



# **Money, Power, and Elections: How Campaign Finance Reform Subverts American Democracy (Media & Public Affairs)**

*Rodney A. Smith*

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Have campaign finance reform laws actually worked? Is money less influential in electing candidates today than it was thirty years ago when legislation was first enacted? Absolutely not, argues Rodney A. Smith in this passionately written, fact-filled, and provocative book. According to Smith, the laws have had exactly the opposite of their intended effect. They have increased the likelihood that incumbents in the House and Senate will be reelected, and they have greatly diminished the chances that candidates who are not wealthy will be elected. Smith's claims are supported by convincing data; he collected and analyzed information about all federal elections since 1920. These data show clearly that money matters now more than ever.

Smith thinks that reform legislation has created a new inequality for candidates that, if left unchecked, threatens to destroy the American electoral process by obliterating the foundational principle of free speech. He argues that "money buys speech" and when candidates lack money to buy media time and space they are effectively silenced. Their inability to "speak freely" violates the most significant intentions of our nation's founders: that a sovereign citizenry elect its own leaders based on a free exchange of ideas. For Smith, campaign finance reform has unwittingly unbalanced the checks and balances created by the Framers of the Constitution.

After presenting a detailed historical overview of how we have reached the present crisis, Smith proposes a simple solution: institute a process that completely discloses relevant information about campaign donors and recipients of donations. All disclosures would be available to the media, which would be able to investigate and report them fully. Only then, Smith believes, will the United States have the opportunity to be the democratic republic that its founders intended.

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