American Business Leaders On Campaign Finance And Reform

Key findings from survey conducted May/June 2013 for Committee for Economic Development
Research Methodology

- Hart Research (D) and American Viewpoint (R) formed a bipartisan research team to conduct an online nationwide survey among 302 business executives for the Committee for Economic Development (CED).

- The survey was conducted May 29 – June 3, 2013.

- Job titles for respondents were restricted to owner, president, chairman, partner, CEO, COO, CFO, senior vice president, department head, vice president, director, and administrator.

- All respondents work for a company with at least five employees, including approximately 120 respondents who work for a company with at least 1,000 employees.

- While online surveys are not sampled surveys, a comparable sampled survey of this size would have a statistical margin of sampling error of ±5.64 percentage points.
Large Majorities Of U.S. Business Executives Agree On The Problem

85% say that the campaign finance system is in poor shape or broken.

87% say that the campaign finance system needs major reforms or a complete overhaul.

71% believe that major contributors have too much influence on politicians.

75% say that the U.S. campaign finance system is pay-to-play.
Large Majorities Of U.S. Business Executives Agree That The Solutions Are Limits And Disclosure

90% support reforms that disclose all individual, corporate, and labor contributions to political committees.

89% want limits on how much money individuals, corporations, and labor can give to political candidates.

89% want limits on how much money individuals, corporations, labor, and independent political organizations can spend for political purposes during an election.
2012 Election Was Not The Best

Thinking about the 2012 election for president, Congress, and other federal and local offices, and concentrating not on the outcome of the election but on the process of how the election was conducted, how would you say election 2012 went?

- One of the best elections ever
- Better than most
- About average
- Worse than most
- One of the worst elections ever

All business executives: 44% good, 16% bad
Democrats: 23% good, 24% bad
Republicans: 39% good, 23% bad

11% of all business executives said the election was one of the best elections ever, while 16% said it was one of the worst. Democrats were more likely to say it was good (23%) and Republicans were more likely to say it was bad (23%).
85% Say The Campaign Finance System Has Major Problems Or Is Broken

Which one of the following best describes the current state of the system for financing political campaigns?

- In good shape with minor problems
- In poor shape with major problems
- Completely broken

No one selected “in great shape” to describe the current system.

Current System Pleases Special Interest, Empowers Super PACs, Hurts Country In General

The current system is:

- Leading politicians to cast votes to please special interests rather than voters: 61% DEFINITELY, 94% PROBABLY
- Letting Super PACs crowd airwaves: hard for campaigns to have meaningful dialogue: 55% DEFINITELY, 83% PROBABLY
- Contributing to Congress’s inability to solve big problems country is facing: 50% DEFINITELY, 83% PROBABLY
- Making it harder to pass economic reforms and other important legislation: 46% DEFINITELY, 81% PROBABLY
- Harming our democracy: 44% DEFINITELY, 74% PROBABLY
- Driving politicians and political parties to be more extreme: 43% DEFINITELY, 79% PROBABLY
- Limiting quality/diversity of candidates willing and able to run for office: 42% DEFINITELY, 81% PROBABLY
- Reducing competition in elections: 41% DEFINITELY, 74% PROBABLY
- Distorting market economy by adding political calculations to business decisions: 34% DEFINITELY, 72% PROBABLY
87% Say The Campaign Finance System Needs Major Reforms Or Complete Overhaul

Which one of the following best describes the amount of change the system for financing political campaigns needs?

- Needs minor reforms
- Needs major reforms
- Needs a complete overhaul
- No one selected “needs no reforms at all” to describe the amount of change needed.

87% Need major reforms or overhaul

13% Need minor reforms

47% Need major reforms

40% Need a complete overhaul
### 71% Say Major Contributors Have Too Much Influence On Politics

Which one or two of the following, if any, come closest to your view of what the problems are with the system for financing political campaigns?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>All business executives</th>
<th>Democrats</th>
<th>Republicans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major contributors have too much influence on politicians</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politicians spend too much time and energy raising money</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too easy for donors to hide their identity from the public</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough transparency over how people are giving</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People are under too much pressure to contribute</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Business executives believe that elected officials in the U.S. are mostly looking out for:
- The needs of those who finance their campaigns: 79%
- The needs of their constituents: 18%
69% Believe Political Donors Have A Great Deal More Influence

In the way election campaigns are financed, I think political donors have a great deal more influence than average donors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By Company Size</th>
<th>All business executives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $50 million</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50 million or more</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I think companies that spend money on political campaigns gain a large advantage in the marketplace:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By Company Size</th>
<th>All business executives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $50 million</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50 million or more</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
64% Say The “Pay-To-Play” System Is A Serious Problem

Would you say the U.S. system of financing elections amounts to a pay-to-play system, where business executives are expected to give money if they want to have influence over public policy, or would you not describe the system this way?

The U.S. system is pay-to-play, and it is a serious problem

64%

The U.S. system is pay-to-play, not a serious problem

11%

There are elements of pay-to-play, but it’s not that bad

19%

I would not describe it as a pay-to-play system

5%
86% Say There is Not Enough Transparency; 91% Want More Transparency

Do you think there is adequate transparency over the way election campaigns are financed, or not?

In the way election campaigns are financed, how much transparency does there need to be?

- Adequate transparency: 8%
- Not adequate transparency: 86%
- Little/no more transparency: 9%
- Great deal/some more transparency: 91%
90% Support Full Disclosure; 80% Support Limits On Contributions

- Disclosing all individual, corporate, labor contributions to political committees or other organizations that spend money in election campaigns: 90% support, 68% strongly support.
- Reducing influence of individual donors by limiting total amount an individual may contribute to all candidates, political action committees, and party committees: 80% support, 48% strongly support.
- Encouraging individual contributions, especially small contributions, by giving them tax-exempt status: 52% support, 16% strongly support.
- Eliminating need for candidates to raise money by having full public financing of political campaigns: 48% support, 21% strongly support.
- Encouraging citizens to participate in elections by matching their small contributions up to $200 with public funds: 34% support, 10% strongly support.
- Removing all restrictions on contributions to candidates, PACs, Super PACs, and political parties while also requiring full disclosure of all contributions: 22% support, 8% strongly support.
95% of Democrats and 88% of Republicans Support Disclosure Reform

- Disclose all individual, corporate, labor contributions to political campaigns:
  - Democrats: 95%
  - Republicans: 88%

- Reduce influence of individual donors: limit total amount they may contribute:
  - Democrats: 88%
  - Republicans: 73%

- Encourage individual contributions, especially small, by giving tax-exempt status:
  - Democrats: 58%
  - Republicans: 51%

- Eliminate need for candidates to raise money: full public financing:
  - Democrats: 57%
  - Republicans: 39%

- Encourage citizens to participate by matching small contributions up to $200:
  - Democrats: 44%
  - Republicans: 28%

- Remove all restrictions on contributions while requiring full disclosure of all:
  - Democrats: 15%
  - Republicans: 30%
70% Believe Current Super PACs Should Be Made Illegal

Organizations known as Super PACs can raise and spend unlimited amounts of money on behalf of candidates they support. (Supporters say this is a form of free speech) while (opponents say this allows groups or wealthy individuals to have unfair influence.) Do you believe it should be legal or illegal for these Super PACs to operate?

- Super PACs should be illegal: 70% (40% feel strongly)
- Super PACs should be legal: 28%
- Not sure: 2%
89% Support Limits On Donations To Political Candidates And Groups

Should there be limits on the amount of money individuals, corporations, and labor unions can give to political candidates and independent political organizations?

- **Should have limits**: 89%
  - Feel strongly: 79%
- **Should not have limits**: 11%

Should there be limits on the amount of money outside groups, including individuals, corporations, labor unions, and independent political organizations can spend for political purposes during an election?

- **Should have limits**: 89%
  - Feel strongly: 78%
- **Should not have limits**: 9%