

New Group Pushes Campaign Finance Reform From The Right

Posted By [Peter Fricke](#) On 10:48 PM 01/14/2015 In | [1 Comment](#)

A new interest group officially launched on Wednesday with the goal of building a conservative case for campaign finance reform.

The group, called "[Take Back Our Republic](#)," will seek to convince Republicans that reducing the influence wealthy contributors wield in elections can make for good politics, as well as good policy. **[\(RELATED: Claim: Harvard Prof Who Raised Millions For Stricter Campaign Finance Laws BROKE EXISTING LAWS\)](#)**

John Pudner, who worked on Dave Brat's successful campaign to unseat then-House Majority Leader Eric Cantor before helping to found the group, told The Daily Caller News Foundation that, "solutions can be liberal or conservative, but I don't think issues are."

He acknowledged that campaign finance reform has traditionally been seen as a "liberal issue," but claimed conservatives are becoming increasingly aware of the pernicious influence that big money has on the political process.

"This is the first year I've heard conservatives on the trail expressing concern about the money flowing in politics," he said. "The main concern is not the amount of money involved, but that donations could be transactional," with politicians awarding special favors or protections to major donors.

Some conservatives remain skeptical about the group, concerned that any type of campaign finance reform will primarily benefit Democrats. Pudner dismissed such fears, saying the group's leadership team boasts a number of Republican insiders who have worked diligently to ensure that the staff shares a common philosophical vision. **[\(RELATED: Senator Sanders' Campaign Finance Hysteria\)](#)**

"Conservatives told me when I was working on Brat's campaign that it was a liberal plot to defeat the Republican candidate in the general election," he noted, but pointed out that those worries were proven groundless when Brat ended up getting more votes than Cantor had received in the previous election.

Previous campaign finance reforms have typically taken the form of restrictions—such as caps on individual contributions and limits on how candidates can spend their campaign funds—but Pudner told TheDCNF that Take Back Our Republic will pursue a nearly-opposite approach, working to reduce the relative influence of large donors by empowering small donors.

"Citizens United is the law of the land, and that's the playing field we're on," he explained, saying the group would "look at ways of working within the current system," rather than pursue a Quixotic quest to amend the Constitution. **[\(RELATED: Why Republican Senators Should Support a Campaign Finance Amendment\)](#)**

Currently, there are about 10,000 small donors (defined as those who contribute less than \$200 in an election cycle) in the average congressional district, and Pudner said he would like to see that number grow to at least 25,000 through the group's efforts.

To that end, one of the first policies they plan to advocate for is a proposal from Republican Rep. Tom Petri to offer tax credits and deductions for small-dollar political contributions, which they hope will incentivize more individuals to make such donations.

The group also favors raising the amount that individuals can contribute anonymously, from \$200 to \$500. Such a modest increase, Pudner asserted, would make donors less reluctant to contribute, because they would have less reason to fear retaliation, without reducing transparency for large donors.

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