

Campaign Finance Reform Historical Timeline

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DATE	EVENT	DESCRIPTION
1757	George Washington	Washington was charged with a kind of campaign spending irregularity in his race for a seat in the Virginia House of Burgesses. Said to have purchased and distributed during the campaign more than a quart of rum, beer, and hard cider per voter (391 voters in the district).
1828	Kentucky Governor's Race	A Candidate solicited donations of \$5,000 to \$10,000.
1828	Professional Campaign	Practice of Professional Campaign Managers begins.
1838	New York Mayor's Race	Vote buying --- As much as \$22 was being paid for an uncommitted vote.
1864	President Abraham Lincoln	Warns of "a crisis approaching" in a 21 November Letter... "As a result of the war, corporations have become enthroned, and an era of corruption in high places will follow. The money power of the country will endeavor to prolong its rule by preying upon the prejudices of the people until all wealth is concentrated in few hands and the Republic is destroyed."
1867	Naval Appropriations Bill	First federal effort to regulate campaign finance. Aimed to stop the practice of shaking down naval yard workers of political donations.
1876	The Golden Age of Boodle	Historian George Thayer nicknamed the era (Gilded Age) filled with political corruption, Tammy hall, Boss Tweed. Mark Twain "I think I can say, and say with pride, that we have legislatures that bring high prices than any in the world."
1883	Civil Service Reform Act	aka Pendleton Act. Applied the Naval Appropriation Act to all government workers.

1896	Election	Watershed for Campaign Finance ... set the record for expenditures, unsurpassed for the next quarter century. McKinley = \$7 million, Bryan = \$650,000...Marcus Alonzo Hanna, Ohio businessman and chairman of the Republican national Committee, introduced the practice of regularly assessing businesses for campaign contributions, and began the practices of political advertising, regular press releases, speakers, posters, buttons, and billboards. 300,000 flyers in 9 different languages.
1905	President Roosevelt Calls for Reform	President Theodore Roosevelt argued for a ban on all political contributions by corporations. Also proposed a public financing system for all federal candidates.
1907	Tillman Act	President Theodore Roosevelt called for public financing of federal candidates via political parties and congress responded with the Act to ban bank and corporate giving. The ban was largely ignored.
1910	Federal Corrupt Practices Act	First comprehensive reform measure. Established the first disclosure requirements for federal candidates and limited the spending by House and Senate candidates.
1913	17th Amendment	Direct election of Senators. Expansion of the Electorate and importance of the common voter to the overall process; thus, requiring more campaign financing.
1920	19th Amendment	Women's Suffrage. Expansion of the Electorate and importance of the common voter to the overall process; thus, requiring more campaign financing.
1924	Democratic Party Campaign	The Party campaign plank sponsored by William Jennings Bryan, called for federal candidates to be furnished "reasonable means of publicity at public expense."
1925	Amendment to Federal Corrupt Practices Act	Served as the basic campaign finance act until 1971. Act was devoid of any enforcement procedures. Strengthen the disclosure requirements and caps spending. President LBJ referred to the law as "more loophole than law."
1935	Hatch Act	Congress prohibited contributions to federal candidates from federal workers and contractors and limited individual contributions to \$5,000 per year.

1936	Labor Contributions to Campaigns	CIO president John L. Lewis contributes \$500,000 to the Democratic Party.
1943	Smith-Connally Act	Prohibited Labor Unions from directly contributing money to federal candidates.
1944	CIO first PAC	In response to the Smith-Connally Act the CIO formed the first Political Action committee (PAC) funded through voluntary contributions and not union treasury funds.
1947	Taft-Hartley Act	Permanent ban on contributions to federal candidates from unions, corporations, and interstate banks.
1950	Electronic Campaigning	Between 1956 and 1968 campaign spending doubles from \$155 million to over \$300 million as outlays for broadcast media increased six fold, from \$10 million to \$60 million.
1968	Campaign Contributions	8 percent of the voting population gave contributions to local, state, and federal candidates.
1971	FECA	Federal Elections Campaign Act - Congress passes the act to set limits on and require disclosure of spending by candidates for federal offices and provides for financing for Presidential campaigns. Required full and timely disclosures, limited some contributions, capped spending, and permitted unions and corporations to form PACs.
1971	Revenue Act	Established the public financing system for qualifying presidential candidates paid for by the voluntary \$1.00 check off on income tax forms. Also provided \$50.00 tax deduction for individual contributions (ended 1978) or \$12.50 tax credit ⁹ raised to \$50.00 in 1978 and eliminated in 1986).
1972	Watergate Election	President Richard Nixon's reelection committee received million of dollars in secret. IE Robert Vesco (\$200,000 in a briefcase), Howard Hughes (\$100,000 in a safe deposit box), Clement Stone (\$2 million), 13 corporations \$780,000 in illegal corporate contributions.
1974	Federal Election Commission	FECA - After the Nixon Watergate scandal Congress creates the commission to enforce the Federal Election Campaign Act provisions. Create \$1,000 individual contribution limit and a \$5,000 PAC limit.

1976	Buckley v. Valeo	424 US 1 Supreme Court ruling that mandatory spending limits violate free speech mandates.
1976	FECA Amendments	Congress enacts new amendments to FECA to comply with Buckley v. Valeo.
1978	General Election Spending	General election totals equal \$153.5 million.
1979	FECA Amendments	Package of amendments to the election campaign act allows the use of donations to political parties rather than candidates. First time Congress enacted reform.
1980	General Election Spending	General election spending totals \$192.1 million.
1985	FEC v. National Conservative	470 US 480 NCPAC extended Buckley's ruling that independent expenditures could not be limited.
1986	Bills Killed	The US Senate votes twice in favor of strict controls for campaign fundraising but bipartisan maneuvers do not allow the bills to come up for a vote.
1986	General Election Spending	General election Spending reaches \$400.9 million.
1988	General Election Spending	General Election Spending reaches \$408.3 million.
1988	Legislative and Legal Setbacks	A proposal for limiting overall Campaign spending by candidates is shelved after a Republican Filibuster. A constitutional amendment to override the Supreme Court decision fails to get off the ground.
1990	Austin v. Michigan State Chamber of Commerce	494 US 652. Austin affirmed the constitutionality of a ban on campaign spending by business corporations or other corporations other than purely non-profit.
1990	General Election Spending	General Election Spending reaches \$403.7 million.
1990	More legislative Failure	The House and Senate approve voluntary spending limits and restrictions on political action committees. Conferees fail to resolve differences and bill never sent to President Bush.
1992	Bush Vetoes Campaign Limits Bill	President Bush vetoed a bill providing partial public financing for congressional candidates who abide by voluntary fund-raising ceilings and barring soft money contributions to Presidential candidates. Senate fails to override the veto.

1992	Campaign Contributions	4 percent of the voting population gave contributions to local, state, and federal candidates. 80 percent of all congressional campaign money donated by PACs and individuals giving \$200 or more.
1992	General Election Spending	General Election Spending reaches \$528.6 million.
1994	General Election Spending	General Election Spending reaches \$616.2 million
1994	More Bills Blocked	Republicans again block a bill setting spending limits and authorizing partial public financing of congressional elections.
1996	General Election Spending	General Election Spending reaches \$650.8 million.
1996	More Bills Fail	Bipartisan legislation for voluntary spending limits with rewards for those who comply and barring soft money is killed by a Republican filibuster.
1997	Bill Fails	McCain- Feingold bipartisan bill to close soft money and TV advertising expenditures runs afoul of a Republican filibuster. Senate sets March 1998 deadline for another vote on the bill.
1999	Campaign Integrity Act HR:1867	Asa Hutchinson (R - Arkansas) Bill to ban soft money and raise hard money limits.
1999	Campaign Reform and Election Integrity Act	Sponsored by Rep. Bill Thomas (R - CA) includes a ban on foreign money and reforms the FEC.
1999	Citizen Legislature & Political Freedom Act	HR 1922 sponsored by Rep. John Doolittle (R - CA) to repeal all federal election contribution limits and expedite and expand disclosure.
1999	HR: 417 Campaign Reform Act	Shays-Meehan Bill, sponsored by Christopher Shays (R - CT) and Martin Meehan (D - MA) to ban soft money and limit types of campaign advertising.
2002	Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act	Sponsored by Senators Russell Feingold (D-WI) and John McCain (R-AZ). Revised some of the legal limits of expenditure set in 1974, and prohibited unregulated contributions (called "soft money") to national political parties. Also defined political ads as "electioneering communications" prohibiting any such ad paid for by a corporation or paid for by an unincorporated entity using any corporate or union funds

2003	Supreme Court Upholds BCRA	A divided Supreme Court upholds the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act, which had been challenged by both parties. The decision preserved the soft money ban and restrictions on political ads, which were the most significant parts of the law.
2006	U.S. Supreme Court Decision Right to Life v. FEC	Certain advertisements might be constitutionally entitled to an exception from the electioneering communications' provisions of McCain-Feingold. The Court established a broad exemption for any ad that could have a reasonable interpretation as an ad about legislative issues.
2006 the	Randall v. Sorrell	The Supreme Court of the United States ruled that Vermont's law, the strictest in nation which placed a cap on financial donations made to politicians, unconstitutionally hindered the citizens' First Amendment right to free speech. A key issue in the case was the 1976 case Buckley v. Valeo, which many justices felt needed to be revisited
2007	BCRA Loosens	The Supreme Court, in a 5-4 decision, ruled that advocacy groups financed by unions or corporate money could not be barred from running ads in the month before a primary and the two months preceding a general election. The court gave greater latitude to what an issue ad could say
2012	Citizens United v. FEC	The ruling allows corporations and unions to advocate for or against candidates at any time. Two months later, in <i>Speechnow.org v. FEC</i> , an appeals court strikes down limits on contributions to independent-expenditure shops. The super-PAC is born.