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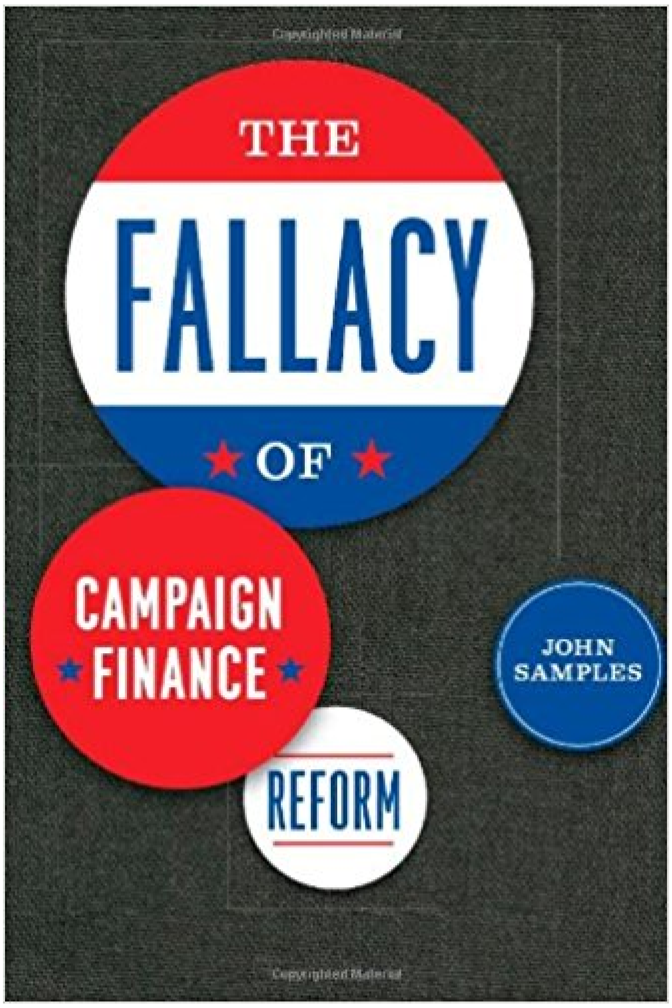
The Fallacy Of Campaign Finance Reform



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Synopsis

At first glance, campaign finance reform looks like a good idea. McCain-Feingold, for instance, regulates campaigns by prohibiting national political parties from accepting soft money contributions from corporations, labor unions, and wealthy individuals. But are such measures, or any of the numerous and similarly restrictive proposals that have circulated through Washington in recent years, really good for our democracy?Â John Samples says no, and here he takes a penetrating look into the premises and consequences of the long crusade against big money in politics. How many Americans, he asks, know that there is little to no evidence that campaign contributions really influence members of Congress? Or that so-called negative political advertising actually improves the democratic process by increasing voter turnout and knowledge? Or that limits on campaign contributions make it harder to run for office, thereby protecting incumbent representatives from losing their seats of power?Â Posing tough questions such as these, Samples uncovers numerous fallacies beneath proposals for campaign finance reform. He argues that our most common concerns about money in politics are misplaced because the ideals implicit in our notion of corruption are incoherent or indefensible. The chance to regulate money in politics allows representatives to serve their own interests at a cost to their constituents. And, ironically,Â this long crusade against the corruption caused by campaign contributions allows public officials to reduce their vulnerability by suppressing electoral competition.Â Â Defying long-held ssumptions and conventional political wisdom, The Fallacy of Campaign Finance Reform is a provocative and decidedly nonpartisan work that will be essential for anyone concerned about the future of American government.Â

Book Information

Hardcover: 328 pages

Publisher: University Of Chicago Press; 1 edition (October 1, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0226734501

ISBN-13: 978-0226734507

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1.1 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds

Average Customer Review: 3.0 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (2 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

I love this book. Finally a scholar 'gets it right' on the topic of campaign reform. The net result of campaign reform in America in 2012 going back to the liberal sweep of the 1974 mid term elections(following in the wake of the watergate and other Nixon misteps) is the stupid Federal Elections Commission and the massive restrictions on contributions to public officals running for office. Campaign finance reform is a failure to date. The net result is that most congressmen and senators and some state legislators, joined by presidentaial candidates, spend most of their time [in or out of office] campaigning for dollars in order to have a chance to run a successful campaign for election. The author's argument is that restrictions deny you [the voter] choices of candidates that cannot raise the money from small donations and must spend all of their time fundraising instead of thinking about reform bills that would actually solve problems. Real campaign reform would be : abolishing the Federal Elections Commission and permitting American citizens (not corporations, labor unions, or foreign citizens) to give any amount of money to the candidate of their choice. THe only requirement would be disclosure within 30 days of the donation if it exceeds one thousand dollars from any one person in any calander year. Expenditures need not be kept track of unless they were to be given to another candidate for office.

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