

Flash!

A NEWSLETTER FROM **MAPLight.org**

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You're Invited!

Join us for a Supporters-Only Briefing

MAPLight.org has big plans for the year ahead, and we'd like to give you a preview of our upcoming new projects and transparency tools. Join us for a special conference call/webinar on Wednesday, December 3rd, 3:00 PST, 6:00 EST.

To sign up visit www.maplight.org/briefing

From the Executive Director

It's been an amazing political year – with a new President-elect – and the opportunity for reforming our broken money and politics system is upon us. MAPLight.org is playing a key role in building momentum for that reform – at the local, state and national levels.

We begin our expansion to state legislatures in the year ahead with MAPLight.org sites planned for Iowa, Wisconsin and New York State. All three states are poised to take up money and politics reform.

In addition to state expansion, we will launch Los Angeles MAPLight.org next spring in time for the city's election for mayor and city council. Our data will give L.A. voters an unprecedented view into the ties between money and politics in the second-largest city in the country.

Just before the national election, we launched a national research report, 'Remote Control.' This comprehensive report, which included "money maps" for every member of Congress, was featured on CNN, the national radio show Marketplace and more than 50 other media outlets.

With your help, MAPLight.org will continue to shine a spotlight on our broken political system. Let's not let this historical moment slip by without making the systemic change our country needs.

Thank you for your support.



'REMOTE CONTROL' REPORT RECEIVES COVERAGE ON NATIONAL TV

One week prior to our historic national election, MAPLight.org launched a research report entitled, "Remote Control: U.S. House members raise 79% of campaign funds from outside their districts."

Our research team, led by Research Director Emily Calhoun, found that 79% of campaign contributions to members of the House of Representatives came from outside their districts. Almost all members of the House (97%) received the majority of their campaign contributions from outside their districts, and 91 members of the House received 90% or more of their campaign contributions from outside their districts.

Dan explained it this way: "To win an election, a House candidate has to raise an average of \$1.3 million in campaign funds—that's \$2,500 every working day for an entire two-year term. With such a herculean fundraising effort required, what time and attention do Representatives have left to address the interests of the voters they represent?"

MAPLight.org researchers also found that, of the top 20 contributing Zip codes, 15 are from Washington, DC and its surrounding areas.

More than 50 media outlets covered our findings, including prime time coverage on the Lou Dobbs show on CNN and the national public radio show Marketplace. Our report also inspired a CNN.com online poll.

CNN.com

★ **Tonight's Poll**

Did you know that the majority of our Congressmen in Washington raise more than half the funds needed for re-election from outside their districts?

Yes 38% 3041
No 62% 4881
Total Votes: 7922

In the Marketplace radio story by reporter Steve Henn, Representative John Tanner (D-TN) defends raising 99% of funds from outside his district, saying, "In this town you have to raise money to participate in the system. I don't like the system, but that is the system that we deal with."



When elected officials like Rep. Tanner try to disassociate themselves from our broken money and politics system, it paves the way for reform.

Other news outlets covering 'Remote Control' included: U.S. News and World Report, Baltimore Sun, Orlando Sentinel, Harford Courant, Sacramento Bee, Washington Times, Wisconsin Public Radio, Illinois Radio Network, WAMU-DC Public Radio, KGO (ABC) Radio San Francisco, KOGO Talk Radio San Diego, KRGV - TV (ABC) Texas, KDIO- TV (ABC) Minnesota, WTAX - Talk Radio Springfield, IL, WBT Talk Radio Charlotte, NC, Harpers Magazine, Los Angeles Times, Politico and many other outlets.

SHINING A LIGHT ON THE WALL STREET BAILOUT

On September 29, the morning of the first House bailout vote, Dan, MAPLight.org's executive director, walked into the office and called everyone together for a meeting. "As you know," he said, "the House bailout vote is today. This is what our website was designed for. This is what we've trained to do. Let's roll up our sleeves and ready ourselves to report on the outcome."

MAPLight.org's research and communications departments sprang into action. Shortly after the vote, at 4:28 PDT, MAPLight.org issued a press release revealing that House members who voted 'Yes' on the \$700 billion financial system bailout bill received, on average, 54% more money from banks and securities firms than those voting 'No.'

In another significant finding, MAPLight.org's research team revealed that House Democrats voting Yes received an average of \$212,700 each, about twice as much as was received by Democrats voting No (\$107,993).

In the press release Dan spoke about the implications of MAPLight.org's findings: "Profit-driven companies wouldn't be making campaign contributions if it didn't buy them influence or access. This research reveals that votes in Congress align with the river of money that flows through our political system."

Our analysis was cited on more than 150 blogs and websites and included in 30 print, radio and television news stories, including a story in the Wall Street Journal Online. Here is a sampling of the coverage:



NEW GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY TOOLS

We are proud to introduce you to two new MAPLight.org transparency tools. The first is our Comments Section, an online collaborative tool that allows journalists, citizens and nonprofit groups to exchange information and ideas and engage in meaningful debate. The second is a Money and Votes Widget.

COMMENTS SECTION

We invite you to share your cognitive surplus and post a comment on our newly-launched 'Comments Section.'

The Comments Section works like a blog in the sense that you can read others' opinions and post your own. But what sets MAPLight.org's Comments Section apart is that it's integrated into an already existing architecture of government transparency tools.

Comments can be posted to every bill and legislator in Congress. The Comment Section has a unique RSS feed so you can stay up-to-date on the latest comments with your RSS reader. This new online collaborative tool provides citizens, nonprofit groups and journalists with a comprehensive look at all bills and legislators in Congress.

Comments 

Subscribe to the RSS feed to receive all comments on this topic.

Click here to post your own comment about H.R. 275.

[New Comment](#) | [Search Comments](#)

Global Online Freedom Act Passes House Committee by Pamela Heisey, Oct 8, 2008 (11:46pm)

Posted with permission from Rebecca MacKinnon.

Bottom line, this proposed legislation positions the U.S. government as arbiter and judge of how companies protect human rights. What kind of joke is that.

As if the U.S. didn't have problems with a secret spying program. As if there weren't serious concerns about the way in which parts of the U.S. government lean on telecoms companies to give them all kinds of data about U.S. citizens' private communications, doing it so secretly that they're not accountable to anybody. Don't forget Americans have lawsuits in progress against companies for giving up their users' rights a bit too readily for many Americans' comfort. So why exactly should non-Americans be expected to want to use a U.S. Internet or telecoms service which is required to consult with the DOJ about their cases - yes, the same U.S. government department much maligned by many Americans, not to mention globally, for being a bit - shall we say - too open-minded about torture? Passage of such a law would seem to hand over one rather awesome marketing advantage to non-American competitors, in addition to being incredibly arrogant and hypocritical.

We need a global set of principles that assumes companies need to be on guard against abuses against their users' rights by any government in any market. And I mean any.

<http://rconversation.blogs.com/rconversation/2007/10/global-online-f.html>

Reply to this comment [Tags] [Spam]

Read commentary written by others to gain insights about the Global Online Freedom Act.

With access to multiple viewpoints, MAPLight.org's community can be better informed to make decisions about elected officials and bills in Congress.

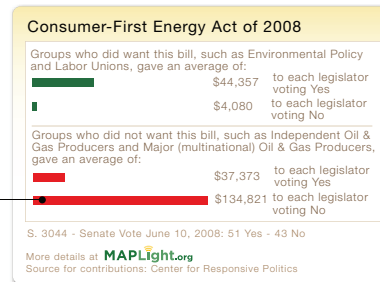
MONEY AND VOTES WIDGET

Track important legislation on your blog or website with MAPLight.org's Money and Votes Widget

The Money and Votes Widget reveals money and vote correlations for every bill in Congress. The Widget below shows that money and votes were in alignment for the vote on the Consumer-First Energy Act of 2008. It reveals that oil producers gave an average of \$134,821 to each of the 43 senators voting 'No' and an average of \$37,373 to each of the 51 senators voting Yes. The bill subsequently failed to pass.

U.S. CONGRESS: MONEY AND VOTES WIDGET

Big Oil Gave \$135,000 per Senator, Energy Bill Died.



URL: <http://www.maplight.org/map/us/bill/763>

Embed: `<object classid="clsid:d27cde6e-ae6d-11cf-96b8-4445535" ...>`

Easy to Post to Your Blog

Widgets are customizable and easy to post to a blog or website. Call us if you need a technical assist.

FUNDRAISING CORNER: State Expansion

Since the launch of our U.S. Congress site in March 2007, MAPLight.org has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in building the best tools available for analyzing and parsing money and politics data. From the start, our vision was to bring these government transparency tools to every state legislature and to hundreds of cities and towns.

In 2009 we will launch MAPLight.org for the state of Iowa, to illuminate money, votes and bills for that state. We will also re-launch our prototype California site with data up to the present-day. Going for-

ward, the California and Iowa sites will be updated daily, in real-time. With support from the JEHT Foundation we will further expand the site to include Wisconsin and New York State. The John Randolph Haynes and Dora Haynes Foundation is underwriting our 2009 launch of MAPLight.org Los Angeles, a groundbreaking model for showing the connection between money and votes in cities.

We are currently raising the \$2.4 million needed to provide our groundbreaking government transparency tools for the next dozen state legislatures, covering 63% of the U.S. population. While that might sound like a lot of money, a good percentage of that price tag is start-up costs. After start-up,

the average state will cost less than \$60,000 per year to operate. Your contribution now will help us build the base of support to sustain MAPLight.org. You can also help us by spreading the word to people you know across the country.

MAPLight.org has built the tools to track money's influence on legislators at the local, state and federal levels. Help us grow to meet the need for transparency, accountability and reform by making monthly contributions through our Light Keepers monthly giving program.

Contact Andrew at 510-868-0894 or andrew@maplight.org, or visit www.maplight.org/light_keepers.

DONOR PROFILE: AN INTERVIEW WITH GAIL KAISER



Gail Kaiser is a Bay Area marketing and project management consultant and mother of two. She has a background in the high tech industry and degrees in both business and economics.

Why MAPLight.org – tell us how this organization came into your life?

My son had cancer. We were lucky, we caught it early. We had good insurance and I was able to leave work to take care of him. But the experience got me looking at the current healthcare system in this country. I know that despite the billions of dollars our country spends on health insurance, we waste billions on overhead and leave too many kids and young adults untreated or bankrupt if they get seriously sick.

“If special-interest campaign money didn’t distort the conversation on healthcare in the U.S., I don’t think we would spend our healthcare dollars so inefficiently and unfairly.”

If special-interest campaign money didn’t distort the conversation on healthcare in the U.S., I don’t think we would spend our healthcare dollars so inefficiently and unfairly.

A couple of years ago there was a proposition for campaign finance reform in California. I got a mailing from the California Nurses Association saying that

“Maybe if people were aware of colluding interests and how they impact legislation, it would help individuals hold their legislators accountable.”

with our current legislative system, there was no way politically we would ever get universal healthcare. That got me involved in their campaign.

The proposition did poorly. Then I got a note about MAPLight.org and I thought, “Ha! Maybe if people were aware of colluding interests and how they impact legislation, it would help individuals hold their legislators accountable.”

I was also profoundly struck by how Tom Delay had to give up his House seat. Here was a powerful Representative who had been very successful in bringing money into his district, but he had to resign because his constituents were shocked by how much money he got from Indian Gambling interests. I mean, these were constituents who were very happy with their legislator, but they were not going to go for a corrupt guy. That was very striking to see – that universal sense of what’s right.

And then, finally, my own contact with legislators makes me feel that they are smart and would probably prefer to follow the interests of their constituents, their own research and their own beliefs. And without special interests they would probably be better able to find common ground with each other and make better legislation.

They are not sleazy hacks, but they sometimes act that way because they’re forced to spend so much time raising money and dealing with the special interests. That’s the system they are in.

In this time with so many needs and issues, what makes MAPLight.org’s work a priority for you?

I tend to look at things and ask, “how are they set up to encourage or discourage behavior? What are the incentives or disincentives inherent in a system, whether it’s for keeping the house tidy or looking at why people behave the way they do?” I think the information MAPLight.org provides shows how our money and politics system creates the wrong incentives for our legislators. People need to look more at that system.

“People don’t understand how much our current system of private campaign financing actually costs us. We wouldn’t be in this economic crisis if the financial industry hadn’t been able to buy so much consideration of their point of view and avoid supervision.”

If there was one thing you would change in our political system, what would it be?

Complete public financing for campaigns.

People don’t understand how much our current system of private campaign financing actually costs us. We wouldn’t be in this economic crisis if the financial industry hadn’t been able to buy so much consideration of their point of view and avoid supervision. We’re paying in plenty of other ways as well: special tax loopholes, uncompetitive bids, unnecessary spending, undercharged or uncollected fees, shoddy services, defective products, overpriced government services, etc. MAPLight.org helps show that there is a lot of money being spent on legislators, and those spenders are getting good value for their cash. MAPLight.org can really raise the awareness of this.

INNOVATIONS IN JOURNALISM AWARD

MAPLight.org was honored to receive an Honorable Mention in the 2008 Knight-Batten Awards for Innovations in Journalism. The awards spotlight information providers who create opportunities to involve citizens in public

issues and supply entry points that invite their participation. The award judges said about MAPLight.org, “Every taxpayer should take a hard look at this site. Never before have citizens been able to so easily track the influences on their elected officials.”



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MAPLight.org
MONEY AND POLITICS: ILLUMINATING THE CONNECTION