

# FAIR ELECTIONS NOW

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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—and they've spent hundreds of millions on campaign contributions and lobbying in Washington.

Members of Congress spend hours each day raising money—and they often turn to these health-related industries. But big money comes with strings attached. Pharma, insurance, and others work aggressively to protect their own interests in the health care debate. They continue to have more access and power in Washington than the 47 million who lack health insurance—or who must break the bank to pay their health care bills.

The public sees the connection: pay to play politics means stalled progress on health care. In a February 2009 poll, four out of five voters agreed that big campaign contributions may prevent Congress from tackling health care and other major issues. They're right.

### CASE STUDY:

## A HANDOUT TO BIG PHARMA

The Medicare reform bill of 2003 was intended to help seniors with health care coverage while keeping costs low. The final result left older Americans feeling lukewarm, but one group rejoiced: the pharmaceutical industry.

Once elected, President George W. Bush made it clear he wanted to reform Medicare—but with the details under discussion, the health industries embarked on a monstrous spending effort to influence Washington decision-makers.

Between 2000 and 2004, health insurance, health services and pharmaceutical companies contributed \$214 million to candidates for federal office. Thirteen administration and congressional officials went on to work for pharmaceutical companies. Rep. Billy Tauzin (R-La.), who wrote large parts of the law, soon retired and famously took a \$2 million per year job as president of PhRMA, the industry's main lobbying group.



**“Full public financing allows candidates to 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

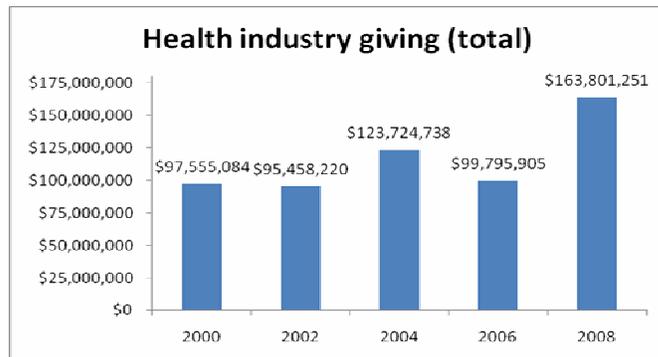
**<< Seniors are left paying higher prices for prescription drugs, thanks in large part to a pay-to-play political system.**

## Members of Congress spend hours each day raising money—and they often turn to these health-related industries for campaign cash.

The industries' \$214 million turned out to be a great investment—one that paid off many times over. The final bill, which passed by just 5 votes in the House and 10 in the Senate, did not allow Medicare to negotiate lower prices with drug manufacturers, making it the only government agency barred from doing so.

Negotiating lower prices would save Medicare \$90 billion per year and the savings could be passed on to elderly consumers and American taxpayers.

Instead, seniors are left paying higher prices for prescription drugs, thanks in large part to a pay-to-play political system that let pharmaceutical companies buy massive influence in Washington.



## 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.



[www.commoncause.org/FairElectionsNow](http://www.commoncause.org/FairElectionsNow)

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