

9/7/14

News Tribune

Money poisoning our political system

By Robert Haslag

9/8/14

Scanned copy received

Email from Robert Haslag



Money poisoning our political system

Robert Haslag
Centertown

Dear Editor:

This avid reader of the News Leader opinion page has recognized a surprising consistency on one issue disturbing conservatives and liberals alike.

That consensus is a distrust of the systemic power of money, the power of banks and big corporations as real threats to the constitutional principle of equality before the law.

We consistently differ when identifying specific threats. Conservatives defame the money of labor unions, Warren Buffett, George Soros and Michael Bloomberg. Liberals malign the Koch brothers, Sheldon Adelson, the Walton heirs and the Chamber of Commerce.

The consistency is the conceptual distaste partisans have for the power that money and influence grants these individuals and groups. There is undeniable agreement this evolution in our politics has become existentially sinister. We both have an ingrained distrust of that power inherently rooted in our national decision to rebel from crown and lords.

I will not confuse this presentation by descending into a numbers dispute, but total expenditures in the 2012

Please see Your Opinion, p. 11



Your Opinion:

Continued from page 10

election cycle in congressional and presidential races exploded to \$6.3 billion, an unsustainable trend in a democracy. The valid point remains that money is poisoning our political system. When fundraising becomes the primary focus of elected officials, the largest funding sources will by definition have that official's attention first.

The critical failure in this funding system is that once bought, almost always owned. Once the elected official recognizes the primacy of their funders, the interests of ordinary citizens become secondary and will remain so as long as this marriage of convenience survives.

The money will always enable the ad purchases that propel us in the desired direction and will demand the legislation that will deprive us of our voting rights, our employment protections or the universally approved Social Security and Medicare. The money consistently dominates.

The Citizens United and McCutcheon decisions by the Supreme Court cut the nominal threads America created to control those pressures. A Senate committee passed SJR 19 restoring the authority of Congress and states to limit this money and constricting conservative and liberal donors alike.

Additionally, legislation called the Disclose Act requires that contributions larger than \$10,000 be reported.

If I and Harold Horstmann can sign our submissions, at least an individual contributing more than \$10,000 can publicly acknowledge that contribution.

Remember the key is still, "One citizen, one vote." The question is whether we will claim our birthright? Will we insist upon protecting it?
