

Needed Reforms of Campaign Finance Laws

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Excerpted from the book *Extortion* by Peter Schweizer

- Ban the solicitation or receipt of campaign contributions while Congress is in session.**
Extortion works best when the threat is imminent. Holding a fund-raise in the shadow of the Capitol, where important legislation might be on the docket, is an extortionist's dream.
In *Buckley v. Valeo*, the Supreme Court ruled "the appearance of corruption may persist whenever a favorable legislation outcome follows closely on the heels of a financial contribution."
Timing and location (proximity) are important. We need to divorce fund-raising from lawmaking as much as possible.
[See Florida House Rule 15.3\(b\)](#)
This would help nudge fund-raising events in the direction of genuine support rather than extraction.
- Place an outright ban on contributions and solicitations involving lobbyists or government contractors.**
This should include (ban) communicator lobbyists, principals of a state contractor or prospective state contractor and members of any of their immediate families.
- Restrict the ability of the "Permanent Political Class" to convert campaign money into lifestyle subsidy.**
If you want to loan money to your campaign that's fine. But, you shouldn't collect interest in doing so.
- Ban Leadership PACs.**
Leadership PACs have become money-laundering operations. They are often used as "slush-funds", sometimes they are used to enhance a politician's lifestyle, sometimes to bribe colleagues for votes. Members of Congress horse-trade all the time – they call it log-rolling: if you support building this in my district, I will support building that in yours. We cannot stop such trades. But Leadership PACs are not about benefits for districts: they are about benefits for members of Congress.

Right now, politicians enjoy a nice loophole. They are provided an exemption from the provision in the *Ethics Manual* that prohibits solicitation of receiving contributions in congressional office buildings from fellow members.

18 U.S.C. § 607 generally prohibits the solicitation or receipt of campaign contributions in federal offices, including the House office buildings and district offices, in connection with a federal, state, or local election.

??? We need to extend the solicitation ban to members of Congress. ??? (what exactly is this?)
Selling your vote is selling your vote, whether its to a special interest or a colleague.

- Restrict the ability of the Permanent Political Class to extort money for their families through political power.
We need to ban immediate family members (spouses and children) from registering as lobbyists.
We also need to prevent members of Congress from putting family members on the payroll.
Campaigns and public service should not be about self-enrichment. Putting your kids on the payroll is the simplest way of moving campaign dollars into the family bank account.

We must also have transparency in the legislative process so that the practice can be exposed.
Laws are so complicated that bills are not even read by members of Congress. Extortive Practices are easy to carry out in a cloud of legal words.

We should adopt a single-subject rule for all bills.

Article III of the Florida Constitution "requires that every law shall embrace but one subject and matter properly connected herewith."

SECTION V. Paragraph III. Of the Georgia Constitution: "**One subject matter expressed.** No bill shall pass which refers to more than one subject matter or contains matter different from what is

expressed in the title thereof.”

In other words: Each bill must be focused on one specific subject. You should not be able to slip in something in on an unrelated subject (pork!).

We need to require members of Congress to actually read the bills they are going to vote on.

Some have suggested a 7 day waiting period before voting actually takes place and another was that all bills scheduled for a full vote on the floor be read aloud – even the 2,000 page monsters (and, they should not be allowed to hire a speed-reader to do it for them). Perhaps this would have the benefit of greatly reducing the size of many bills. Generally, the less words in a law, the easier it is to understand and interpret and the less likely to be misconstrued.

How about simply requiring members to read the bills before a vote and to sign a legal affidavit to that fact?

Such laws have to have teeth. Current Senate rules require that any bill that will be voted on be posted online beforehand, so that the general public can read it. But that rule is regularly suspended or ignored, without any penalty.

Those that ignore the requirement to read a bill and/or to post it online beforehand should face some sort of real sanction.

Dante, in the Inferno, place politicians in the eighth circle of hell, the penultimate in eternal damnation.



Eighth Circle (Fraud)

The last two circles of Hell punish sins that involve conscious fraud or treachery. These circles can be reached only by descending a vast cliff, which Dante and Virgil do on the back of [Geryon](#), a winged monster traditionally represented as having three heads or three conjoined bodies.^[37] However, Dante describes Geryon as having three mixed natures: human, bestial, and reptilian.^[37]

Dante's Geryon is an image of fraud, having the face of an honest man on the body of a beautifully colored [wyvern](#), with the furry paws of a [lion](#) and a poisonous sting in the pointy scorpion-like tail^[38] (Canto XVII).

The fraudulent – those guilty of deliberate, knowing evil.