



A Conservative Case for the For Our Freedom Amendment

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The Left Is Winning.

Conservatives are being outspent 2 to 1 by a torrent of campaign money controlled by a handful of powerful New York, California and DC Democrats. For the 2020 election cycle, [Ds outraised Rs 2.2 to 1](#) and [outspent Rs 1.7 to 1](#). From the top three donor states – irreversibly blue California, New York and the DC metro -- [Ds outraised Rs 2.3 to 1](#). From the top ten donor metro regions – all but Las Vegas deeply blue -- [Ds outraised Rs 3.7 to 1](#). Joe Biden [won the primarily urban and suburban counties](#) accounting for [71 percent of GDP](#). Donald Trump took the remaining 29 percent, down from 36 percent in 2016. This partisan wealth geography has locked in the left's campaign money advantage.

Out-of-State Billions Gutting Federalism.

The left is using their blue state money advantage to surgically target and overwhelm swing state, swing Congressional district and statehouse control elections. The policy implications for conservatism are depressing. In almost every swing election, the new kingmaker is concentrated, out-of-state money. Most of this money is contributed by [fewer than one percent of Americans](#) and controlled by a few dozen political aristocrats in each party. For example, the out-of-state campaign money torrent in Maine's 2020 U.S. Senate election caused TV ad rates to soar and inventory to dry up, effectively silencing the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine, the state's leading pro-gun group. This pattern is at the verge of infesting every election down to school board.

Rather than in-state voters and party activists, this new aristocracy is picking our candidates and issues. Grass roots, locally-funded candidates are unviable. Candidates have lost control over their own campaigns. Local and state priorities are submerged. Political advertising is dominated by vacuous personal attacks, making voters yet more cynical. Most critically for what remains of federalism and our 10th Amendment protections, every swing election is now nationalized. The 10th Amendment is our protection against remote, ivory-tower, one-size-fits-all government. #10A guarantees respect for local preferences, provides political space to test and replicate successful policies and allows us to live together as one nation despite our disagreements. The campaign money aristocracy is gutting federalism.

Crony Capitalism Suffocating Free Markets.

American free-market capitalism has bestowed greater wealth, progress and well-being worldwide than in all prior human history. Human liberty cannot survive without free markets. But pay-to-play politics – essentially, legalized bribery and extortion -- has mutated free-market capitalism into crony capitalism. Government picks winners and losers, doling out tax breaks, loan guarantees, regulatory favors and contract awards to the high bidders, all paid for by taxpayers. Instead of delivering better products and services to customers, business competes in Washington by buying influence or submitting to extortion.

The result? U.S. innovation has dropped to historic lows. Financial engineering is in and capital investment and long-term r&d are out. The pay-to-play influence economy is why we have cellular dead zones, corn ethanol subsidies, Ex-Im bank loans and the world's highest drug prices. It's why young and non-white voters – who will be the majority in a generation -- favor socialism over capitalism.

Buried by Debt.

Fiscal conservatives know that only sustainably low spending permits sustainably low taxes. Big money donors' prime directive – regardless of party alignment – is their endless push to feather their nests with more spending and tax loopholes, at taxpayer expense. Big money drives big spending because crony cap

is so much more profitable than slugging it out in the competitive marketplace. A [Sunlight Foundation](#) study showed that for each dollar of lobbying and political contributions, politically active corporations received \$760 in the form of tax breaks, loan guarantees and contracts ... paid for by taxpayers.

Pay-to-play corruption is why Washington recklessly loads crushing future debt service onto the backs of young people and unborn taxpayers. We can draw a straight line from the crony-controlled campaign money system to short-termism, twisted monetary policy, unsustainable spending commitments, punishing future tax increases and the impending loss of reserve currency status for the American dollar.

Weakened National Security.

National security cannot be walled off from pay-to-play crony capitalism. Former Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman [Admiral Mike Mullen](#) ranks our exploding national debt as the single greatest threat to U.S. national security. Crony cap is why we have failed, sitting-duck weapons systems like the trillion-dollar [F35 fighter](#). It is why industrial oligopoly in the defense sector has left “[no effective competition](#)” for over half of FY2017 military procurement.

Weapons manufacturers are also [driving foreign and military policy](#) in their push to grow global revenues. A [Cato Institute](#) analysis found that "... the policy of the United States is to sell weapons to just about any nation that can afford them without much concern for the consequences." Those consequences are a more destabilized world bristling with loosely-controlled weapons systems, increased public debt, millions of killed, maimed and radicalized civilians, tens of millions of refugees, and anti-U.S. blowback -- all sucking the major powers into direct and proxy military conflict.

The Alliance for Securing Democracy has [catalogued](#) how America's strategic enemies use our loophole-infested campaign money system against us to influence our elections and our foreign policy. Iran, China and Russia are using unrestricted foreign money to finance online political ads and web publishers. Hostiles conceal foreign political money by flowing it through in-kind contributions, favorable terms on loans from state-controlled banks, untraceable shell companies, U.S. subsidiaries of foreign companies, non-profits, think tanks and dark-money c4s. Our enemies are using our corrupt campaign money system as a weapon against us.

Abuse of Our Soldiers' Patriotism.

Silenced by rivers of weapons industry campaign money, revolving door sinecures and a fog of [pro-war opinion shaping](#), Congress has abandoned its non-delegable and sole constitutional authority to declare war. Since 9-11 the U.S. has engaged in a series of endless, crony-cap wars lacking defined mission or exit strategy. We have lost every one of these wars. Our soldiers and their families have paid the price for this corruption ... in record rates of active-duty [suicide](#) and [PTSD](#) and more than 300,000 deaths and injuries. Forgive the frankness, but this abuse makes me vomit as a conservative.

Solution: The For Our Freedom Amendment.

Polling shows that voters of both parties consistently rank federal-level political corruption as our nation's most serious, even crisis-level issue ([Rasmussen](#) 4/2019; [Campaign Legal Center](#) 11/2019; [POGO](#) MI & OH voters 9/2021). Republican voters in the POGO survey overwhelmingly ranked federal-level budget deficits and corruption the top two "very big problems."

The corruption crisis is so blindingly obvious to Republicans that [more than two-thirds of us](#) back a constitutional amendment to restore power to Congress and to the states to set limits on campaign money within their respective jurisdictions. Such an amendment preserves liberty and federalism by delegating the "how" entirely to legislators. Montana could restore its law banning corporate and union contributions. Alaska could enact a donor-voter bill, banning out-of-state campaign money. New Hampshire could increase limits on direct-to-candidate contributions from people balanced by a ban on entity money.

The need for the For Our Freedom Amendment is compelled by fundamental conservative principles and by our Founders' vision ... a nation where all citizens are free to participate in government solely accountable to the governed and free from the risks of corruption and tyranny that history shows grow in the dark swamps of concentrated power.

Jim Rubens is past New Hampshire state senator, past chair of his state's GOP platform committee, past Republican Liberty Caucus-endorsed candidate for US Senate and present board member for American Promise.