it's going to be the Big Money or Us.**
  
4. **Would a solution like this waste money on nonviable or fringe candidates?**
  - a. No. The Government By the People Act requires candidates to raise at least \$50,000 from 1,000 donors from within the state in which the candidate seeks election before the candidate is eligible for public support.
  
5. **Is this legislation constitutional?**
  - a. Yes. The Government by the People Act avoids First Amendment questions by empowering political speech, not limiting it.
  
6. **Would the My Voice tax credit subsidize existing high dollar donors?**
  - a. No. A tax filer cannot claim the credit in the event they have given more than \$300 to any Congressional candidate.
  
7. **Who supports this legislation?**
  - a. The Government By the People Act is supported by a diverse and ever growing coalition of over 50 national organizations. The legislation has over 155 cosponsors (and growing) and has earned the support of over 400,000 citizen cosponsors.