# Very Large Majorities Support Congressional Bills to Reduce Influence of Big Campaign Donors

# [May 10, 2018](https://www.publicconsultation.org/redblue/very-large-majorities-support-congressional-bills-to-reduce-influence-of-big-campaign-donors/)

A major study of voters’ views of campaign finance finds that large majorities support numerous bills in Congress that seek to reduce or offset the influence of big campaign donors.  These include bills that call for a Constitutional amendment to overturn the Citizens United decision, increasing disclosure requirements for campaign donations, and promoting more small campaign donations.

Asked how important they regard “the goal of reducing or counterbalancing the influence of big campaign donors—including special interests, corporations and wealthy people—on the Federal government” 88% said they saw it is as important (60% very important).  This attitude was quite bipartisan with 84% of Republicans and 92% of Democrats saying this is important, though Democrats were more likely to say it is very important (72%) than Republicans (49%).

The most significant change—favored by 75% (Republicans 66%, Democrats 85%)—was a Constitutional amendment that would allow Congress and the states to write campaign finance laws that regulate and set reasonable limits on the raising and spending of money to influence elections and to distinguish between people and corporations. This would effectively supersede the ‘Citizens United’ decision and allow legislators to restrict or prohibit corporations and other organizations from spending money to influence elections.

For each proposed bill, respondents were given a short briefing and asked to evaluate arguments for and against the proposal before making their final recommendation.  The survey content was reviewed by experts in favor of and against each proposal, to ensure that the briefing was accurate and balanced, and that the strongest arguments were presented.

The survey of registered voters was conducted by the Program for Public Consultation at the University of Maryland (PPC), and released today by the nonpartisan organization, Voice of the People.

“Consistent with other surveys that have found very strong public frustration with the perceived level of influence of campaign donors on elected officials, large majorities are ready to try a wide range of strategies for limiting or counterbalancing the power of campaign donors,” commented Steven Kull, director of PPC.

Overwhelming bipartisan majorities approve a variety of proposals in Congressional bills requiring greater disclosure of campaign-related donations. These include:

* requiring that all individuals or organizations that donate or receive a total of $10,000 or more for campaign-related activities promptly register with the FEC, have their name and the amount of the donations listed on the Commission’s website.
* requiring that independent campaign-related expenditures by corporations, unions, and other groups promptly report such spending to shareholders, members, and the general public, as well as the FEC.
* requiring that names of significant donors paying for TV or radio ads in support of candidates or related to controversial issues be publicly disclosed;
* requiring that Federal contractors publicly disclose their donations to groups that spend money on campaign-related activities.

To ensure that all credit card donations to campaigns are coming from US citizens and are not being made to evade limits on donations to a particular candidate, large majorities support requiring donors using credit card to provide the address in which they are registered to vote in the US, to get the CVV on all online donations, and to get and report the address of all donors, not just those giving $50 or more as currently required by law.

Two proposals for increasing the influence of small donors received strong support, including:

* providing a tax credit for those who make small donations of up to $50 to candidate
* providing a six to one match for small donations up to $150 to candidates who first agree to not take any donations over $150, with funded by a charge on large federal contractors.

However, a proposal to make such a six-to-one match using general revenue funds did not get majority support.

A more modest 55% supported a proposal favors a proposal to prohibit Members of Congress from personally asking donors for donations; though speaking at fundraising events would still be allowed.  Though 58% of Democrats were in favor, Republicans were divided.

Support for public funding of presidential campaigns, however, has little support. Indeed, in light of the fact that the Federal program for providing public funding for presidential campaigns has not been used by any presidential candidates for some time, 66% supports ending the program and its $3 check off on taxpayers’ IRS forms, and directing the unused funds to pediatric research or deficit reduction.

The survey was conducted online in three waves: August 3-16, 2017 with 3,045 registered voters (margin of error +/-1.8%), September 7 – October 3, 2017 with 2,482 registered voters (margin of error +/-2.0%) and September 22 – October 17, 2017 with 2,569 registered voters (margin of error +/-1.9%).   The samples were national probability-based samples provided by Nielsen Scarborough from Nielsen Scarborough’s sample of respondents, who were recruited by mail and telephone using a random sample of households.

Americans Evaluate Campaign Finance Reform – Full Report: <http://www.publicconsultation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Campaign_Finance_Report.pdf>

Questionnaire with Frequencies: <http://www.publicconsultation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/CampaignFinance_TermLimits_Quaire_0518.pdf>

Slides with Findings: <http://www.publicconsultation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Campaign_Finance_Slides_050118.pdf>

Try the Surveys Yourself:

* Promoting Donations by Small Donors: <http://vop.org/sim-smalldonors/>
* Prohibiting One-on-One Fundraising by Members of Congress: <http://vop.org/sim-1on1-fundraising/>
* Increasing Disclosure Requirements for Political Donations: <http://vop.org/sim-incr-diclosurereqs/>
* Online Credit Card Donations: <http://vop.org/sim-onlinedonations/>
* Constitutional Amendment to Overturn Citizens United: <http://vop.org/sim-citizensunited/>
* Public Funding of Presidential Campaigns: <http://vop.org/sim-publicfunding-prescampaigns/>

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