



Money in Politics Research Action Project

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Polling Results Shed Light on Recent Controversy over Oregon Restaurant Association Campaign Contributions

Polling results on the role of money in politics help evaluate a recent comment by Representative Jeff Merkley, " Today is the day the Oregon Restaurant Association asks for a return on its heavy investments in elections." This statement concerned a bill that blocks local governments from passing smoking bans in restaurants, which set off cries of disagreement. Some fellow legislators and the lobbyist for the Oregon Restaurant Association called Rep. Merkley's statement "insulting" and "offensive."

"People can look at the figures on candidate contributions from the Restaurant Association on our website, oregonfollowthemoney.org, and make their own conclusion about Representative Merkeley's comments," says Janice Thompson of the Money in Politics Research Action Project. "Also on the website is polling data that helps put this disagreement into perspective."

A national poll by the Mellman Group done in March of 2000 asked a question about the role of money in federal politics. The sample size was 800 likely voters with a margin of error of +/- 3.5%.

Question	Results		
When a member of Congress is elected with the help of special interest contributions, how much do you think it affects his or her votes on issues of concerns to those groups?	87% affects	9% does not affect	4% don't know

A national poll of 300 corporate executives was done by The Tarrance Group for the Committee for Economic Development. This survey was done from mid-September to mid-October of 2000 and has a margin of error of $\pm 5.8\%$. Key findings from this survey include:

- 75% agree that business leaders believe that political contributions give them an advantage in the shaping of legislation
- 73% believe that Corporate America contributes to political campaigns because it wants something in return
- 51% agree that many business executives fear adverse legislative consequences to themselves or their industry if they turn down requests for campaign contributions from high-ranking political leaders and/or political operatives

"The role of money in politics will probably always elicit different opinions from legislators and lobbyists," says Janice Thompson, director of Money in Politics Research Action Project. "This polling data seems to indicate that the majority of citizens would agree with Representative Merkley's assumption that contributions influence legislative actions." More polling data related to money in politics and campaign finance reform is available at oregonfollowthemoney.org.

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