

New survey on Americans' views on the influence of campaign donations on political system

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A majority of Americans believe that money influences decisions made by elected officials and favor full disclosure of the source of campaign donations, according to a new national survey conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Despite their concerns, the survey reveals that Americans favor keeping the current system of campaign funding in which candidates raise money through donations.

The AP-NORC survey explores the views of voting-age Americans on an array of factors that shape current day political campaigns, ranging from the limits on campaign contributions to support for [public](#) financing of campaigns to the connection between money and freedom of speech.

"With over half a billion dollars spent on the 2016 presidential election so far, the public is concerned about the influence of money on the political system," said Trevor Tompson, director of The AP-NORC Center. "However there is no consensus on how the system can be fixed."

Key findings from the survey include:

- More than 4 in 5 Americans—Republicans and Democrats alike—say campaign donations impact the decisions made by

elected officials, and half of them say the impact is large.

- Regardless of party identification, more than three-quarters of the public approve of compelling the disclosure of the sources of campaign contributions to Super PACs, and 60 percent say that revealing contributors to all groups would be effective in reducing the influence of money in politics.
- At least half of the public says several measures would be effective in reducing the role of money in politics, including limiting the spending of outside groups, political parties, and the candidates themselves.
- Only about one-quarter of the public, including about one-third of Democrats, favor public financing of presidential campaigns.
- Republicans and Democrats are divided on the idea that political [money](#) is a form of speech protected by the First Amendment, with 61 percent of Republicans agreeing that campaign contributions are free speech while 53 percent of Democrats disagree.

The [survey](#) was done against a background of significant changes in recent years in campaign finance rules. In 2010, the Supreme Court's Citizens United decision eliminated any cap on independent campaign spending by corporations and unions. In 2014, the Supreme Court struck down the decades-old limit on the total amount any individual can donate to federal candidates in a two-year cycle.

Provided by University of Chicago

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