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To: Media Outlets, open use

Do we have "Representative Government"?

According to the annual financial disclosure filing of the members of Congress, there are 237 millionaires; or 44% of the membership, compared to 1% of the general population of the U.S. The richest member in the Austin/Houston area is Michael McCaul, who ranks as the sixth-richest person in the House of Representatives, with declared minimum assets in 2008 of \$38 million.

A review of self-described occupations of the members of the current U.S. House of Representatives shows 150 Lawyers, 24 Medical professionals, 3 engineers and 257 "others"; such as real estate developers, small businessmen, farmers and university professors.

This is hardly representative of the vast majority of Americans. Why is this? How have we deviated so far from what the founding fathers intended for the "People's House"? It's in the nature of how political campaigns are funded. One great misconception is that political parties help fund candidates campaigns. Campaign finance laws limit the amount a political party can give to a candidate to \$5000, and the party usually doesn't even do that. Political parties can fund get out the vote efforts and general issue advertising in a District or State, but cannot advocate for a particular candidate. They can however run negative ads.

Candidates need to raise money by themselves, they can and do raise contributions from people in the District in the \$10 to \$250 range, but the maximum contribution in a Federal race is \$2400. How many people does the average person know that can give \$2400 to a political campaign? When the average campaign for the House of Representatives costs \$1.2 million, we could have a candidate that knows 500 people giving the maximum \$2400 or a grassroots candidate that can raise \$1.2 million from 12,000 \$100 contributors. Most of us, and certainly I, don't know 500 maximum contributors. So what happens? You have a candidate that self-funds their first campaign with "loans". You have to be a millionaire to do that.

If the candidate is elected, they will be paid back in full. The lobbyists and PAC's will line up to contribute to their campaign committee, which will pay

back all the "loans" made to their campaign, and pile up all the money needed for the next election.

Michael McCaul, in the Texas 10th Congressional District, is the sixth richest member of the House. He self-funded his first campaign in 2004 to the tune of about \$2 million dollars of loans to his campaign. All that debt is gone. He now raises all the money he needs from the usual sources: millionaires, PAC's and lobbyists. Incumbents like McCaul are re-elected 90% of the time.

So do we have "Representative Government"? The simple answer is no, not yet.

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