

Flash!

ISSUE 10 / FALL 2010

A NEWSLETTER FROM **MAPLight.org**

From the Director: The River of Money

THE HUFFINGTON POST
THE INTERNET NEWSPAPER: NEWS BLOGS VIDEO COMMUNITY

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Rep. John Conyers
Congressman from Michigan
Posted March 6, 2009 1:46:57 PM (EST)

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**A Reply to
Larry Lessig**

Congress is not perfect, and I respect Professor Larry Lessig's vigorous effort to change and improve it. Furthermore, as readers of the Huffington Post well know, I am firmly committed to tough oversight and great transparency in government, and I don't mind taking it as well as dishing it out. But Professor Lessig's recent comments on the the scientific publishing issue and my sponsorship of a bill on the subject simply cross the line. I would hope we could debate these matters, including both the substantive policy issue as well as the process/campaign donation subject, without tossing around unjustified allegations. Just as Congress needs some changing, perhaps our discourse does as well.

To hear Professor Lessig tell it, I introduced a bill that is utterly without merit and entirely the product of shady special interest dealing. Without any evidence to support his contention (other than my receipt of what can only be described as modest contributions from publishers), he labels my motivations for

As news outlets report on voters' anger and frustration with lawmakers leading up to the election, Americans are likewise disgusted by the recent attempts of groups like banks and oil companies to secure favorable treatment at the public's expense. (For a few examples, see right.)

cont. on page 2

MAPLight.org Unveils New "Contributions" Search Tool

Our site's new contributions search feature offers an even higher-resolution look at campaign contributions given to legislators. The contributions search tool allows users to search for contributions by office, party, recipient, contributor, interest group, company, date range, election cycle, and location. Additionally, users can download the results from any search in order to conduct their own custom analyses, exponentially broadening the scope of possible money-politics research. Already the tool has proven to be an invaluable asset to our work, and has led to MAPLight.org receiving coverage from *CNN Money*, *Yahoo! Finance*, *The Hartford Courant*, *FavStocks*, and many other media outlets and blogs. MAPLight.org's contributions search tool uses data from the Center for Responsive Politics.

IN CASE YOU DIDN'T KNOW...

We make these reports publicly available on our blog, "Spotlight on Congress," as soon as they come out. So if you're interested in the most up-to-date information about what's really going on in Congress, make our site one of your favorites, and subscribe to our RSS feed! You can also follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

Shining a Light on our Nation's Democracy

In recent months, MAPLight.org has been hard at work churning out research revealing the influence of money on the legislative process as it's unfolding. A few highlights:

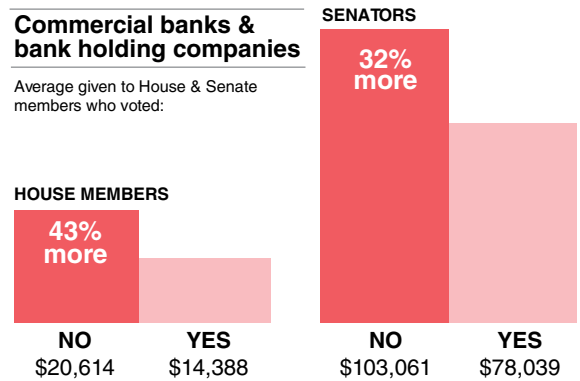
Financial Reform Bill

Summary: Overhaul of financial system that would end "too big to fail," end bailouts, protect consumers from abusive financial services practices, and establish greater transparency and accountability in the financial system.

Commercial banks & bank holding companies opposed this bill.

Commercial banks & bank holding companies

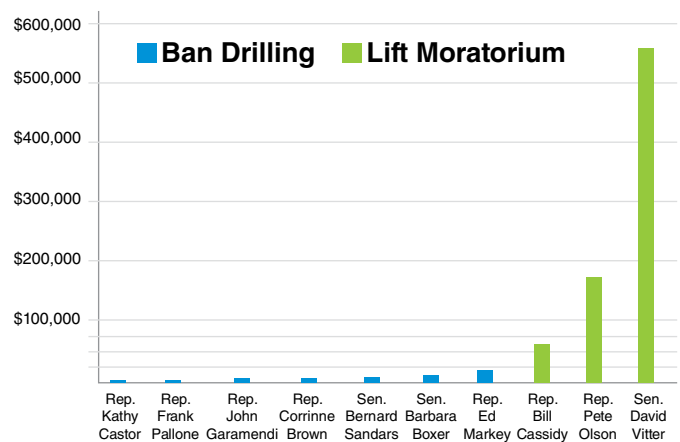
Average given to House & Senate members who voted:



Includes reported contributions made between June 4, 2004 and June 3, 2010 to congressional campaigns of Senators voting 'Yes' or 'No' in office on day of vote and between June 4, 2008 and June 3, 2010 to congressional campaigns of House members voting 'Yes' or 'No' in office on day of vote, from commercial banks & bank holding companies and their employees.

Oil Spill-Related Legislation

Summary: In the wake of the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, seven bills were introduced that would permanently ban offshore drilling. Three bills were introduced that would lift President Obama's moratorium on offshore drilling. At right is a graph showing the amount of contributions the sponsors of these different bills received from oil interests.



Lawmakers introducing bills that proposed to lift the moratorium received an average of \$264,579 each from oil interests during the current election cycle, 45 times more than lawmakers introducing bills that would permanently ban offshore drilling, who received an average of \$5,864 each. Includes reported contributions made between May 6, 2004 and May 5, 2010 to congressional campaigns of Senators and between May 6, 2008 and May 5, 2010 to congressional campaigns of House members, from Oil & Gas interest groups.

Network Neutrality

Summary: Some telecom companies favor the creation of a tiered system on the Internet whereby content would move at different speeds (depending on the tier). Such a development would be a breach of "net neutrality" (the notion that internet providers should treat all content equally). At right, see how much interest groups surrounding this issue have given to Congress since the 2006 election cycle.

Net Neutrality

(all content equal)
Consumer Federation of America: **\$5,950**
American Library Association: **\$4,400**

"Third Way"

(prohibits tiered system on broadband, but not on wireless)
Google & employees: **\$1,640,984**

Anti-Net Neutrality

(allows tiered system on both broadband and wireless)
AT&T & employees: **\$8,470,139**

MAPLight.org Releases Two Landmark Studies

Two recent MAPLight.org reports, *Remote Control* and *Investing in Influence*, offer a never-before-seen look at the flow of campaign cash to California state legislators. Drilling all the way down to contributors' street addresses, *Remote Control* reveals that a whopping 79 percent of contributions to California lawmakers come from outside of the districts where their constituents live.

Equally groundbreaking, *Investing in Influence* examines who's been opening their wallets for state lawmakers — that is, whether it's been mostly private citizens, companies, unions, advocacy groups, or political parties. (*Reader's Digest* version:

*cont. from page 1: **The River of Money***

In early 2009, the publishing industry briefly caught the spotlight. Congressman John Conyers introduced a bill that would have allowed government-funded medical research to be published exclusively in expensive for-profit journals, repealing the current requirement that publicly-funded research be available to the public for free.

Law professor (and MAPLight.org board member) Lawrence Lessig published a *Huffington Post* article citing MAPLight.org's finding that committee sponsors of the bill received, on average, twice as much money in campaign contributions from the publishing industry as did non-sponsors. His article criticized Rep. John Conyers' role as the bill's sponsor.

The article set off a wave of critical blog posts and phone calls to Rep. Conyers' office. Conyers' response on the *Huffington Post* four days later drew more than one hundred comments, most of them critical. The bill has not moved forward since.

This kind of timely, organized response requires not just data, but a comprehensive transparency platform — data, analysis tools, research expertise, and organizing

it has, for the most part, not been private citizens.)

Some key findings from the reports:

- 58% of lawmakers raised 80% or more of their campaign funds from out-of-district.
- No lawmaker raised the majority of his or her funds from in-district.
- 40% of contributions came from business groups.
- 16% came from labor unions.
- 17% came from private citizens.

Our reports earned us coverage from *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *The Sacramento Bee*, *KCBS radio*, *Tableau Public*, and many other media outlets and blogs.

Remote Control:

<http://bit.ly/bQW5LF>

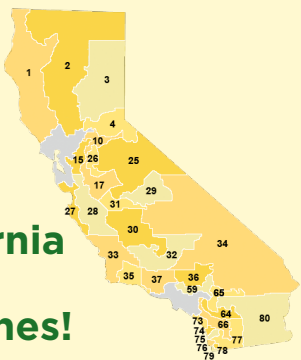
Investing in Influence:

<http://bit.ly/bnze6W>

— to connect monetary inputs (like campaign contributions) to outputs (like bill sponsorship, or legislative votes). MAPLight.org's money and vote correlations provide the missing link needed to connect the political energy around specific issues to the root problem of money's influence on politics.

Why isn't there the same depth of public anger and organized advocacy around special interest campaign contributions as there is around health care, taxes, education, the environment, and the whole host of other issues that ignite public controversy and activism? Perhaps it is because the tangible consequences of this system remain largely invisible. People care more about high medication prices and the fouling of the Gulf of Mexico than they do about the abstract issue of money and politics — even though the river of money that underlies our politics critically affects every aspect of our lives.

MAPLight.org aims to fix that. We act as a pivot point, connecting the issues that people care about to the money and politics system that underlies them. We break down the problem into specific instances — and it's the specific instances that get people angry, organized, and



New California Site Launches!

MAPLight.org is thrilled to announce the launch of our new California website, updated daily with the latest information about connections between money, votes, and interest groups in Sacramento. Built on the foundation of our prototype California site, the new site includes data on individual legislators' voting records on specific bills as well as \$189 million in campaign contributions to current members of the California Assembly and Senate over the past six years. The site also provides robust data on interest groups' support of and opposition to bills, and is searchable by interest group, bill, legislator, and contributions. An interactive map of California on the main page of the site takes you directly to individual legislators by district, where you can instantly see their total campaign contributions received, along with donors and amounts received by interest and organization. Our site uses campaign contribution data from the National Institute on Money in State Politics.

effective. We help crystallize formless discontent into action for change.

We're ready to bring this platform of data, tools, and research services to California (now), Wisconsin (next year), and eventually all fifty states. We're looking forward to helping journalists, activist groups, and citizens put our accountability platform to use improving state governments and citizens' lives.



OPINION

California legislators should have to wear NASCAR-style logos of bill sponsors

By Daniel Newman, published in the *San Jose Mercury News*, July 2010

Lawmakers in Sacramento say they represent the people. But voters have little to do with who really runs our state. Corporations and lobbyists pay to get lawmakers elected, then write the laws that govern us.

So it's time to stop pretending. Lawmakers should be required to wear logos, NASCAR-style, of the companies that sponsor their campaigns and write our laws.

A special report, "How our laws are really made," published recently in the *San Jose Mercury News*, highlighted a disturbing lawmaking practice that is commonplace in Sacramento. Reporter Karen de Sá found that 39 percent of bills in Sacramento were sponsored by outside interests. And these sponsored bills made up 60 percent of the legislation that was passed into law.

Passage of these special-interest laws is greased by millions in lobbying and campaign contributions by these same interests. MAPLight.org's research found that California legislators raised more than three out of every four dollars in campaign funds from outside of where their constituents live.

Our research also revealed that funding of California lawmakers' campaigns is dominated by business groups. Businesses and trade associations paid for 40 percent of California legislators' campaigns over the past three years. Unions paid for 16 percent, and private citizens paid for just 17 percent.

Lawmakers give away citizens' money, water and air to the corporations and lobbyists who pay for them to get elected. If the office-holders were required to wear NASCAR-style logos, this would become transparent.

As one example, the maroon and black logo of the Illinois-based Plumbing Manufacturers Institute should be among those sewn prominently to the suit of Sen. Ron Calderon.

Are your water faucets lead-free?



Thanks to a bill the Plumbing Manufacturers Institute sponsored, industry-friendly labs favorable to faucet manufacturers do the testing, rather than state regulators. Calderon introduced this bill, which is now law. According to the *Mercury News*, Calderon received \$13,900 from the Plumbing Manufacturers Institute and its faucet-manufacturer members.

Calderon is the norm, not the exception. Virtually all state lawmakers (except Sen. Tom McClintock) introduced bills sponsored by outside interests, according to the *Mercury News* report. And all depend on hat-in-hand fundraising to win office and stay there.

With our logo proposal, when lawmakers get up to speak, colorful patches on their suits will make it clear whom they represent. Your lawmaker, not just your AT&T installer, will wear the familiar blue and white AT&T sphere. AT&T is among the top spenders on lobbying in California — as is the Western States Petroleum Association. The association's curved swoosh will be prominent on lawmakers' suit jackets, along with the logos of their oil company members, including the red letters of ExxonMobil and the cheerful yellow and green sun of BP.

No doubt political leaders will protest. But enough is enough. We might as well make it clear that when lawmakers speak, what we're actually hearing is a word from their sponsors.

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U.S. Congress contributions data provided by the Center for Responsive Politics (OpenSecrets.org). California contributions data provided by the National Institute on Money in State Politics.

STAFF ROUNDUP

Pamela Heisey has rejoined MAPLight.org as our Communications Director. Pamela has 20 years of communications experience in public relations, community outreach, marketing, events and sustainability programs.

Emilie Middlesworth has joined MAPLight.org as a Data Analyst, assisting with ensuring the accuracy and timeliness of MAPLight.org data. She has six years experience working with databases and data quality issues.

Jay Costa has come on board as our Program Assistant. He recently received an AB from Harvard College in Biological Anthropology, with a certificate in the study of Mind, Brain, and Behavior.

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Flash! A NEWSLETTER FROM MAPLight.org

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER USING SOY-BASED INKS

Daniel Newman is one of the "100 Most Creative People in Business"

We're proud and honored to announce that MAPLight.org's Executive Director, Daniel Newman, has been named one of the "100 Most Creative People in Business" by *Fast Company* magazine. The article, included here, ran in the magazine's June 2010 issue.



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DANIEL NEWMAN

Cofounder, Executive Director MAPLight.org

Daniel Newman's award-winning not-for-profit database cross-references public records, giving anyone instant access to political contributions — what once took investigative reporters weeks or months to uncover — and shining a light on “the forces that are corrupting our democracy,” says Newman, 41. A redesign this year enables data to be updated within 45 minutes of a Congressional vote, and traffic, previously 25,000 visitors a month, has quadrupled. “Our vision is to have MAPLight.org facts in every story about every political issue,” the software entrepreneur says.

— Chuck Salter

You're Invited!

WEBINAR:
Intro to MAPLight.org
November 9, 2010

MAPLight.org is a premier example of the growing Web 2.0 movement to improve government transparency. New to our organization? Want to discover more about what we do? Learn about our new website and more. Join us for a special conference call and webinar on Tuesday, November 9, 1 p.m. Pacific (4 p.m. Eastern). To sign up visit <http://maplight.org/briefing>