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1133 19th St. NW, 9th Floor NW, Washington D.C. 20036 / 202.833.1200 / Fax 202.659.3716

PAY-TO-PLAY POLITICS IS BLOCKING ACTION ON THE ENVIRONMENT

In the pay-to-play politics of Washington, the campaign contributions and lobbying dollars of oil, coal, and electric companies buy access to members of Congress and policy-makers in the executive branch.

The industry's friends in government shield it from tougher safety regulations and from climate change legislation that would help break our dependence on fossil fuels and push America toward clean energy sources like wind and solar power.

The public understands what's happening. In a February 2009 poll, 79 percent of voters agreed that large campaign contributions to politicians will keep Congress from tackling issues like rising energy costs and global warming. They're right.

CASE STUDY:

Slick Oil and Industry Lobbyists

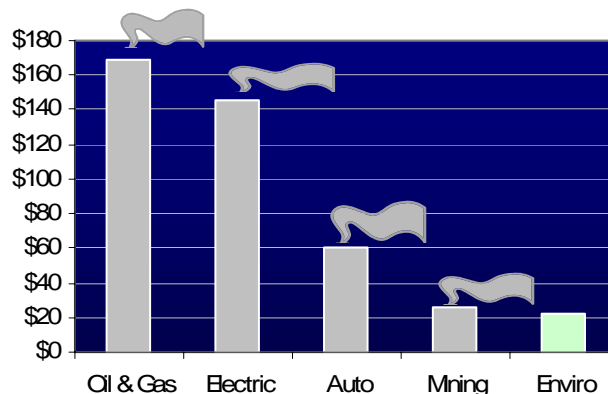
The Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico has rekindled public interest in sensible regulations on offshore drilling. Alarmed oil and gas interests already are fighting proposals to make them pay in full for the damages caused by their mismanagement.

Big oil spends millions each year on lobbying and donations to political candidates. BP alone invested \$15.99 million to influence legislation in 2009, part of \$169 million paid out by the industry, according to the non-partisan Center for Responsive Politics. That doesn't include another \$12.8 million (as of mid-May) in industry contributions to 2010 Congressional candidates.

The Deepwater spill, says Rep. Edward Markey, is "a blistering, scalding indictment" of the industry's effort to avoid safeguards that could have prevented the Deepwater Horizon disaster.

"Americans understand the connection between clean air, clean water and clean elections, and they don't want to see environmental safeguards sold to the highest bidder."

Carl Pope
The Sierra Club



<< Expenditures by the energy industry and environmental groups in 2009 (in millions)

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Election Day is months away, but the energy industry already has spent more than \$7.5 million on friendly candidates

As BP follows the instructions of their PR department and pays to clean up the Gulf, their lobbyists are pressing efforts to cash in on years of campaign contributions. They're asking Congress and the Obama administration to open new areas offshore to energy production and kill or water down climate change legislation which narrowly passed the House in 2009.

BP's spending has helped it secure friends in high places. Its former chief scientist is an undersecretary in the Energy Department. Its lobbyists include former aides to top Democrats like the late Sen. Ted Kennedy and Republicans like former President George W. Bush. And at least four lawmakers on committees investigating the disastrous Deepwater Horizon oil spill have reported family stock holdings in BP or two other companies involved in the rig disaster: Halliburton and Transocean. BP has given generously to a foundation run by former President Bill Clinton and its Alaska subsidiary has employed "First Dude" Todd Palin, the husband of former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin.



"It is horrifying that we have to fight our own government to save the environment."

ANSEL ADAMS

FairElectionsNow.com

(202) 833-1200

THE SOLUTION

THE FAIR ELECTIONS NOW ACT

The bipartisan 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. Fair Elections 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 donations – \$100 or less – from their communities could qualify for Fair Elections grants to fund their primary and general election campaigns.
- ✓ Qualifying candidates would be 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.

SUPPORTING ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS

- ✓ 1Sky
- ✓ Chesapeake Climate Action Network
- ✓ Friends of the Earth
- ✓ Greenpeace
- ✓ League of Conservation Voters
- ✓ NRDC
- ✓ Sierra Club