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*Campaign Finance: The Impact on the Legislative & Regulatory Process*

50 Admin. L. Rev. 81 (1998)

Abstract by Ryann Kathleen Bernard

The regulatory role of the federal government has grown over the last century, leading to an increase in campaign contributions and to increasingly insistent demands for reform. The author claims the current campaign finance system is not designed to achieve compromise; instead, it is designed to maintain the status quo. Money is used to gain access to powerful politicians in order to promote personal economic and social interests, which often trump the interests of the politicians' constituents. Opposing views are drowned out, and a mockery is made of the one man, one vote principle.

In one example given by the author, UPS increased its donations to campaigns so much that it became one of the top contributing PACs registered with the Federal Elections Commission. This was done in response to Department of Labor regulations seeking to increase safety and efficiency for workers. The author argues that the issue is more than campaign improprieties - rather, the problem lies within a system that allows over \$2 billion in campaign donations during one election cycle. Legislation resulting from pressure from special interests often results in a cost to tax-payers, as in the case of the federal minimum wage increase, which costs the tax payers money since it gives tax breaks to businesses. Special interests have the power to delay or thwart legislation they dislike, but they also have a trickle-down effect, since they affect how legislators influence administrators, regulators, and their regulations.

The authors conclude with the contention that policy changes are necessary to redress such concerns about our system, and that these changes must occur on the legislative and the regulatory level, since both have been seriously affected by the current campaign finance system.

