



# The Phyllis Schlafly Report

VOL. 20, NO. 1, SECTION 1

BOX 618, ALTON, ILLINOIS 62002

AUGUST, 1986

## PACs Protect Personal Political Participation

The liberals do not like PACs (Political Action Committees). That's because more Americans contribute through PACs toward the election of conservative candidates than liberal candidates.

So the liberal busybodies have devised a three-point plan to outmaneuver democracy in order to advantage their candidates. (1) Get their liberal friends in the media to publish endless "news" stories, features, interviews with prominent persons, and editorials complaining about the large amounts of money donated through PACs. This is designed to have the subliminal effect of convincing people that PACs are something evil.

(2) Pass legislation severely restricting the amounts of money that PACs and political candidates may receive and spend. Label this legislation a "reform" or a "clean campaign" bill and hope that this semantic trick will expedite passage. The current anti-PAC bill is sponsored by Senator David L. Boren (D-OK); its many new restrictions would cut in half the amount of PAC donations made in 1984.

(3) Bring about taxpayer financing of elections to replace voluntary financing of elections through PACs. In other words, make the taxpayers pay for what the PACs are paying for now.

It's quite an exercise in campaign chicanery to try to force citizens to finance the political campaigns of candidates they don't like, while prohibiting citizens from making voluntary contributions to the political campaigns of candidates they do like. In the peculiar inverted ideology of the liberals, it is bad for American citizens to spend \$100 million of their own money on candidates of their own choice, but it would be good for the Federal Government to tax you and spend a similar amount of your money to elect candidates most of whom are not of your choice.

It's quite a demonstration of the liberal dialectic to try to restrict First Amendment rights for political speech, while at the same time the entire liberal apparatus is working overtime to try to extend First Amendment rights for pornographic speech. One gets the feeling that, if PACs were promoting pornography instead of personal political views, the liberals might be supporting PACs.

In any event, it is vastly more important to the maintenance of our freedom to protect political than pornographic speech and activity. The First Amendment was written to protect political speech in order to retain our individual right to elect candidates and choose policies in a free society. PACs are simply one manifestation of your personal First Amendment right to express your political beliefs and to participate in the political process.

### PACs Are Part of the Process

What are PACs? PACs are campaign committees set up by like-minded individuals to donate money to the candidates of their choice. They are the best way for the average citizen to participate in the process of self-government because they enable each of us to "put our money where our mouth is." There is nothing wrong with American citizens organizing and pooling their funds to make their legislative and political choices better known and more effective. That's what self-government is all about.

Those who want to restrict PACs complain that campaigning now costs too much. Sure, it costs more than it used to, but so does everything else. A candidate's ability to raise funds is a clear indication of his appeal to the voters. If he can't raise enough money to mount a campaign, it means that not enough voters care enough about his candidacy to help him get elected.

Ponder a moment on the fact that there is NO limit to the value of contributions that can be made to political candidates by the big corporations which operate newspapers and magazines. They can effectively contribute an unlimited amount to the candidates of their choice by publishing favorable news stories and features, as well as editorials, about candidates of their choice, along with negative items (or the silent treatment) about candidates they oppose.

Newspapers can even accept the paid advertisements of candidates they want to help, and refuse to print the paid advertisements of candidates they want to defeat. That's called "freedom of the press," and there are no limits on it. The dollar value of this type of

contribution is vast and there is no way to measure it.

PACs enable the individual American, who doesn't own a newspaper or magazine, television or radio station, to participate effectively in the political process. Since the media enjoy such enormous power to support the candidates of their choice, it comes with exceedingly poor grace for any newspapers to try to restrict private individuals from making their voluntary contributions to the candidates of their choice.

Instead of editorializing against the rights of American voters to exercise their full First Amendment rights to contribute to political candidates, it would be more helpful to the political process if newspapers would publish the list of all those who contribute \$1,000 or more to each candidate in the newspaper's Congressional district. Full disclosure, not limitation, is the best remedy for potential abuses.

The first PAC was formed in 1943 by the CIO. For three decades, the unions had a practical monopoly on PACs; unions made huge political contributions to candidates who voted for union-backed legislation.

When the majority of PAC money came from unions, we didn't hear any propaganda from the press and self-righteous liberal lobbies about how terrible PACs are. It's only since conservatives discovered that they, too, can have PACs that the liberals are upset.

The proliferation of PACs in the last ten years is the direct result of the Watergate "reform" laws. Funny thing, though, the 1974 election laws didn't have anything to do with the abuses of Watergate or the prosecutions that followed it.

The Federal Election Laws were passed in a euphoric effort to eliminate "corruption." Corruption may be important in the political games played at the local level in some parts of the country, but it was not the issue in Watergate. It is the least of the problems we have with politics in the Federal Government.

When the laws about political contributions, limitations, and disclosure were spelled out, then corporations, associations, and organizations suddenly discovered that they, too, could be financially active in politics.

Today, union PACs are contributing more than ever, but it is only one-fourth of the PAC money that flows into Congress, instead of 90 percent. The anti-PAC argument really is: if the majority of PAC money is conservative rather than liberal, then PACs must be bad.

### Why Liberals Hate PACs

The real explanation for liberal antagonism to PACs was inadvertently revealed by Irvin Ross in the July 1983 *Reader's Digest* in the course of an impassioned plea for taxpayer financing of Congressional elections. He admitted that the liberals outsmarted themselves in their election "reform" legislation passed after Watergate.

What Ross called a "surprising development" was that conservatives began to use the 1974 law and set up dozens of PACs. From the 1940s to 1974, PACs were operated almost exclusively by labor unions, but Ross said that, by the time of his article, labor unions

operated only 380 out of 3,371 PACs.

Ross concluded: "Clearly, we need to reform campaign financing" and control "the PAC problem" by substituting taxpayer financing. The only thing "clear" from Ross' argument is that he wants to substitute a liberal/federal control mechanism in elections instead of allowing the American people voluntarily to spend their own money as they choose.

It might sound like a bit of flamboyant rhetoric to say that voluntary PACs versus taxpayer financing of Congressional candidates is an issue of freedom versus socialism, but that is substantially what a prominent liberal, Senator Eugene McCarthy, has said. He admitted that there is "a kind of socialist ideology that runs through a lot of the liberal movement." He said that many liberals think, "Why don't we have government control the political process?"

McCarthy, an outspoken defender of our full First Amendment rights to make political contributions, has given us some good advice about his liberal friends. He said, "When liberals turn reformers, beware. Dr. Guillotine's invention was welcomed by the reformers of the French Revolution. It was new, scientific, fast, clean, certain, and its side effects were minimal."

McCarthy added, "When liberals become reformers, you're in deep trouble -- like the second stage of the French Revolution." He compares liberal reformers to the Robespierre liberals who supported the guillotine because it was more humane than the older method of executions by axe; the guillotine also diffused responsibility since gravity rather than a human hand delivered the fatal blow.

The anti-PAC liberal reformers are trying to persuade the taxpayers to assume the responsibility for electing candidates to Congress so you will never know whom to blame when you don't like how the money is spent. The best way to keep Congressional elections "clean" is to keep them as far away as possible from government control and taxpayer financing.

### Advocacy Journalism Against PACs

The lobby called Common Cause is leading the pack against PACs. Common Cause wants to restrict your right to help elect candidates so that Common Cause, through its big mailing list, can exert more influence over the Congressmen who are elected.

A steady drumbeat of anti-PAC newspaper articles and editorials always accelerates in the weeks before an anti-PAC bill is due to come up in the Congress. More than 150 newspaper editorials in favor of restricting PACs have appeared recently in the expectation that the Boren anti-PAC bill will soon be voted on. The *New York Times* professes indignation that there are now 4,000 PACs raising campaign contributions and pouring \$100 million a year into Congressional campaigns.

So what! All that money was voluntary. Nobody forced anybody to contribute to PACs or to accept money from a PAC. Americans spend only \$1 on PACs for every \$75 they spend on tobacco, and only \$1 on PACs for every \$231 they spend on alcohol.

The \$100 million spent voluntarily on PACs is much less than the \$144 million the taxpayers were forced to spend to pay for mass mailings by Senators and Congressmen to their constituents, most of which are directly related to getting themselves reelected.

Most editorials on PACs start from the assumption that "everybody wants to cut down the enormous cost of political campaigns." That's false. Some of us think it's healthy that \$100 million was voluntarily spent by American citizens as their investment in the public officials and public policies that the voters want. This is citizen participation in the process of self-government and the exercise of our First Amendment rights of free speech and assembly.

Those who want to restrict PACs argue that, a decade ago, contributions under \$100 made up nearly half of all the money given in Congressional races, and now it's only 19%, so that means "ordinary voters are squeezed out by the fat PACs." These figures don't mean that at all. They mean that voters who contribute less than \$100 have found a way to pool their resources with other less-than-\$100 contributors in order to let their voice be heard at the national level.

PACs cannot be blamed for inventing "special-interest groups." They always existed. In the pre-PAC era, their money was distributed in brown paper bags, or shoe boxes, or unmarked envelopes. By contrast, with PACs, we have full disclosure of all contributions, and extremely low limitations on contributions (\$5,000 to any federal candidate in a single election). That's hardly enough to buy a 30-second TV spot.

Some of the anti-PAC rhetoric comes from the two major political parties because the average candidate now gets about three times as much money from PACs as from a political party. PACs have risen in influence as the parties diminished in their effectiveness in dealing with the issues that voters really care about.

Let's hear no more from those who complain that other Americans are giving their own hard-earned money to PACs. How could there be a more constructive way to spend money than to try to elect candidates who will give us the kind of government we want?

### **Big Money Doesn't Buy Elections**

The liberals are forever complaining that the "big money" spent by conservatives through PACs exercises undue influence on elected officials. However, the election of the Republican Senate in 1980 proves that other factors -- issues, personalities, or parties -- are usually more important than money.

Senator George McGovern spent \$3.2 million to hold on to his South Dakota seat, but James Abdnor was able to replace him by spending only \$1.8 million. Birch Bayh of Indiana spent \$2.7 million to try to stay in the Senate, but he lost out in November 1980 to Dan Quayle who spent \$2.5 million.

In Georgia, Herman Talmadge spent \$2.2 million in a valiant effort to remain the Senator from Georgia, but he was bested by Mack Mattingly who spent only \$0.5 million. In Florida, Democrat Bill Gunter spent

\$2.1 million, while the Republican winner Paula Hawkins spent only \$0.6 million.

Other races where Republican candidates won a Senate seat while spending less than Democratic opponents were Warren Rudman over John Durkin in New Hampshire, Robert Kasten over Gaylord Nelson in Wisconsin, and Frank Murkowski over Clark Gruening in Alaska.

Some 1980 Republican candidates did outspend their Democratic opponents: Charles Grassley, Jeremiah Denton, Steve Symms, and John East. But, when you add it all up, it is clear that Republicans were able to spend less and enjoy the results more. The total Republican spending on the twelve U.S. Senate seats that Republicans took from Democrats in 1980 amounted to \$14.7 million (including the \$722 thousand spent in independent expenditures by NCPAC -- National Political Action Committee). Democrats, on the other hand, spent a whopping \$19 million.

It is obvious that the twelve Republican challengers who defeated Democratic liberal Senators in 1980 had something going for them other than money. That "something" was being on the right side of issues and having a dedicated corps of campaign volunteers who worked effectively for their candidates.

In addition to the campaign expenditure figures reported to the Federal Election Commission, the Democratic incumbents had the benefit of immense, unreported Congressional office budgets for their political use. These incumbency perks include a professional staff, the franking privilege for free mailings to all constituents, tremendous free media, WATS telephone lines, and the headstart of a high name identification.

### **Single-Issue Voting**

It bothers the liberals that PACs are concerned with specific issues, so their media friends have orchestrated attacks on what they call the peril of "single-issue voters." So what's wrong with that? Voters and donors have every right to base their support of candidates on a single issue, or on a cluster of issues, or on a single party, or on any other reason of their choice.

There appear to be four categories into which the American electorate divides: single-candidate voters, single-party voters, single-issue voters, and non-voters. The media have labored hard to make the first two categories fashionable and the latter two categories unfashionable, perhaps even suspect.

The essence of democracy, however, is not only that each citizen can vote, but that he can vote for any candidate for the reason of his choice (there is no place on the ballot to write in your reason), and that he can even vote for "none of the above."

In George Wallace's heyday, the non-voters, who were badly disillusioned with the political process, proclaimed that "there's not a dime's worth of difference" between the two major parties. The non-voters thought that, no matter who was elected, after election they all joined the "tax and tax, spend and spend, elect and elect" club.

That era saw the rise of the single-issue voters, who were those all revved up by a single issue. They determine their support or nonsupport of each candidate based on his position on that issue. Among the single issues that have fired the emotions of those willing to work for or against candidates are the Equal Rights Amendment, abortion, gun control, tax limitation, and the Panama Canal.

The single-issue movement brought millions of non-voters into the political process -- an estimated two million in 1980 and another two million in 1984. For the first time in generations, individual voters began to realize their personal participation *does* make a difference, both in who is elected and in what policies are adopted after the election. The single-issue movement played an important part in restoring the confidence of the American people in our democratic process, as well as in the election and reelection of Ronald Reagan.

Several major conservative groups in 1980 served notice that support or opposition to the SALT II Treaty would be the single issue on which conservative money and volunteer help would be determined. One commentator belittled this tactic by labelling it "the 2-by-4 or mule-training school of educational psychology." That was a derogatory reference to the old story about how to train a mule: first of all you have to hit him with a 2-by-4 to get his attention.

So what's wrong with that? Those who honestly believe that SALT II will disable the United States in its ability to defend its freedom and independence against Soviet expansionism and nuclear blackmail *should* put their money and volunteer work where their mouth is and translate their strong beliefs into action at the polls.

The Panama Canal Treaties provide a good object lesson in single-issue voting. Of the 15 Senators who ran for reelection after voting *for* the Panama Treaties, 8 were defeated and only 7 were reelected. Of the 9 Senators who voted *against* the Panama Treaties and ran for reelection, all but one were successful.

Whether the epithet "single-issue" is applied to any group seems to depend on whether it is liberal or conservative. Only conservative groups are called "single-issue", whereas liberal groups which work for a single goal are said to have "legitimate concerns" and be working for the "common cause."

Senator George McGovern was glad to welcome the support of a strange collection of single-issue voters in his 1972 campaign for the Presidency, but then he complained that single-issue groups were a threat to his 1980 reelection to the Senate.

Those who try to put down the single-issue voters would leave the politicking to the single-candidate and single-party voters. There is no persuasive evidence that those voting blocs are any more socially or politically responsible than the single-issue variety of voters.

The single-party voters are those who would vote for a candidate wearing their party's label even if he is a yellow dog, in preference to any good guy on the opposition ticket. The rationale behind this, to the extent that there is any, is that it is more efficient to

hold the party accountable, rather than the individual officeholder. In any event, single-party voting blocs have been in a no-growth stalemate for years.

The single-candidate voters are those who usually say, "I vote for the man, not the party," or who piously proclaim that they are "independent" voters. In reality, their criterion for candidate selection is simply personality, rather than issues.

The single-candidate voters also include that large bloc of voters who belong to the "cult of incumbency": they support any candidate who is an incumbent against anyone who has the gall to challenge whoever is already in office.

Each of us can make our own choice as to which kind of voter we choose to be. On the record of the last 15 years, the single-issue voter has the most intellectual consistency, political savvy, and clout at the polls.

One of the last articles written by the late Congressman John M. Ashbrook of Ohio was called "Why Liberals Hate 'Single Issues.'" Known as the voice of conservatism in Congress, he said:

"On issue after issue, in every part of the country, movements are rising against the liberal establishment. From abortion to taxes, from bureaucratic regulations to busing, groups are spontaneously erupting from the grassroots, each representing a major and growing challenge to a different aspect of liberal policy being forced on the country by the Washington establishment.

"Liberals dismiss these groundswells as 'single-issue movements.' But what really disturbs the powers that be is that they know they are not.

"The single-issue movement is exactly that — a single movement — and the issue common to all the groups is a revolt against what liberals have done to their country. Our servants have made their masters servants in their own homes and the masters have arisen. It isn't the word 'single' that bothers the liberals although that is their usual lament. It is really the other word — issue! Their issues have wrought disaster. Their issues are dead. That we are going to win frightens them. The new wave of reform in America scares them to death and oh, how they hate our issues, every single one of them."

---

Phyllis Schlafly is the author of one of the ten all-time best-selling books of the conservative movement, *A Choice Not An Echo*, which sold three million copies in 1964. She is a lifetime student of political strategy and of politics at every level. She was a Delegate or Alternate to six Republican National Conventions: 1956, 1960, 1964, 1968, 1980, and 1984, and the Illinois member of the Republican Platform Committee at the 1984 Convention. President Reagan appointed her a member of the Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution.

## The Phyllis Schlafly Report

Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002  
ISSN0556-0152

Published monthly by The Eagle Trust Fund, Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002.

Second Class Postage Paid at Alton, Illinois.

Subscription Price: \$10 per year. Extra copies available: 50 cents each; 4 copies \$1; 30 copies \$5; 100 copies \$10.