



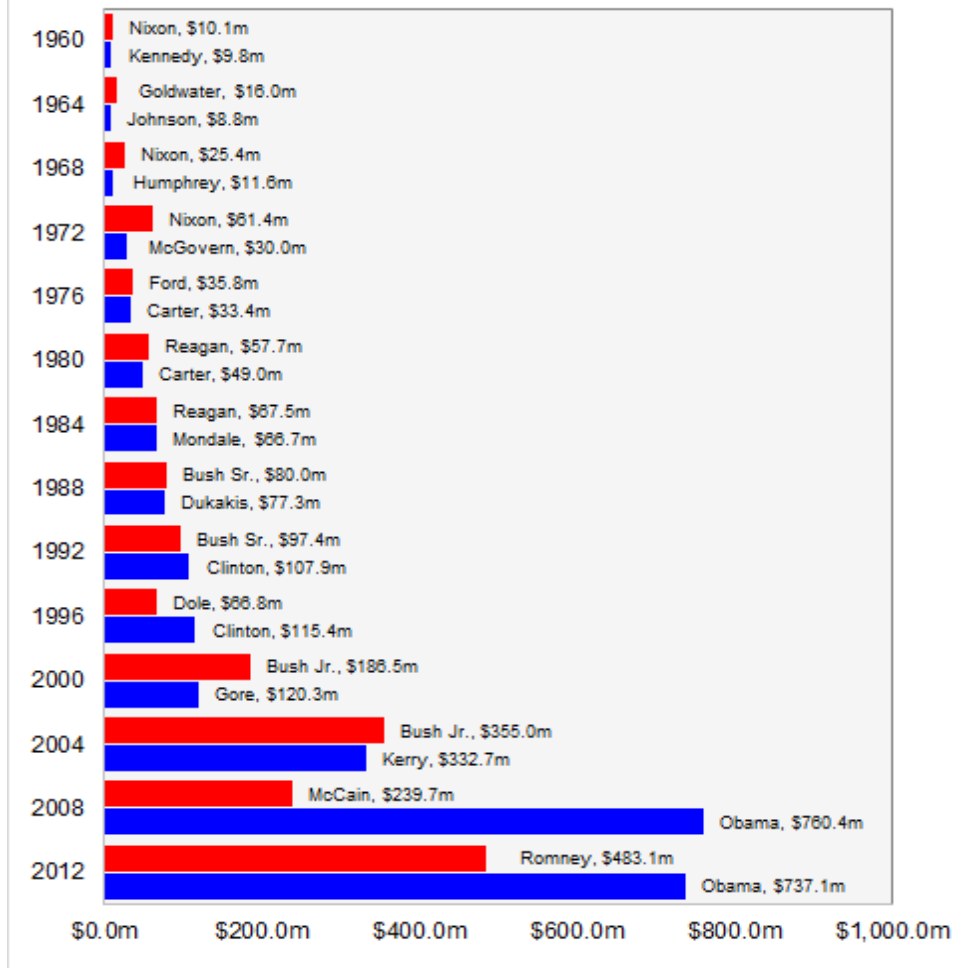
Money Can't Buy Me Love- But it Might Buy Elections!

There is a debate between political philosophers on the impact of money. Two British philosophers, Sir Paul McCartney and John Lennon, downplay the impact, stating, **"I don't care too much for money, money can't buy me love."**

This view is contradicted by the American political philosopher Cindy Lauper who opined, **"Money changes everything."** *

People who contribute money to elections in the United States appear to agree with Lauper.

Presidential Campaign Spending (1960-2012)



According to this chart from the Huffington Post, in 1960, \$19.9 million was spent on the Presidential election. By 2012, this number had jumped to \$1.24 billion. But that was only the beginning.

Spending on Elections Has Increased Dramatically

Open Secrets has calculated total expenditures on Presidential and Congressional elections, including PACs, increased from \$1.6 billion in 1998 to \$5.7 billion in 2018.

Cycle	Total Cost of Election	Congressional Races	Presidential Race
1998	\$1,618,936,265	\$1,618,936,265	N/A
2000*	\$3,082,340,937	\$1,669,224,553	\$1,413,116,384
2002	\$2,181,682,066	\$2,181,682,066	N/A
2004*	\$4,147,304,003	\$2,237,073,141	\$1,910,230,862
2006	\$2,852,658,140	\$2,852,658,140	N/A
2008*	\$5,285,680,883	\$2,485,952,737	\$2,799,728,146
2010	\$3,631,712,836	\$3,631,712,836	N/A
2012*	\$6,285,557,223	\$3,664,141,430	\$2,621,415,792
2014	\$3,845,393,700	\$3,845,393,700	N/A
2016*	\$6,511,181,587	\$4,124,304,874	\$2,386,876,712
2018	\$5,725,183,133	\$5,725,183,133	N/A
*Presidential election cycle			

Our government appears to be for sale, at least that is what people with extra money seem to think.

Much of the Spending Increase is from PACs

A large portion of the increase in spending is coming from PACs and other related sources. According to Open Secrets, the spending by outside sources on elections jumped from \$366 (that is three hundred sixty-six dollars) in 1996 to \$315,194,820 in 2016.

Cycle	Total	Independent Expenditures	Electioneering Communications	Communication Costs
2020	\$145,553,904	\$144,905,777	\$592,005	\$56,122
2018	\$92,103,224	\$91,587,646	\$0	\$515,578
2016	\$315,194,820	\$309,786,920	\$0	\$5,407,900
2014	\$43,396,136	\$42,503,528	\$0	\$892,608
2012	\$90,474,877	\$89,861,860	\$0	\$613,017
2010	\$12,488,359	\$11,887,760	\$0	\$600,599
2008	\$35,988,888	\$20,066,993	\$8,309,592	\$7,612,303
2006	\$1,820,866	\$1,249,006	\$408,850	\$163,010
2004	\$13,357,452	\$6,039,953	\$4,083,429	\$3,234,070
2002	\$983,825	\$801,320	N/A	\$182,505
2000	\$3,022,921	\$1,056,469	N/A	\$1,966,452
1998	\$2,254,492	\$1,726,616	N/A	\$527,876
1996	\$366	\$366	N/A	\$0
1994	\$766,637	\$640,229	N/A	\$126,408
1992	\$1,826,570	\$973,150	N/A	\$853,420
1990	\$1,161,887	\$1,059,513	N/A	\$102,374

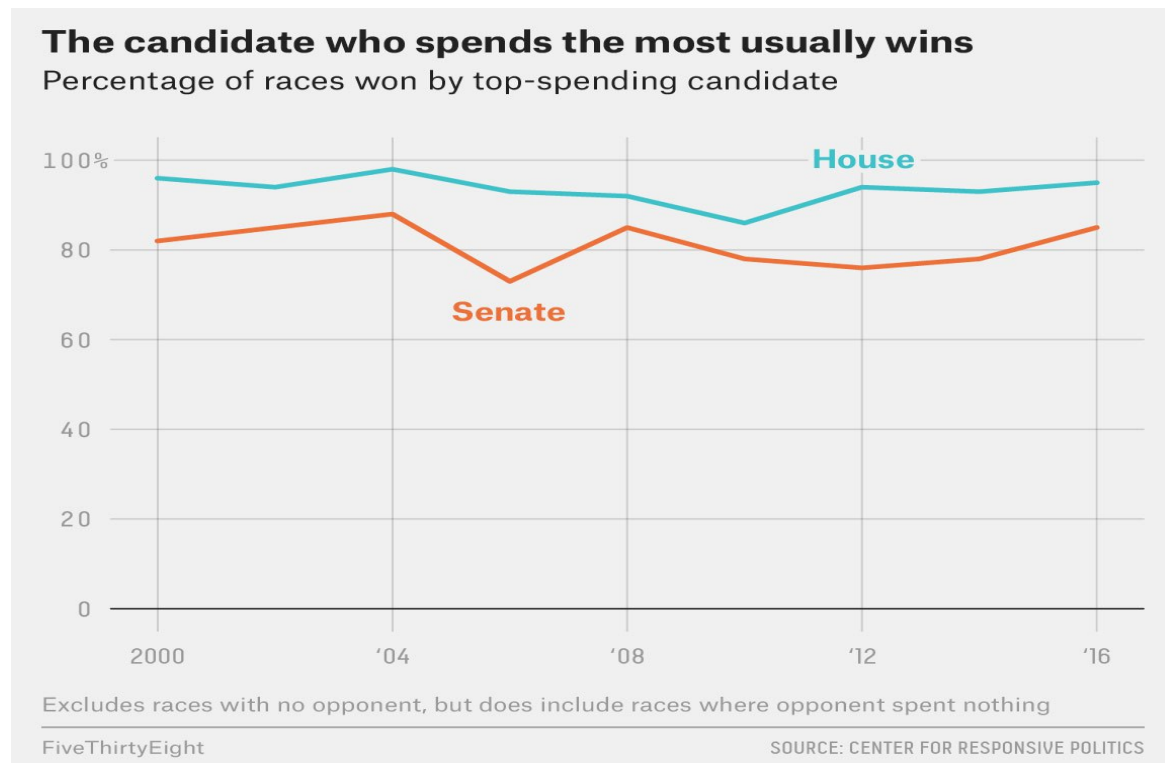
Even if one looks at non-Presidential years, the spending jumped from \$766,637 in 1994 to \$92,103,224 in 2018.

Perhaps all of these spenders are crazy. Perhaps the drug companies are nuts to think spending on Congress could help them keep drug prices high. Perhaps oil and gas companies are nuts that spending on Congress could give them tax incentives. Perhaps financial companies and wealthy individuals are nuts to think that spending money on Congress could help to give them tax cuts.

Spending Produces Results in Congressional Elections

Cindy Lauper might be correct. When we look at the results of the elections for the House of Representatives and the Senate, according to Five Thirty Eight, the numbers show that in well over 90% of the House races and well over 80% of the Senate races, the candidate that spends the most money usually wins.

From this it is possible to conclude that while “Money Can’t Buy You Love,” it can buy you seats in the House and the Senate.



Most of the Increase in Spending has Come After the Citizens United Ruling

A substantial percentage of the increase in spending has come after the Citizens United ruling in 2010. In this ruling, the Supreme Court held that the free speech clause of the First Amendment prohibited the government from restricting independent expenditures for political communications by corporations, including nonprofit corporations, labor unions, and other associations. This opened the door to political action committees and other organizations to donate to political candidates.

We believe the Citizens United ruling is wrong and has damaged to the U.S. political system. Our view is shared by most Americans.

- **Citizens United Is Highly Unpopular**
 - **88% of Americans oppose it.**

The Current Supreme Court Will Not Reverse Citizens United

If the Supreme Court in 2010 supported Citizens United, the current Supreme Court, which is more conservative, will certainly not overturn it. Given the age and composition of the current Justices, there is little chance that the Supreme Court will change its position in the far foreseeable future.

The best solution for controlling dark money is to offer alternatives on a state and local level including:

- **Passing funding laws**
- **Public financing of campaigns**
- **Forcing PACs and other contributors to publicly disclose their donations**
- **Funding candidates that agree to accept funding limits.**
 - **States should take affirmative action to place limits on campaign contributions**
 - As with Gerrymandering, while the Supreme Court will not do anything, states can take action to reduce the control of dark money.
 - States and localities are passing laws restricting campaign contributions.
 - **Public financing of campaigns for candidates that agree to contribution and spending limits lessens the power of dark money.**
 - Congress, states, and municipalities can take steps to provide financing to candidates that agree to contribution and spending limits.
 - New York matches small donations 6-1 for candidates who agree to contribution limits.
 - Maine offers a public grant to candidates who raise a qualifying number of \$5 donations and then agree to abstain from further private fund-raising.
 - Seattle voters approved a ballot initiative that will provide every voter with “democracy vouchers,” to be distributed among candidates who agree to abide by spending limits.
 - More political jurisdictions should adopt similar measures.
 - **Forcing all donors to publicly disclose their donations reduces secrecy and works to control their power.**
 - In the 2018 elections, half of all PACs did not fully disclose the sources of their contributions.
 - A substantial percentage of the PACs that did disclose waited until after the election (or primary) to issue a report.
 - This means that voters had no idea of the source of the money supporting or opposing their candidates.
 - Improving the rules for disclosure would make the system more transparent.
 - **People can show their dissatisfaction with the system by supporting candidates that refuse to accept money from PACs.**

- The problem with this recommendation is that it could be like cutting off your nose to spite your face. As can be seen from a chart above, the candidates that receive the most money normally win.
- While this was not the case in the 2020 Democratic Presidential primary, it may be naïve to think that the power of money is going to disappear.

Reform Elections Now believes that the U.S. has to do something to restore some balance to the impact of money in political campaigns. Too much money is being spent by too many secretive groups with their own narrow agendas. Unfortunately, as long as Citizens United is the law of the land, and as long as people with money understand that they can influence elections, we can only take small steps to improve the current condition. That is why we believe that we should take the steps outlined above: have states and municipalities enact funding limits, provide public financing of campaigns to candidates that agree to spending limits, and enforce disclosure of donations from PACs and other outside organizations.

Peter J. Siris
March 20, 2020

*Ms. Lauper also is the creator of the “Girls Just Wanna Have Fun” theory