

Date: November 13, 2012

To: Friends of Democracy Corps, Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, and Public Campaign Action Fund

From: Stan Greenberg and James Carville, Democracy Corps
Erica Seifert, Greenberg Quinlan Rosner
David Donnelly, Public Campaign Action Fund

Voters Push Back against Big Money Politics

In 2012, campaigns and outside groups spent a breath-taking \$6 billion at the federal level, more than one billion of it was by Super PACs. A post-election survey conducted November 6-7, 2012 by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner for Democracy Corps and Public Campaign Action Fund shows that voters are fed up with big money politics that they believe undermines democracy. In an otherwise intensely partisan and divided electorate, concerns about money in politics unite voters across parties and demographic groups.¹ Changing money and politics is central to the mandate for change in this election – and unlike the potential bi-partisan deal on the budget – voters are united in their contempt for the corruption of money, clear about how the money is used to influence politicians, and open to major reforms to change it. Indeed, the more information voters hear about the scale of spending, the more open they are to major policy reforms. Among the survey's findings:

- Voters are deeply concerned that all of this money purchases influence in Congress and drowns out the voices of ordinary voters. When asked who has the most influence on Congressional votes, the views of constituents ranked at the bottom of the list, while 59 percent of voters said “special interest groups and lobbyists” and almost half (46 percent) said campaign contributors.

¹ This memo is based on a national survey of 1,000 likely 2012 voters, conducted November 6-7, 2012 by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner for Democracy Corps and Public Campaign Action Fund. Unless otherwise noted, margin of error= +/- 3.1.

- As a result, Democrats and Republicans, Obama voters and Romney voters alike, are equally concerned about the level of spending in this year's presidential campaign, and this survey finds unmitigated bi-partisan disdain for Super PACs.
- Among all 2012 voters, 61 percent give the current level of money in politics an unfavorable rating, including a nearly identical 62 percent of Obama voters and 60 percent of Romney voters.
- Seven in ten voters said there was more advertising in this election compared to past years and more than a quarter characterized it as "unhealthy for our democracy."
- Two thirds (64 percent) of 2012 voters said that democracy was undermined in this election by big donors and secret money that control which candidates we hear about.
- Accordingly, more than three quarters (78 percent) say there needs to be reasonable limits on campaign spending. This survey finds strong majority support (56 percent) for a plan to replace the current system with one that relies on small contributions and public funding of campaigns.
- Voters give strong support across the board to a series of reforms like closing the revolving door (81%), increased disclosure of outside money (85%), and matching small donations with public funds (67%).

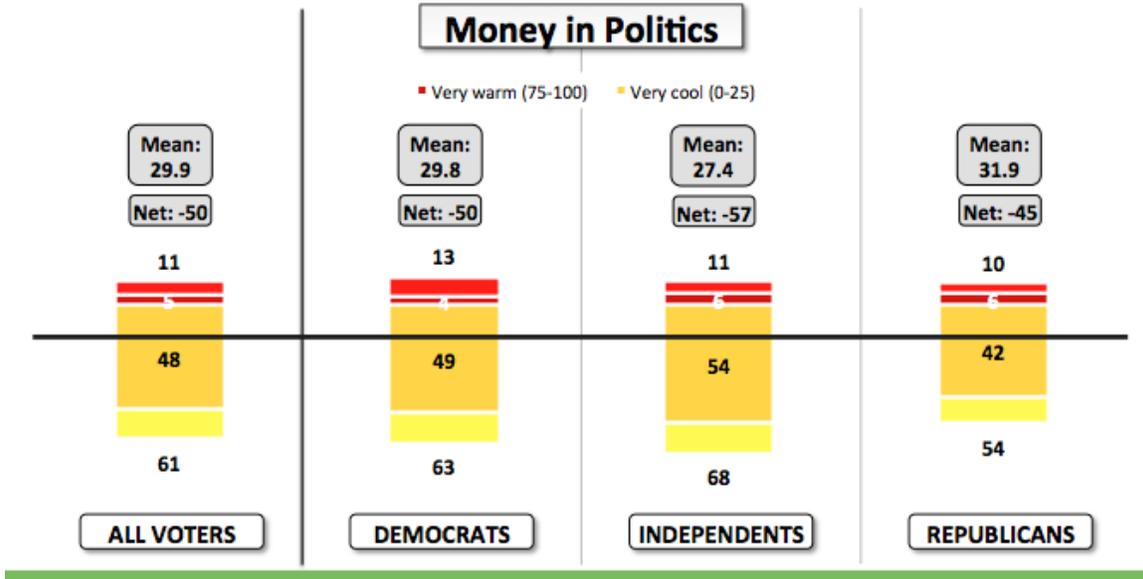
The upshot is that small reforms no longer match the scale of the problem. Voters now want a fundamental overhaul, rather than modest changes, to the way elections are financed, particularly when they are provided information about the \$6 billion of campaign spending. Information produces majority support for some of the most sweeping changes with public matching funding.

MoneyPol

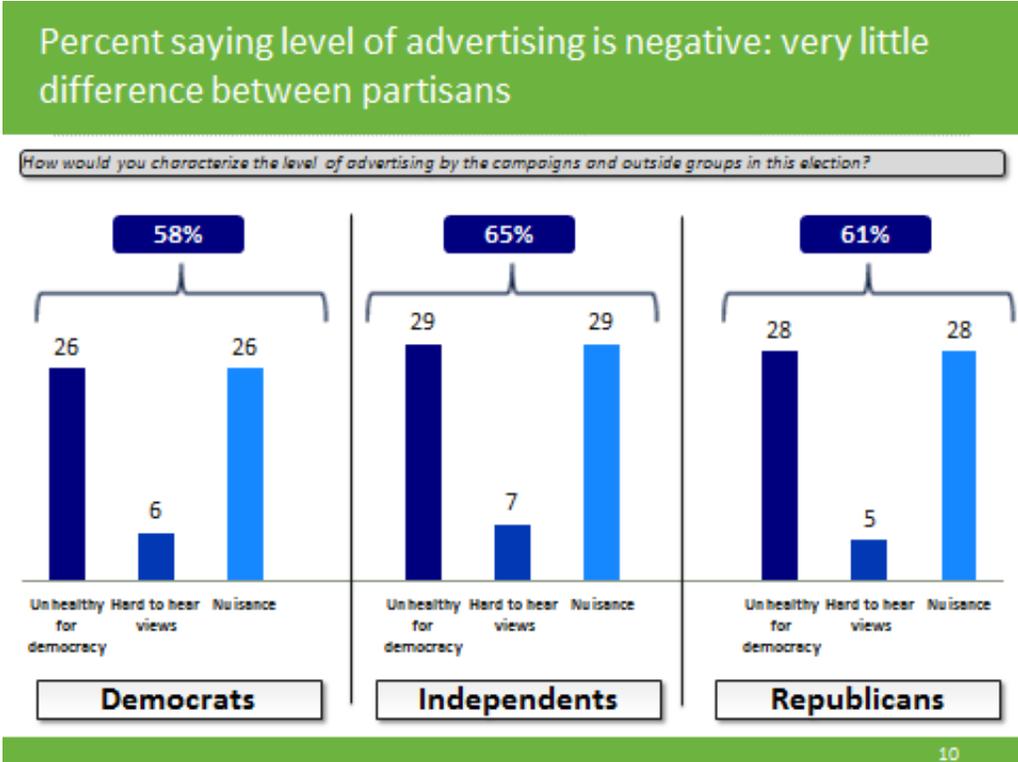
In 2012, campaigns and outside groups combined to spend more than 6 billion dollars to elect (or fail to elect) their candidates—a 16 percent increase since 2008. And voters noticed. More than 60 percent of all voters, including nearly identical percentages of Obama and Romney voters, held negative views about the level of spending in this year's presidential campaign.

All voters negative about money in politics; very little difference between partisans

Now, I'd like to rate your feelings toward some people and organizations, with one hundred meaning a VERY WARM, FAVORABLE feeling; zero meaning a VERY COLD, UNFAVORABLE feeling; and fifty meaning not particularly warm or cold. You can use any number from zero to one hundred, the higher the number the more favorable your feelings are toward that person or organization. If you have no opinion or never heard of that person or organization, please say so.



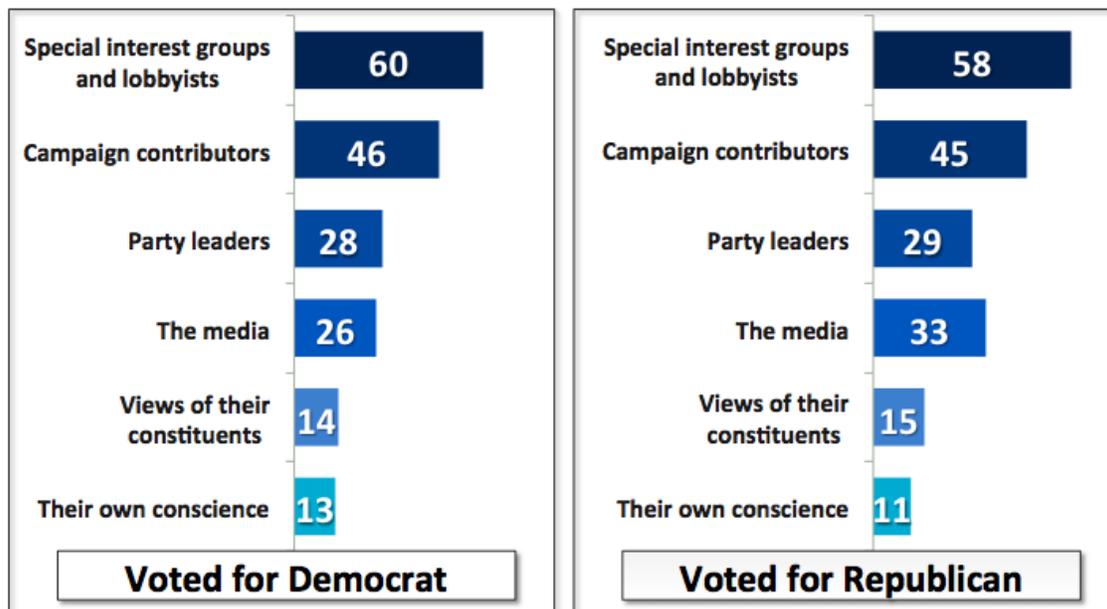
More than 70 percent of all voters said there was more advertising in this election compared to past years and more than 61 percent believed it had a negative impact, including the more than a quarter of all groups—Democrats, independents, and Republicans—who characterized it as “unhealthy for our democracy.”



Two-thirds (64 percent) of 2012 voters said that democracy was undermined in this election by big money and fortunately for the Republic, citizens of all partisan stripes are unhappy with what is happening: “Given what I saw in the presidential race during this election, I am fed up with the big donors and secret money that control which candidates we hear about. It undermines democracy.” All voters chose this statement over the alternative, “Money is always going to be spent in campaigns and at least all the candidates were able to get heard and voters got to decide in the end,” by nearly a two-to-one margin.

Negative view of influence on Congress cuts across party lines, whether voted for Democratic or Republican representative

Now I'm going to read you some various people and organizations that might influence how members of Congress vote. Of the following, which TWO do you think have the most influence on how members of Congress vote?



Voters are now reacting strongly against a system in Washington, fueled by money and run by special interests, that they believe limits Congress’s ability to focus on what is best for the country and for their constituents. Indeed, when asked which candidate would do a better job reducing the influence of special interest money in politics, more than a quarter of all voters either refused to answer the question or volunteered that neither Obama nor Romney could be trusted to reduce the influence of money in politics. No party is presumed to be leading reform in this area.

Voters demand big change

A very clear and powerful theme emerged in this survey: voters are hungry for reforms that would increase citizens’ access to and control over their political system and for reforms that would reduce the influence of big campaign contributors and lobbyists who control how policy decisions are made. This is apparent in their support for plans to expand access to voting, limit money in politics, and eliminate lobbyists’ influence over politicians.

More than two-thirds of all voters (67 percent) give a positive response to a plan to make sure all eligible voters can vote and to a plan that would modernize voter registration and make early voting a universal option.

While support for cutting red tape to make voter registration easier falls along predictably partisan lines (83 percent of Obama voters compared to 50 percent of Romney voters) this survey still finds that half of all Romney voters support such liberalization.

And modernizing the process to allow universal early voting is even less controversial—more than half of all Romney voters (55 percent) give a favorable response to such a plan.

Both of these efforts find strong support among a diverse range of key groups including suburban voters, white non-college voters, seniors, and the unmarried women, minority, and youth voters who comprise the Rising American electorate.

A plan to modernize voter registration and to extend early voting for all voters										
	Total	Obama	Romney	Suburb	White non-coll	Senior	RAE	Unmarried women	Youth	Minority
Very warm	53	67	39	77	62	59	73	74	78	69
Total warm	67	78	55	67	46	47	61	60	65	56
Mean	70.7	80.5	60.9	77.6	69.1	65.6	76.6	78.1	79.2	71.9
A plan to cut red tape from the voting process to make sure all eligible voters can vote										
	Total	Obama	Romney	Suburb	White non-coll	Senior	RAE	Unmarried women	Youth	Minority
Very Warm	57	77	36	51	47	56	63	66	55	84
Warm	67	83	50	63	60	63	72	75	68	86
Mean	75.2	86.9	62	73.9	69.3	72.7	79.4	80.3	75.3	92.3

But increasing voter access is only part of the equation. According to this survey, voters also believe that citizens will not truly be represented in Washington until campaign spending is limited.

As a result, there is strong support for candidates soliciting small donations from their home districts, supplemented by matching public funds. Two-thirds of all voters would support a plan allowing candidates for Congress the option of having the small donations from people in their home state matched with public funding as long as candidates took no contributions above 100 dollars. Majorities of Democrats, independents, and Republicans support such a plan, including 74 percent of those who voted for a Democratic representative for Congress and 60 percent of those who voted for a Republican member.

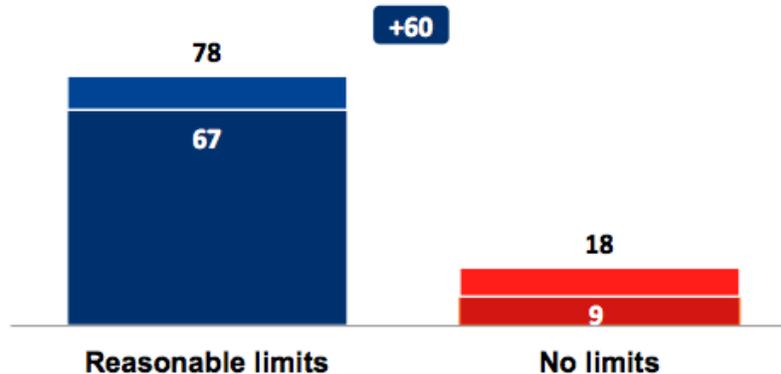
More than three-quarters of all voters (78 percent) say we need to put in place reasonable limits on campaign spending.

Strong desire to see a change – common sense limits

I'm going to read you some pairs of statements. For each pair, please tell me whether the FIRST statement or the SECOND statement comes closer to your own view, even if neither is exactly right.

There is too much big money spent on political campaigns and elections today and reasonable limits should be placed on campaign contributions and spending.

Because electing our political leaders is one of the most important things we do as a nation, there should not be any limits on campaign contributions or spending.



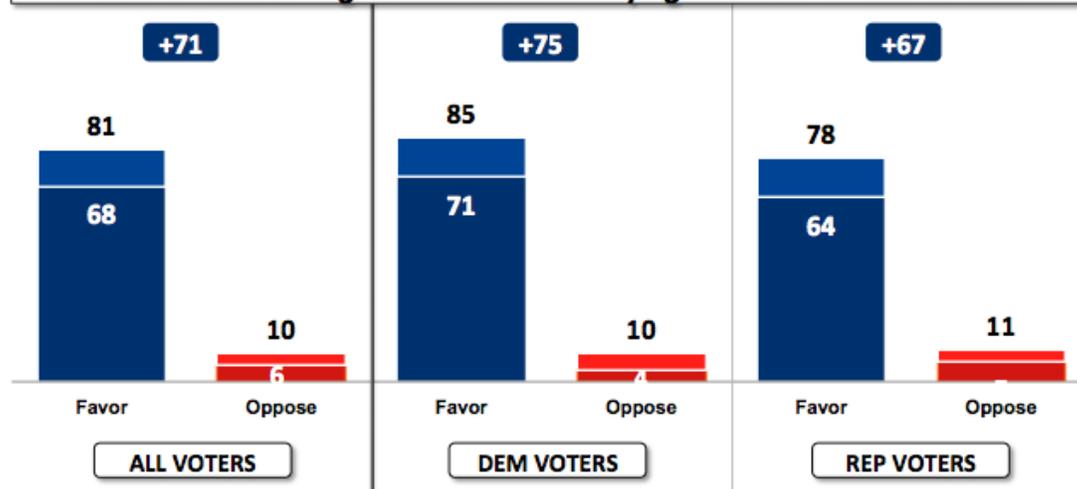
Specifically, this survey finds strong majority support (56 percent) for a plan to replace the current system of campaign financing to reduce the influence of big money. This support cuts across party lines—61 percent of Obama voters and half of all Romney voters give a positive response to a plan to replace the current system with one that relies on small contributions and public funding of campaigns. And the newly elected or re-elected representatives would be wise to pay attention—60 percent of those who voted for Democratic candidates and 53 percent of those who voted for Republican representatives support such a reform.

When asked what kinds of policies the U.S. should enact in the coming years, the top item—favored by 81 percent of voters—was “clean up lobbyists and prevent government staff from cashing in on their connections...by closing the revolving door between the government and lobbying firms.”

Overwhelming support for efforts to stop the “revolving door” of lobbying

Now, looking ahead to the kinds of policies that the U.S. might enact in the next few years, I'm going to read you a list of them and for each, please tell me whether you favor or oppose that policy.

Clean up lobbyists, and prevent government staff from cashing in on their connections in the private sector by closing the revolving door between the government and lobbying firms.



Voters overwhelmingly support a law that would require outside groups to disclose their sources of spending in elections. Among all voters, 85 percent support such a law, and almost two-thirds (65 percent) strongly. This cuts across party lines—86 percent of Obama voters (66 percent strongly) and 83 percent of Romney voters (63 percent strongly) say they would support mandatory disclosure laws for outside groups. And Congress would be wise to listen—87 percent of those who voted for Democratic representatives as well as 83 percent of those who voted for Republican representatives support disclosure laws.

The upshot is that voters now demand a total overhaul to the way elections are financed, a result that increases when voters are made aware that more than 6 billion dollars were spent in 2012 to elect the President and Congress. When asked how we should address money in politics, just 10 percent of voters said we ought to “keep the system the way it is.” A majority, 52 percent, said we must “overhaul the way elections are paid for by replacing large donations with small donations and limited matching public funds, strict enforcement of election laws, and disclosure of outside spending.” This is more than twice the number saying we need just “modest reforms like increased disclosure of outside spending.”

The context of this election is powerful: knowing amount of money spent increases voters' desire for major change

Now for something a little different. In this election, more than six billion dollars were spent to elect the President and Congress. Which of the following comes closest to your view of how we should address money in politics?

