



How Money In Politics Affects Educators

WHEN BIG MONEY WINS, WE ALL LOSE

*“No matter how you feel about the issue of standardized testing in schools, the **corruption** in our political process—by **lobbyists** from companies like Pearson and McGraw-Hill, and industries looking to **profit from this system**—has drowned out the voices of educators everywhere.”*

– TIERRA JOLLY, HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER AND
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBER IN WASHINGTON, DC

It’s a sad but unavoidable fact: Money is power in our political system. Educators and students can’t hire the lobbyists or make the massive donations necessary to become a real priority in Washington. Big Money is calling the shots, and teachers and students alike are paying the price.

Few institutions have been hit harder by the great recession than our nation’s public schools: Today, thirty-five states offer less funding for education than in 2007¹. The 2013 sequester cutbacks put enormous strain on already dwindling resources by **cutting nearly \$3 billion** in education funding², jeopardizing more than 9,000 primary- and secondary-education jobs³.

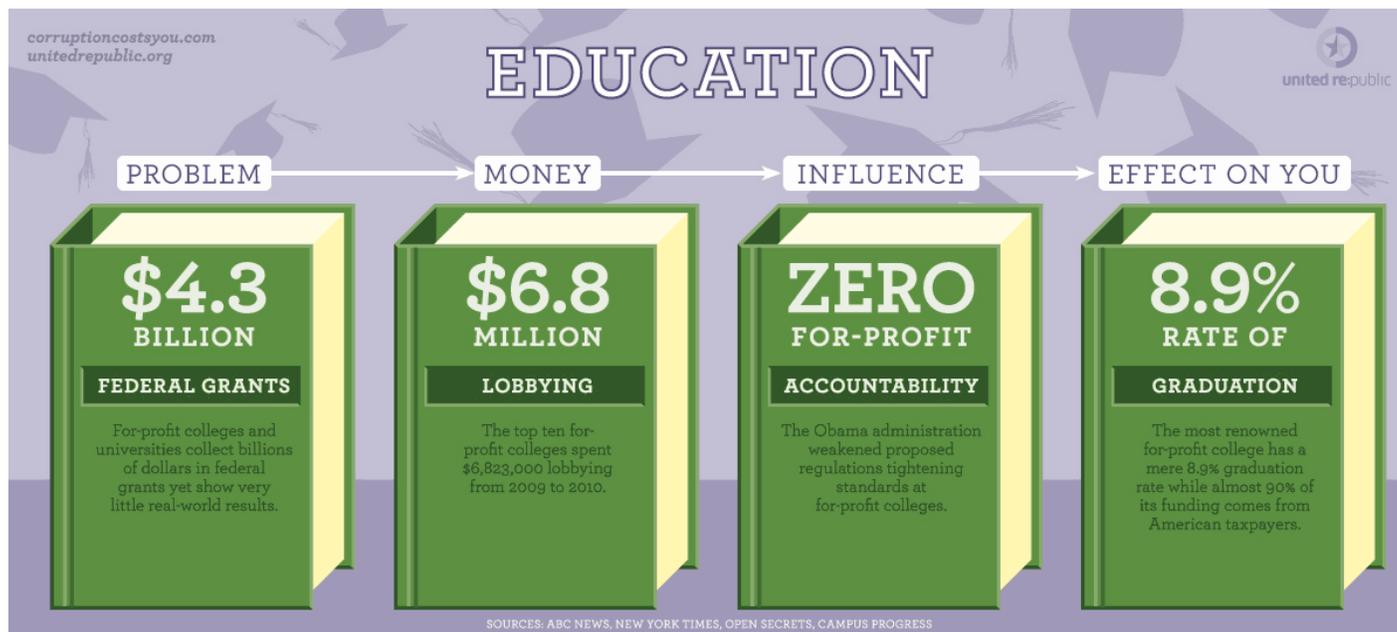
In the same year these cutbacks took effect, Wall Street banks saved themselves \$9 billion in the form of a publically-funded tax exemption⁴. **Just 6% of that money** could have saved over **7,000 special-education jobs**⁵, but Congress voted against them. Why? The **\$470 million in lobbying and influence** spending from the financial services sector in 2009 might have had something to do with it.

FAST FACTS

- › 35 states offer less funding for education than in 2007.¹
- › The 2013 sequester cut nearly **\$3 billion** in education funding,² placing the jobs of more than 9,000 primary and secondary education teachers in jeopardy.³
- › National student debt totaled \$1.2 trillion in 2012.¹⁰
- › In 2009 Wall Street Banks spent \$470 million lobby Congress and received a \$9 billion tax exemption in return.
- › In less than 20 years student loan debt has grown by 511%⁸, meaning a college graduate was leaving with an average of \$35,000 in debt.⁷
- › The Student loan industry has spent more than \$50 million influencing Congress over the past 10 years.⁹
- › Americans spend \$15,171 per student per year⁶, the most in the entire world.

“Our government is held hostage by the funders of campaigns. Those funders don’t spend their money to get good public policy. They spend their money to get policy that favors them.”

– LAWRENCE LESSIG, PROFESSOR, HARVARD SCHOOL OF LAW



BIG PROBLEMS, LITTLE ACTION

It’s never been more expensive to get an education in the United States. Americans spend \$15,171 per student per year⁶, the most in the entire world, but continue to face stiffer competition than ever before from the international community. In less than 20 years, student loan debt has grown by a staggering 511%⁸ and last years’ graduates left school with an average of \$35,000 of debt⁷. It’s a big-industry boon: the student loan industry spent more than \$50 million influencing Congress over the past 10 years.⁹

THE REASON IS ELEMENTARY: MONEY HAS CORRUPTED OUR GOVERNMENT

Politicians love to point fingers at our educators, but the truth lies within our political system. For all the lip-service politicians pay to education reform every time an election rolls around, surprisingly few substantial reforms have been enacted.

This issue isn’t about a few specific lawmakers or party members, but rather the conflict of interest arising from politicians’ dual role as regulators and solicitors of contributions. It’s institutionalized bribery, unjustly benefitting a tiny minority with the financial means to matter in Washington. That’s why Represent. Us created the American Anti-Corruption Act: model legislation to stop money from corrupting government at the local, state, and federal levels; and ensure that elected leaders are more responsive to the needs of students and teachers.

At the heart of local communities, educators not only play a vital role in our nation’s long-term economic success, but also in the fight to fix our broken political system. With a direct line to our youth and a rich history of activism, educators can become leaders in the national effort to return America to a nation in which politicians represent the interests of the people above all else.

www.Represent.Us

www.AntiCorruptionAct.org

1 Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
2 National Education Association
3 Washington Post
4 Washington Post

5 Washington Post
6 CBS News
7 CNN Money
8 The Atlantic

9 Center for Responsive Politics
10 Consumer Financial Protection Bureau