Welcome to TimesPeople
Get Started

TimesPeople recommended: An Irish Mirror 8:17 AM Recommend

My Account | Welcome, 75200 | Log Out | Help

HOME PAGE | TODAY'S PAPER | VIDEO | MOST POPULAR | TIMES TOPICS

The New York Times

Opinion

Search All NYTimes.com Go

WORLD | U.S. | N.Y. / REGION | BUSINESS | TECHNOLOGY | SCIENCE | HEALTH | SPORTS | OPINION | ARTS | STYLE | TRAVEL | JOBS | REAL ESTATE | AUTOS

EDITORIALS | COLUMNISTS | CONTRIBUTORS | LETTERS | THE PUBLIC EDITOR | GLOBAL OPINION

EDITORIAL

The Escalating Price of Politics

Published: March 7, 2010

SIGN IN TO RECOMMEND
TWITTER
E-MAIL
PRINT
SHARE

A hugely cynical Republican Party memo on the care and feeding of big donors disdains them as “ego-driven” check writers who can be bought by access to power and vanity tchotchkes. The memo, obtained by Politico.com, is exceptional for its candor about the crassness of the multibillion-dollar politicking industry.

That industry is on the verge of a great leap forward in this year’s Congressional elections, thanks to the Supreme Court ruling that freed corporate executives and union bosses to spend whatever they want on their own commercials touting candidates who toe their lines or, more likely, attacking those who don’t.

Congress must quickly pass the remedial Schumer-Van Hollen bill to rein in at least some of the damage. It would ban expenditures by government contractors and foreign-controlled companies and require public disclosure of the money and business interests behind corporate and union ads. Congress must also revive public financing as a feasible alternative to big-money federal elections. President Obama reversed his promise and rejected public financing in 2008, arguing that the public subsidy lagged far behind modern campaign budgets. But he also vowed to repair and update the system once he made it to the White House. We’re waiting.

On Capitol Hill, where quid pro quo is the name of the game, the public option is just as needed. Senator Richard Durbin has introduced a measure to extend a federal four-to-one match to qualifying Congressional candidates who pledge to only accept donations of $100 or less and abide by spending limits and transparency rules.

Now, 80 percent of donations in Congressional campaigns come from 1 percent of the population, according to the nonprofit group Americans for Campaign Reform.

Senator Scott Brown, the Republican newly arrived from Massachusetts, promised to study Mr. Durbin’s bill. “There’s a way that we can work to get big money and corporations out of politics and, obviously, adhere to the Constitution as well,” said Senator Brown. This was an extraordinary observation from a politician whose campaign was buoyed by $14 million in last-minute donations, mostly from out of state. We hope he meant it.

Sign in to Recommend

A version of this article appeared in print on March 8, 2010, on page A22 of the New York edition.

Next Article in Opinion (4 of 30) »

Past Coverage

Decision Could Allow Anonymous Political Contributions by Businesses (February 28, 2010)
A Justice Responds To Criticism From Obama (February 4, 2010)
Former Justice O'Connor Sees Ill in Election Finance Ruling (January 27, 2010)
SIDEBAR; Stevens Era, Nearing End, Takes On An Edge (January 26, 2010)

E-MAIL
PRINT

Related Searches

Next Article in Opinion (4 of 30) »

MOST POPULAR

E-MAILED | BLOGGED | SEARCHED

1. Building a Better Teacher
2. Op-Ed Contributor: Algebra in Wonderland
3. Tuscany Without the Crowds
4. Thomas L. Friedman: Dreaming the Possible Dream
5. Opinionator: Finding Your Roots
6. Lessons at Indian Hospital About Births
7. Defectors Say Church of Scientology Hides Abuse
8. Program Will Pay Homeowners to Sell at a Loss
9. Nicholas D. Kristof: The Spread of Superbugs
10. Editorial: If Reform Fails

Go to Complete List »

INSIDE NYTIMES.COM

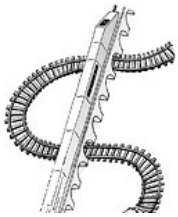
WEEK IN REVIEW »

Democrats Need a Rally Monkey

N.Y. / REGION »

A Jewish Knight for a Wartime Pope

OPINION »



Op-Ed: Slug on the Tracks

SPORTS »

Mets College of Catchers Convenes

OPINION »

Educated and Hopeless in China

A Room for Debate forum on why China's best and brightest — its college graduates — are unable to find jobs.

MUSIC »

Picture This: A Nose on the Loose

Home | World | U.S. | N.Y. / Region | Business | Technology | Science | Health | Sports | Opinion | Arts | Style | Travel | Jobs | Real Estate | Automobiles | Back to Top

Copyright 2010 The New York Times Company | Privacy Policy | Terms of Service | Search | Corrections | RSS | First Look | Help | Contact Us | Work for Us | Site Map