

THE GREEN WIRE

SENATOR TIMOTHY P. GREEN - DISTRICT 13

ROOM 330, STATE CAPITOL, JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65101 - PHONE 573-751-2420



St. Louis Post Dispatch - Letter to the Editor – March 30, 2006

By Missouri Senator Timothy P. Green, D-Spanish Lake

Missourians Have a Right to Know Who Is Influencing Who

The editorial entitled “Sixpack v. Fatcat” (March 30) overlooks the complex mess of campaign finance. The whisper of Missouri voters’ voices can’t compete with the bellow of influential big-money donor special interests. The people of Missouri know that politicians are being influenced by campaign contributions, and the voters have the right to know who is doing the influencing. Missouri needs additional transparency in campaigns.

Special interests can contribute unlimited donations to third-party committees, which can then spend the money on behalf of candidates. From 2000-04, third-party committees spent and contributed more than \$158 million. When the legislature placed limits on contributions to candidates, we thought we were going to curtail the amount of money flowing into political campaigns, but we just poured gasoline onto a burning fire. Honesty demands full disclosure and that disclosure is the only way Missouri can restore integrity to our campaigns.

Consider: The Republican 18th Legislative District Committee connected to Republican House Majority Floor Leader Rep. Tom Dempsey (R-18), received \$100,030 in January 2006 and spent 88,750 during that reporting period. Some \$5,500 of the \$100,000 came from the 2nd Senatorial District Republican Committee. The 18th District Committee then funneled \$6,650 to other legislative committees, including giving \$2,050 back to the 2nd Senatorial District Committee. Rep. Dempsey, as Majority Floor Leader, controls and decides which bills will go to the House floor. This legal money funneling which provides zero accountability and zero transparency must end.

By eliminating the caps placed on candidate campaign committees and placing them on third-party committees the public would be able to find out exactly who spends what on whom. Campaign finance limits cannot end political corruption, but at least with transparency, the people will know who is influencing who and why certain interests are rewarded.

Currently, it is difficult for people to find out what third-party committees spend on individual candidates. If those committees were placed under limits, the money would flow directly to the individual candidate committees, where the public could easily view the contributions and hold politicians accountable. Then at least the Sixpack would know what Fatcat is doing the influencing.