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Follow the Money : by Ted Ankrum

Many Americans believe that their politicians vote in response to campaign contributions, rather than in the interests of the ordinary people in their District. Representatives Rangel and Waters are about to be tried by a subcommittee of the House of Representatives for just this kind of activity. It seems their defense is "We all do it". My opponent in the next election, incumbent Republican Michael McCaul of Texas US House of Representatives District 10, is the lead Republican on this "trial" and it would be interesting to test this assertion by looking at his campaign contributions and his votes.

This information is taken from the latest Federal Elections Commission report, ending June 30, 2010, on campaign contributions from individuals and political action committees; starting from the beginning of 2007, after Mr. McCaul's first reelection, when corporations and big donors start to pay attention. The totals are bare minimums because contributor's employment is listed by company name, and I don't claim to know the names of every financial firm, for instance. I've only tabulated contributions affiliated with those relatively well-known companies whose principal business is one I know.

The largest group contributing to Mr. McCaul is BANKING and FINANCE. He has received at least \$469,943, including almost 10% of that total, or \$34,500, from GOLDMAN-SACHS. Of course, Mr. McCaul has voted NO to every proposal to increase consumer protection, control outsized bonuses, and limit the effect of failure of a single financial firm on the general economy. One also wonders if Mr. McCaul's fervent desire to preserve income tax breaks on the richest 2% of Americans (himself included) is not also a factor.

The second group is ENERGY (principally oil companies, including BP), having contributed at least \$202,200. Is there a connection between this money and his voting NO to every proposal to increase safety regulation on deep water drilling in the Gulf of Mexico? He has also voted NO to every attempt to correct "mistakes" made by the Bush Administration's Minerals Management Service which allowed deep water oil wells in the Gulf to avoid paying royalties that would have reduced our Government deficit by billions of

dollars and which were "inadvertently" omitted from their contracts?

The third group is CLEAR CHANNEL COMMUNICATIONS, the largest owner of radio stations in the US, who have given him an astounding \$184,300. Is there some truth when people refer to Mr. McCaul as the "Representative from Clear Channel" and some benefit to Clear Channel from his adamant opposition to reinstating the "fairness doctrine" to the public airwaves?

Fourth is MEDICAL, with \$162,466. This is puzzling, until you realize that medical cost containment efforts in the new health care bill that Mr. McCaul so adamantly opposes have already begun to cut back on the million dollar per year earnings of surgeons and anesthesiologists in favor of modest increases to primary care providers. And don't forget those income tax cuts for the top 2% of earners in the US. There are a lot of medical providers in that group.

Fifth, and here is a real surprise, is AUTO DEALERS at \$72,850. Actually, it's not a surprise. Despite all the Republican rhetoric about inheritance taxes killing family farms, the so-called "death tax" repeal is really for auto dealers. Family farmers are a much more sympathetic victim than auto dealers, but you show me a family farm worth more than \$10 million and odds are I'll show you a farm about to grow houses. On the other hand, there are scads of auto dealerships across the country that were established some 30 years ago when an auto dealer franchise was relatively cheap and easy to get. Many are sole proprietorships that are worth millions of dollars with aging owners who want to pass on that wealth free of any tax on the increase in value. Mr. McCaul has been an ardent supporter of keeping this 1% of estates "all in the family", while the country that made it possible for all this wealth to accumulate goes bankrupt.

A single company, DELL COMPUTERS, at \$26,550 is another example. Mr. McCaul was a strong supporter of the bill that would have ultimately granted unlimited company-sponsored Green Cards to IT professionals from third-world countries. If it had passed, just as we have been exporting our good manufacturing jobs overseas, we would have been importing third-world IT professionals to work at good IT jobs in the USA at cut-rate wages. HR 5744 would have been very good for Dell, but very bad for American IT professionals in Austin and Houston. Given the numbers of these, one wonders just whose interests were being served: the IT professionals in his District, or DELL?

The HOUSTON EXECUTIVE AIRPORT is another example. When this airport, located in District 10 on the outskirts of Houston, was under construction in 2007; its owner wrote in the airport's website "write your elected Representative and ask for their support for this important project". Federal clearance is needed for any commercial airport to operate. During this period the owner, Mr. Ron Henrickson and his wife, contributed \$12,300 to his Representative, Mr. McCaul. The airport is now operating and there haven't

been any contributions lately. I wonder what happened here?

BAE is a case of "the dog that didn't bark", as Sherlock Holmes said. Prior to 2010, BAE contributed \$20,750 to Mr. McCaul. BAE lost its contract in Sealy, part of District 10, to build tactical trucks for the US Army in early 2010 and Mr. McCaul was unable to get the Army to reconsider. Some (including me) have said that Mr. McCaul was "ASLEEP AT THE SWITCH" when these 3000 direct and at least 2000 indirect jobs were lost. Apparently, the executives at BAE didn't think they got good value from Mr. McCaul, either, since there have been no new contributions since that loss.

The big DRUG COMPANIES are an interesting example. Mr. McCaul has received 17 contributions of \$500 each from lobbyists for the big drug companies. All of these contributors have addresses in the Washington, DC area. None of these companies have any manufacturing facilities in his District, but Mr. McCaul has consistently voted NO to allowing importation of cheaper drugs from Canada. Who is he putting first: seniors who have had to spend huge fractions of their social security checks for prescription drugs, or the big drug companies?

Finally, EARMARKS. In the 2008 election, Mr. McCaul swore off earmarks. But, prior to that, he got a \$2.4 million earmark (no-bid, directed contract) for Applied Physical Electronics in Spicewood, Texas and received a \$1500 campaign contribution. Zebra Imaging of Austin got an earmark of \$1.6 million and made a campaign contribution of \$2500. Did Mr. McCaul stop taking earmarks because of his opponent's criticism of his taking these "kickbacks" in the 2008 election?

Do campaign contributions affect how your Representative votes, even when those votes are opposed to the interests of the regular people in a District? You be the judge. You have the facts!