

Foreign Money in US Campaigns

Michael Sean Winters | Oct. 7, 2010 | Distinctly Catholic

The Chamber of Commerce is [catching hell](#) [1] for allowing foreign companies to put their cash into U.S. political campaigns. The Chamber has targeted several prominent Democrats, including Rep. Tom Perriello from Virginia, Joe Sestak in Pennsylvania, and others. They have said they will spend \$75 million, an amount that dwarfs the resources of even the best fundraisers in Congress.

The Chamber denies that it is using foreign money for its campaign ads, that it keeps foreign dollars segregated from domestic, political accounts. But money is fungible, which leads to an irony. Last summer, when the Capps Amendment was introduced to allow insurance companies to segregate funds used for abortion services from funds they got from the federal government, conservatives objected, noting that money is fungible. Now, it is the Democrats who point to the fungible quality of cash to blast the Chamber of Commerce.

Your scribe here at Distinctly Catholic can claim consistency on this point. I was vocally and vehemently opposed to the Capps Amendment because it seemed like an accounting trick, and I fault the Chamber for similar accounting tricks now.

There is a larger point here. This year's election is awash with corporate cash thanks to the Supreme Court's ruling in the Citizens United case. Our politics are now for sale because the Court could not recognize that a corporation is not an individual in any meaningful sense of the word and that corporations do not function in the same way individuals do within the political system. This controversy over foreign funds serves to make the point the Court failed to grasp. And I hope the controversy creates a backlash against those who are trying to buy the election without even disclosing who is paying the bills for these ads. It is telling that those who defend the Chamber cite the fact that the report on the use of foreign funds came from the Center for American Progress, which they denounce because that organization is funded, in part, by George Soros. But, at least we know that it is Soros's money at work. You may like Soros, you may hate him, but at least you know what he is up to. These new super PACs do not even have to disclose their donors!

The GOP is constantly prattling on about accountability and transparency, well, here is an instance where they can put their money where their mouth is. They have plenty of money with which to do it.

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[1] <http://thinkprogress.org/2010/10/05/foreign-chamber-commerce/>