Flash!

A NEWSLETTER FROM **MAPLight.org**

IN THIS ISSUE

OUR ORGANIZATION

WELCOME SUSANNAH!
MAPLight.org welcomes Susannah Nadler, our new Research Coordinator. Susannah's previous experience includes teaching English and American Government to middle school students.

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From The Executive Director

Too often we learn about what was *really* going on in Congress after it is too late to do anything about it. Now, with MAPLight.org's "real-time" updates, our site displays key money and vote information for Congress within 45 minutes of every vote.

We had our first "trial run" of the system this January. One hour after Congress voted on a bill to improve mining safety, we contacted a few key journalists with an instant analysis. Mining and manufacturing unions, who supported this bill, gave an average of nine times more to legislators who voted Yes, compared to legislators who voted No. Opponents—such as mining companies—gave an average of three times more to legislators who voted No on this bill, compared to legislators who voted Yes. The Washington Post printed these facts, and cited us, in their column "In the Loop on K Street."

This new, powerful real-time update system is the product of months of work from our research and technical teams—including our top-notch new research coordinator, Susannah Nadler. We are hiring a media relations manager, to help get our money and politics facts in the news in this political-crazed election-year. And we deeply appreciate your support. Our members and Light Keepers (monthly donors) build our financial stability and introduce MAPLight.org to an ever-wider audience.

I am especially pleased to welcome Lawrence Lessig to our Board of Directors. Professor Lessig helped change how people think about copyright in the Internet age. We are thrilled that he will be helping MAPLight.org use the power of the Internet to shine a light on our broken system of money-dominated politics.

Thank you for getting us to this point. I am tremendously excited about the year ahead.

Dan Newman

LAWRENCE LESSIG JOINS MAPLIGHT.ORG BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Professor Lessig, known for his groundbreaking work in the fields of intellectual property and the law of cyberspace, decided last June to shift the focus of his scholarship and activism to the problem of corruption.

"MAPLight.org's correlations between money and votes elegantly illustrate how special interest campaign money pervades and weakens our democracy," said Lessig. "The site's unprecedented findings helped convince me that there was more that could be done to fight corruption, and how this issue is at the root of so many of our country's problems."

Lessig is a Professor of Law at Stanford Law School and founder of the school's Center for Internet and Society. He is also CEO and founder of Creative Commons, a nonprofit organization that defines the spectrum of possibilities between full copyright and the public domain. Creative Commons licenses help content creators keep copyright while inviting certain uses of the creators' works.

Lawrence Lessig joins the MAPLight.org Board of Directors

Professor Lessig has won numerous awards, including the Free Software Foundation's Freedom Award, and was named one of Scientific American's Top 50 Visionaries, for arguing "against interpretations of copyright that could stifle innovation and discourse online."
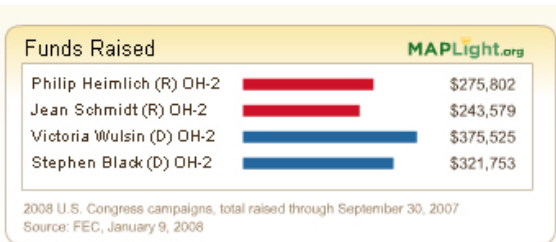
NEW "REAL TIME" INFO ON CONGRESS

We start 2008 with our data as close to "real time" as possible, and we have added several new features that make our data more useful and accessible to you.

MAPLight.org now provides up-to-the-minute money and politics information on legislation. "We have streamlined our research process to provide 'real-time' information about the most interesting bills of the moment in Congress," explains Sean Tanner, Research Manager at MAPLight.org. "We monitor debates on the House and Senate floor so that you can get money/votes analyses from MAPLight.org within 45 minutes of a vote being reported."

Other features make the timely data even more useful. You can use our new pull-down menu option to view money/vote data for a single interest group that you care about. Pull-down menus make it easier to filter out all the other interest groups that took a position on the bill, so you can find the exact money and politics data you want.

Another new feature is the "In the News" tab, which provides the context you sometimes need to understand what a bill is really about. For instance, the Prescription Drug User Fee Amendments of 2007 maintains the ban on purchasing imported pharmaceuticals (*see MAPFact*). Our "In the News" tab links to articles that explain how an amendment by Senator Cochran assured that outcome.

Funds Raised		MAPLight.org
Philip Heimlich (R) OH-2	▬▬▬▬	$275,802
Jean Schmidt (R) OH-2	▬▬▬	$243,579
Victoria Wulsin (D) OH-2	▬▬▬▬▬	$375,525
Stephen Black (D) OH-2	▬▬▬▬	$321,753

2008 U.S. Congress campaigns, total raised through September 30, 2007
Source: FEC, January 9, 2008

You can customize this widget to show any combination of the 1500 Congressional candidates.

The "In the News" tab provides links to newspaper articles, research reports, blog postings, and other information about this bill. You can submit links to relevant information about legislation you know about, making MAPLight.org a continuously improving resource for understanding what a bill is really about.

Yet another recent tool is our new widget, the Congressional Money Race Widget. It allows you to track fundraising for Congressional races on your own blogs, social media sites and personal Web sites. You can choose from over 1500 Congressional candidates and customize widgets to show any combination, from the candidates in a single Congressional race to all the candidates running in a state. As with our Presidential Money Race Widget, the colors are fully customizable to match your favorite Web site theme.

All of these features make MAPLight.org the best resource for understanding money and votes in Congress! More great tools are in the pipeline, and we hope that you will share your ideas for making MAPLight.org even more useful to you.

INTERN SPOTLIGHT
HARSHAL MEHDI

Harshal Mehdi was a research intern at MAPLight.org for seven months. His time at MAPLight.org helped him better understand the relationship between money and politics. "It's easy to have stereotypes about political parties and politics in general," he said, "and maybe some of them are true, but my understanding of political trends changed rapidly after I began learning the details of money in politics."
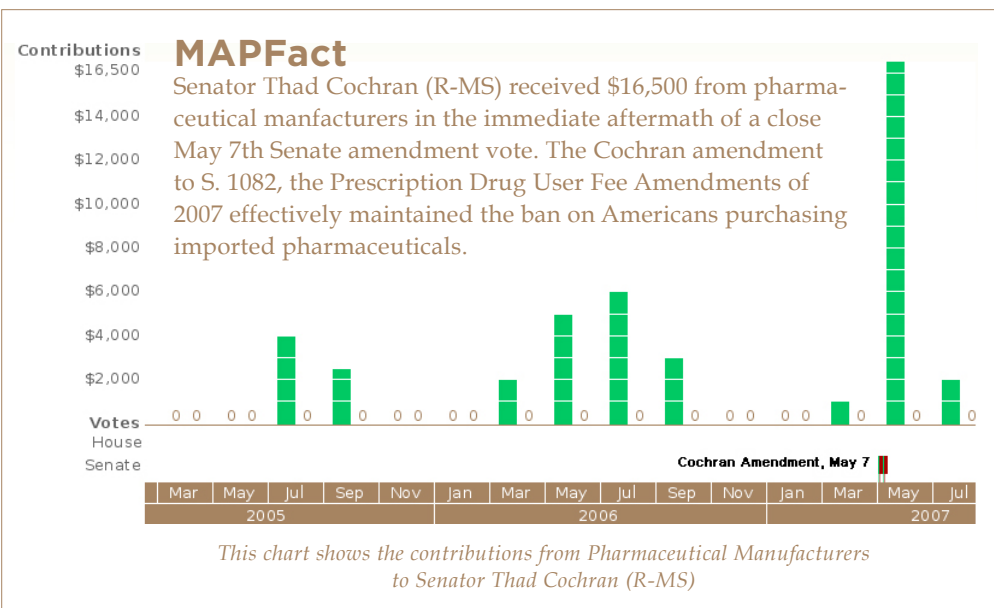
His advice to incoming interns is to keep their eye on the big picture. "Don't get bogged down in the little things you research," he said. "I think we tend to look at small facts that we're investigating, and in the process we lose sight of the larger trends in front of our eyes." His other advice? "Make sure you have a good idea of what kind of music you want to listen to in the office on Fridays, so that when it's your turn to choose, you're ready."

In December Harshal left to pursue his medical career at St. George's University School of Medicine.
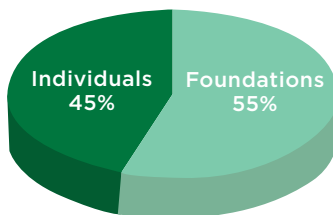
Dan accepting the World Summit Award for e.Goverment at the award ceremony in Venice last November.

MAPFact

Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS) received $16,500 from pharmaceutical manfacturers in the immediate aftermath of a close May 7th Senate amendment vote. The Cochran amendment to S. 1082, the Prescription Drug User Fee Amendments of 2007 effectively maintained the ban on Americans purchasing imported pharmaceuticals.

Contributions: $16,500 / $14,000 / $12,000 / $10,000 / $8,000 / $6,000 / $4,000 / $2,000

Votes: House / Senate

Cochran Amendment, May 7

| Mar | May | Jul | Sep | Nov | Jan | Mar | May | Jul | Sep | Nov | Jan | Mar | May | Jul |
| 2005 | | | | | 2006 | | | | | | 2007 | | | |

This chart shows the contributions from Pharmaceutical Manufacturers to Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS)

LIGHT KEEPERS
Thank You!

Many of you just joined MAPLight.org and our new Light Keepers monthly giving program. Your contribution is critical to our work of government transparency, accountability and reform.

Light Keepers is a secure, convenient and efficient way for you to support MAPLight.org. With this automatic monthly giving program, your contribution goes further because we are able to reduce administrative costs. At the same time, the consistent support of monthly donors affords us the security to plan ahead, ensuring that we build on our momentum.

The more MAPLight.org does to expose the connection between money and politics, the more we promote an accountable and responsive government. You can join the Light Keepers at www.maplight.org/donate and click on the Light Keepers tab.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

MAPLight.org would never have gotten this far without the support of individuals who recognize the fundamental problem of money's influence on politics. You can help us further by taking our "Tell us what you think" survey. There is a link to it on every page of the website.

You can also join us by contributing at **www.maplight.org/donate**

Individuals 45%   Foundations 55%

Total Contributions to Date
March 2005 – December 2007
$826,000

MAPLight.org
MONEY AND POLITICS: ILLUMINATING THE CONNECTION