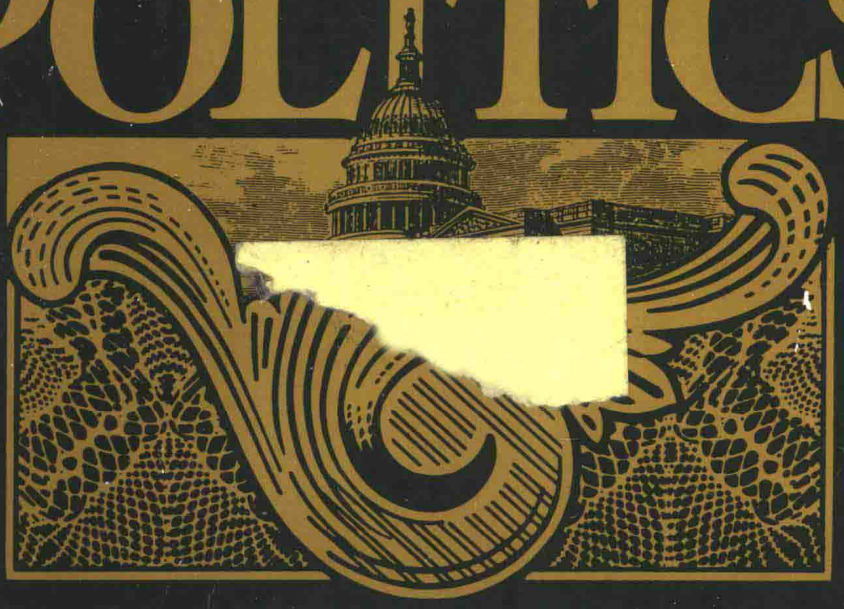
SARA FRITZ • DWIGHT MORRIS
LOS ANGELES TIMES

GOLD-PLATED POLITICS



RUNNING FOR CONGRESS IN THE 1990s

GOLD-PLATED POLITICS

RUNNING FOR CONGRESS IN THE 1990S

SARA FRITZ AND DWIGHT MORRIS

LOS ANGELES TIMES

Congressional Quarterly Inc.
Washington, D.C.

Copyright © 1992 Congressional Quarterly Inc.
1414 22nd Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

Book design: Kaelin Chappell
Cover design: Ben Santora

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Fritz, Sara, 1944-
Gold-plated politics : running for Congress in the 1990s / Sara Fritz and Dwight Morris.
p. cm.
Condensed ed. of: Handbook of campaign spending / Sara Fritz and Dwight Morris.
Includes index.
ISBN 0-87187-858-5
1. Campaign funds–United States–Handbooks, manuals, etc. 2. United States. Congress–Elections, 1990–Handbooks, manuals, etc. I. Morris, Dwight, 1952- . II. Fritz, Sara, 1944- Handbook of campaign spending. III. Title.
JK1991.F74 1993
324.7'8'0973–dc20 92-32153
CIP

Preface

Until now, campaign spending has been ignored in the study of American politics. Political scientists, journalists, and even proponents of campaign finance reform held the view that it made no difference how campaign money was spent. If they focused on the role of money in politics, they concentrated on contributions.

It was simply assumed that politicians used their campaign contributions for all of the usual things: television ads, bumper stickers, billboards, yard signs, phone banks, and sample ballots. That assumption was never challenged, in part, because it was virtually impossible for political analysts to penetrate the mountains of paper reports on campaign spending filed each year with the Federal Election Commission (FEC).

What we expected to uncover by looking through all those FEC reports were questionable or improper expenditures by political candidates. While we were not disappointed on that count, we also uncovered a wealth of information that sheds new light on many issues that have been debated about politics in recent years, including the decline of the two-party system, the rising cost of campaigns, and the role of technology in politics.

This book is based on a database compiled by the authors and others while working in the Washington, D.C., bureau of the *Los Angeles Times*. It is the product of about two years of work and a considerable financial expense by the *Times*.

We analyzed 437,753 separate expenditures reported to the FEC

by 972 candidates who sought congressional office in 1990. Copies of each FEC report were obtained by the *Times,* and every expenditure was entered into the database under 1 of 220 different categories. While we relied primarily on the candidates' own descriptions of their expenditures, we sought to contact every campaign for an explanation of all ambiguous entries in which the candidate spent more than a few thousand dollars. While most campaigns were very cooperative, some members of Congress and their employees refused to explain their vaguely reported campaign expenditures.

In House races, this book covers all expenditures during the two-year cycle beginning January 1, 1989, and ending December 31, 1990. In Senate races, it covers the six-year cycle beginning January 1, 1985, and ending December 31, 1990. We made no effort to report on the campaign expenditures of senators who were not up for reelection in 1990. In cases where special elections were held during the cycle to fill House vacancies, the book contains data from the special election as well as the subsequent primary and general elections.

Our findings come at a time when members of Congress are trying to decide how to reform the campaign finance system. They also come at a time when Americans are questioning whether politicians are committed more to their own careers than to the well-being of the nation. We hope this book will cause Americans to be concerned enough to demand serious, substantial reform of the campaign finance system. We also hope it will cause members of Congress to opt for a full-scale overhaul of the system, rather than a few cosmetic changes.

We are journalists. It is not our purpose to side with Republicans, Democrats, Common Cause, or Ralph Nader or to endorse any particular approach to campaign finance reform. In fact, we have never seen a reform proposal from any source that would satisfy our concerns.

Our intention in writing this book was nonpartisan and nonideological. We wanted to point out problems in the campaign finance system that have been ignored. We also wanted to encourage political scientists, journalists, and others interested in politics to study the full impact that special-interest money is having on American democracy.

We would like to emphasize that except in a few cases we are not accusing any member of Congress of doing anything illegal. By and large, most members of Congress are guilty of nothing more than participating in a widely accepted system of conduct. At the same time, we believe many of the practices outlined in this book should be illegal.

试读结束，需要全本PDF请购买 www.ertongbook.com

Acknowledgments

For their strong support of this project, we are deeply grateful to the management of the *Los Angeles Times:* Publisher David Laventhol, Editor Shelby Coffey III, Managing Editor George J. Cotlier, Assistant Managing Editor Martin Baron, National Editor Norman C. Miller, Washington Bureau Chief Jack Nelson, Deputy Bureau Chief Richard T. Cooper, and Angela Rinaldi, manager of book development.

This book could never have been written had it not been for the long hours, night, and weekends Murielle E. Gamache, Stephanie Grace, Desiree Williams, and Debbie Szpanka spent researching the expenditures and coding the data. For their assistance in writing the book, we thank Richard S. Dunham, Eric Woodman, and Lisa Hoffman. For their encouragement and patience, we are grateful to our family members: Jenifer Morris, James A. Kidney, Mary Kathleen Kidney, and Daniel McCarthy Kidney II. For their advice and counsel, we are grateful to our good friends: Cheryl Arvidson, Karen Tumulty, David Lauter, and Art Pine, as well as many others in the Washington Bureau of the *Los Angeles Times.*

A special thanks to Tom McLean of Data Tabulating Service, who put up with our demanding schedule and frequently stayed up all night to compile or make changes in the database, and to the staff of Data Tabulating Service, who provided us with rapid and, above all, extremely accurate data entry and verification: Carmen Hughes, Nancy Houston, Jimmy Owensby, Darlene Lyons, and Rachelle Pitts. For technical assistance, we thank Phil Ruiz.

A Guide to the Tables

The analysis of individual races that follows is based on an examination of all 437,753 separate expenditures reported to the Federal Election Commission (FEC) by 972 candidates who sought congressional office in 1990.

Copies of each campaign's financial reports were obtained from the FEC by the *Los Angeles Times.* Each expenditure was entered into the database under 1 of 220 different categories. To ensure that the categorization was accurate, we contacted officials of each campaign that spent more than a few thousand dollars and asked for clarification of all vaguely reported expenditures. We also inquired about the duties of every consultant employed by the campaign.

While most campaigns were extremely cooperative, some were not. In cases where neither the candidate nor the campaign employees provided sufficient information, we contacted the consultants directly. In all, we conducted more than 700 interviews with candidates, campaign staff, and consultants.

In calculating expenditure totals, transfers between authorized committees, payments of debts from prior election cycles, contribution refunds, and loan repayments have been excluded in order to avoid double counting expenditures. All debts to vendors reported at the end of the 1990 cycle have been included.

The expenditures were subsequently assigned to one of eight major spending categories. Five categories were broken further into specific

areas of spending. The following is a description of the categories and the types of items included in each.

Overhead

Office furniture/supplies: Furniture and basic office supplies, telephone answering services, messenger and overnight delivery services, monthly cable TV payments, newspaper and magazine subscriptions, clipping services, payments for file storage, small postage and photocopying charges, office moving expenses, and improvements or upkeep of the office (including office cleaning, garbage pickup, repairs, plumbers, and locksmiths).

Rent: Monthly rent and utility payments for campaign offices.

Salaries: Salary payments and employee benefits, including health insurance. In addition to payments specifically described as salary, this category includes regular payments to those people who performed routine office tasks, which were frequently misrepresented in campaign finance reports as "consulting." Whenever a housing allowance was part of a campaign manager's compensation package, it was considered to be salary as well.

Taxes: All federal and state taxes paid by the campaign, including income taxes paid on the campaign's investments and payroll taxes.

Bank fees: Interest payments on outstanding loans, annual credit card fees, and check charges.

Lawyers/accountants: Fees paid for their services as well as any other expenses incurred by the campaign's lawyers and accountants.

Telephone: Purchases of telephone equipment (including cellular phones and beepers), monthly payments for local and long-distance service, installation fees, repairs, and reimbursements to staff for telephone expenses.

Campaign automobile: All payments for the purchase or lease of a campaign vehicle, maintenance, insurance, registration, licensing, and gasoline.

Computers/office equipment: All payments related to the purchase or lease of office equipment, such as computer equipment and software, typewriters, copiers, FAX machines, telephone answering machines, televisions, radios, and VCRs. Repair and warranty costs were included.

Travel: All general travel expenses, such as air fare and hotels, as well as rental cars, taxis, daily parking, and entries such as "food for travel."

Restaurant/food: Meeting expenses (for example, steering committees, campaign committees, state delegations) and other food costs not specifically related to constituent entertainment, travel, or fund raising.

Fund Raising

Events: All costs related to fund-raising events, including invitations, postage, planning meetings, travel costs, room rental, food and catering costs, liquor, flowers, bartenders, follow-up telephone calls, in-kind fund-raising expenses, general reimbursements to individuals for fund raising, tickets to sporting or theater events that served a fund-raising purpose, and fees paid to consultants who planned the events.

Direct mail: All costs related to fund raising via the mail, including the purchase of mailing lists, computer charges, postage, printing, consultant fees, and consultant expenses. Mailings that served a dual purpose, both to raise funds and inform voters, were included in this category.

Telemarketing: All expenses related to a telephone operation designed to raise money, including consulting fees, list purchases, and computer costs. Campaigns use the terms *telemarketing* and *phone banking* loosely. Some items identified as telemarketing in campaign reports to the FEC were found to be inaccurately identified.

Polling

All polling costs, including payments to consultants as well as in-kind contributions of polling results to the campaign.

Advertising

Electronic media: All payments to consultants, separate purchases of broadcast time, and production costs associated with the development of radio and television advertising. In most cases, payments to media consultants for other purposes were excluded.

Other media: Payments for billboards; advertising in newspapers, journals, magazines, and publications targeted to religious groups, senior citizens, and other special constituencies; as well as program ads purchased from local charitable and booster organizations.

Other Campaign Activity

Voter contact mail: All costs associated with the strictly promotional mailing undertaken by campaigns, including artwork, printing of the brochures or other mailed material, postage, the purchase of mailing lists, as well as consultant fees and consultant expenses.

Actual campaigning: Filing fees and costs of petition drives, announcement parties, state party conventions, campaign rallies and parades, campaign training schools, opposition research, printed campaign handouts, posters, signs, buttons, bumper stickers, speech writers and coaches, get-out-the-vote efforts, election-day poll watchers, and all campaign promotional material (T-shirts, jackets, caps, embossed pencils, pens, nail files, potholders, etc.). Fees and expenses billed by campaign management firms and general consultants for services unrelated to advertising, fund raising, and voter contact mail are also included. In cases where it was impossible to isolate advertising, fund-raising, and other expenses incurred by these consultants, the entire consulting fee was included here.

Staff/volunteers: All food expenses for staff and volunteers, including phone bank and get-out-the-vote volunteers. These expenses included bottled water, soda machines, monthly coffee service, and food purchases that were specifically for the campaign office. Also included were recruitment of volunteers, gifts for staff and volunteers, and staff retreats.

Constituent Gifts/Entertainment

Meals purchased for constituents, the costs of events that were designed purely for constituent entertainment (for example, a local dominos tournament), constituent gifts of all kinds, flowers, holiday greeting cards, awards and plaques, and costs associated with the annual congressional art contest.

Donations

To candidates (both in-state and out-of-state): Direct contributions to other candidates as well as the purchase price of fund-raiser tickets.

To civic organizations: Contributions to charitable organizations, such as the American Cancer Society, as well as local booster groups, such as the Chamber of Commerce and local high school athletic associations. Includes the purchase of tickets to events sponsored by such groups.

To political parties: Contributions to national, state and local party organizations, including tickets to party-sponsored fund-raising events.

Unitemized Expenses

Candidates are not required to report expenditures of less than $200, and many do not list them on their FEC reports. This category also includes expenditures described in FEC reports merely as "petty cash," unitemized credit card purchases, and all reimbursements that were vaguely worded, such as "reimbursement," "political expenses," or "campaign expenses."

试读结束，需要全本PDF请购买 www.ertongbook.com

Contents

List of Tables and Boxes

Tables

Boxes

CHAPTER 1

Political Campaigns
Why Do They Cost So Much?

> It is not good for this country that the cost of campaigns continues to skyrocket. It is not good that the average cost to successfully run for the Senate has gone from $600,000 when I first came to the Senate thirteen years ago all the way to $4 million. It is not good.... Where is it all going to end? Is the sky the limit?
>
> *Sen. David Boren, D-Okla., May 23, 1991*

In the same anguished tones used to decry the federal deficit or the high cost of health care, today's politicians lament the rising cost of political campaigns. Over the past decade, the money spent in congressional campaigns has more than doubled. Senate incumbents complain that they must raise an average of $12,000 a week during their six-year term to be ready for a reelection campaign. In California, a candidate running for the Senate must be prepared to raise at least $20 million. It is no longer unusual for incumbent House candidates—even those without opposition—to spend between $500,000 and $1 million on their reelection.

Politicians tell us they are helpless to control these rising costs, which they invariably blame on the high price of television advertising. The television stations, they say, bleed politicians dry by charging them more than other advertisers. They cite other uncontrollable costs, such as the exorbitant fees charged by political consultants, the high price of fund raising, and the cost of air travel.

Ostensibly, these rising costs are to blame for forcing most of our nation's politicians to turn to special-interest groups to finance their elections and, as a result, to enter into an unspoken agreement to use their office to defend the interests of those who help finance their campaigns. Without these burdensome expenses, the politicians claim, they could escape the ethical dilemma posed by financing elections with huge sums of special-interest money.

In fact, it is simply not true that high campaign costs are beyond

the control of the politicians. Campaign spending is growing in response to the ever-increasing availability of campaign contributions, not because of rising costs.

More than half the money spent in the 1990 congressional elections went for purchases that were virtually unrelated to contacting voters. Of all the money spent by House incumbents, 55 percent was invested in races by those with little or no opposition. In short, campaign funds are not being used primarily for campaigns.

Even television costs, which have long been blamed as the root cause of escalating campaign costs, accounted for only a fraction of what candidates spent from their campaign treasuries in 1990. On average, House candidates spent only 23 percent of their money on radio and television advertising. In fact, 127 incumbents spent nothing at all on either radio or television advertising; another 55 incumbents spent less than $10,000. For Senate candidates, radio and television costs averaged 35 percent of the campaign budget.

The truth is that Congress is awash in special-interest money and incumbents simply have created a variety of new ways to gild the electoral process in order to make use of it. If less money were available, candidates would still be able to communicate effectively with the voters—even on television.

Perhaps the most persuasive proof of the needless excesses of the current system is the continued success of a few members of Congress who spend very little money on their campaigns—even in contested elections or marginal districts—such as Reps. Andrew Jacobs, Jr., D-Ind., William S. Broomfield, R-Mich., and Glenn Poshard, D-Ill. The records of these incumbents disprove the contention that big spending is a necessary element of modern politics.

This book offers the first comprehensive study of spending by political candidates. In the past, journalists, political scientists, and reformers have focused on the growing dependency of candidates on special-interest money and the undue influence that big contributors exert on policy making. Little or no attention has ever been paid to what is our primary focus: how the electoral process itself has been distorted by big money.

In this book, we look closely at what money in politics actually buys and how it has radically transformed the process of electing public officials. In our view, the current patterns of campaign giving and campaign spending are far more responsible for the failures of the

试读结束，需要全本PDF请购买 www.ertongbook.com