

## Campaign finance reform stalls: not much progress since 1905

BY MCCAFFREY BLAUNER  
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It's a strange fact of our political system that politicians buy their way into office.

In the 2004 general elections, 91 percent of the senate elections and 95 percent of those for the House were won by the politicians who spent the most on their campaigns. Now, I'm not saying that being president or a congressman or a senator comes with a literal price tag, but the statistics are hard to refute.

The truth of the matter is far more convoluted. There isn't an actual requirement for vast wealth on the part of major political candidates, but it sure seems like there might as well be.

When is the last time someone ran for president who was even slightly less than extremely wealthy?

While the tendency for anyone but those in the highest of income brackets to be excluded in our system of governance from positions of power seems to stink of oligarchy, a deeper and more insidious problem presents itself in the workings of campaign finance.

Since ads and similar campaigning methods cost money, it seems logical to conclude that funding can greatly influence the success or failure of a political campaign.

While this might seem ultimately democratic (after all, if the success of a candidate is based on the contributions given to them, would that not seem to manifest the

many corporations have access to such vast financial resources that it disproportionately represents the actual amount of people involved who support the candidate in question.

Unsurprisingly, the members of congress, many of whom owed their positions to sizable contributions from corporate

action committees has allowed for a plethora of loopholes through which corporations may funnel money into the campaigns of various politicians.

These campaign contributions are invaluable to getting elected to major political offices.

In the last presidential race, candidates Barack Obama and John McCain spent a total record-shattering \$5.3 billion, in comparison to a relatively paltry \$4.2 billion spent on the 2004 campaign.

Current Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney has sunk approximately 45 million dollars of his own money into his campaign.

Attempts at campaign finance reform have met with little more support than in 1905. In 2010, the Supreme Court ruled that it was unconstitutional to ban spending by corporations in candidate elections.

So, ultimately who will change this? The politicians who owe their positions to the same largely unchecked corporate donations that they should presumably be attempting to regulate?

Unlikely.

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desires of the people?), it has trapped our political system in a logistical catch-22.

Why you might ask? Corporations.

In 1905, President Teddy Roosevelt spoke before Congress suggesting that all corporate donations should be banned. After all,

supporters, did not greet this idea warmly.

Today, sadly, we have not come very far. What Roosevelt feared has come to pass. Despite numerous attempts to regulate donations to candidates and spending on the part of said candidates, the use of political

## The cost of safety: New York shootings gone awry

BY DANIEL GASKIN  
STAFF WRITER

Crazed gunman Jeffrey Johnson, 53, killed one person before he was shot to death outside the Empire State Building on 34th Street and Fifth Avenue in New York City in a chaotic gunfight that left nine bystanders injured.

Since this incident, some critics of police policy involving the apprehension of criminals have raised the debate over gun usage in the police force. Many argue policemen shouldn't be using guns to apprehend criminals due to the fact that nine people were injured in the crossfire that resulted in Jeffrey Johnson's death.

This suggested change in police protocol is something that I cannot, in good conscience, ever advocate for a man or woman who I ask to risk their life for me and my fellow Americans on any given day.

We as civilians have the luxury to second guess the choices made by the police officers who apprehended Jeffrey Johnson, but Assistant Professor of Justice and Policy Studies Will Pizio suggests another point of view.

"Use of deadly force is OK if you are faced with a split second decision," says Pizio. "The cop saw the gun and shot the criminal. They probably had three seconds to make a choice."

When one thinks about the immediate reaction that policemen have to go on

when they see a gun, it is shortsighted to say that they should have used a taser or some other form of non-lethal weapon simply to protect the safety of bystanders, because the decision to shoot Johnson was an instinctual one.

"Not being there, and only knowing what little I have seen on the news about it, I can't make a call on whether the officers did the right thing or not," said Director of Public Safety Ron Stowe in an email interview.

"Without question, it is unfortunate that innocent bystanders were wounded and I would imagine the officers involved are second guessing their own actions," said Stowe. "That said, the officers had to react to the situation at hand — in a split second — based on the information they had available to them."

"There is no doubt that the situation would've been even more tragic except for the extraordinary acts of heroism," said Mayor Bloomberg in a media conference. "New York City is the safest big city in this country, but we

are not immune to the national problem of gun violence."

We are lucky to have heroes and we need them because we all live in a world of violence. When asking the selfless to defend us from perils, we must give them those tools necessary for the job at hand. We sleep safely in our beds because of the police and I am grateful for them.

In the words of Niccolo Machiavelli, "Before all else, be armed."

**"New York City is the safest big city in this country, but we are not immune to the national problem of gun violence."**

**Mayor Michael Bloomberg,  
mayor of New York City**



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