

FAIR ELECTIONS NOW

PEOPLE.ACTION.DEMOCRACY.
www.commoncause.org/FairElectionsNow



...FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

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PAY-TO-PLAY POLITICS IS BLOCKING ACTION ON THE ENVIRONMENT

In the pay-to-play politics of Washington, campaign contributions and lobbying dollars from oil, coal, and electric companies dwarf spending by environmental advocates.

The money is spent for a reason. With the access political donations can buy, private interests routinely trump the public interest on the issues of energy and climate change, even though the vast majority of Americans believe that protecting our environment should be a high priority.

The public is seeing the connection between a broken pay-to-play system and stalled environmental progress. In a February 2009 poll, 79% of voters agreed that Congress won't be able tackle the important issues like rising energy costs and global warming, because of large campaign contributions to politicians. They're right.

CASE STUDY: A CLIMATE BATTLE

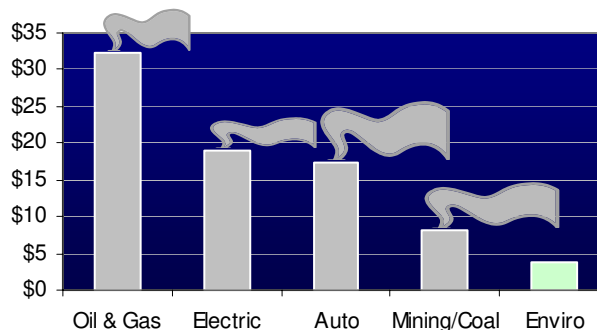
The America's Climate Security Act of 2007, introduced by Sen. Joseph Lieberman (I-CT) and former Sen. John Warner (R-VA), was the first big chance at meaningful climate reform in several years.

Yet even as environmental groups believed it needed to be stronger, the global warming bill failed. Coal, oil, and other energy interests launched an expensive lobbying campaign in Washington, outspending environmental groups 20 to 1 to win influence with Congress.

The legislation was debated in 2008 just as gasoline prices were climbing to \$4 a gallon, a fact the Chamber of Commerce and other opponents seized on to claim that *(continued...)*

"Americans understand the connection between clean air, clean water and clean elections, and they don't want to see environmental safeguards sold to the highest bidder."

Carl Pope
The Sierra Club



<< Contributions by the energy industry and environmental groups in the 2008 election cycle (in millions)

The energy industry spends about 20 times the amount of money on lobbying and campaign donations as environmental groups.

a cap on green house gases would make gas even costlier and lead to job losses. The bill died in the Senate.

Even after this bill's defeat, the return of legislation to limit greenhouse gasses was all but guaranteed. President Obama's first budget soon confirmed that the climate change battle would be waged yet again.

In anticipation, energy industry leaders stepped up their political donations during the 2008 election cycle. Oil, coal, and electric utilities spent another \$55 million on congressional campaigns.

Opponents also beefed up their public relations. One analysis shows more than 770 companies hired an estimated 2,340 lobbyists to influence federal policy on climate change. There are now four climate lobbyists for every member of Congress.

As the climate crisis continues, the big money spent in Washington will make change an uphill battle.



"It is horrifying that we have to fight our own government to save the environment."

ANSEL ADAMS

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THE SOLUTION

THE FAIR ELECTIONS NOW ACT

The Fair Elections Now Act, sponsored by Senators Dick Durbin and Arlen Specter, and Congressmen John Larson and Walter Jones, 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 large contributions and raise a large number of small contributions--\$100 or less--from their communities 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.
- ✓ Candidates would be also eligible to receive additional matching Fair Elections funds if they continued to raise small donations from their home state.
- ✓ Once in office, elected officials would no longer be beholden to powerful special interests.

SUPPORTING ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS

- ✓ Chesapeake Climate Action Network
- ✓ Friends of the Earth
- ✓ Greenpeace
- ✓ League of Conservation Voters
- ✓ Sierra Club