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Private Campaign Finance Serves Special Interests, Blocks Health, Other Reforms

There are a number of reasons why the United States is 50 years behind the other wealthy countries in ensuring good health care for all its citizens. But surely the biggest is our country's uniquely permissive campaign finance system, which allows deep-pocket special interests to shower incumbents with money – at the same time lawmakers decide issues of direct concern to said special interests.

Foreigners laugh at this form of virtual bribery – and I don't blame them. Huge majorities of Americans want fundamental health care reform, stricter regulation of private insurance companies, and a robust public plan option to compete against private HMOs.

But Republicans and conservative Democrats – the same ones who rake in campaign cash from private insurance companies -- belly-ache that a robust public health option would constitute “unfair competition” against private HMOs.

Do these lawmakers care more about the health of the American people -- or about the super-profits of their big campaign contributors? It should not be this difficult to enact what a huge majority of Americans want. We need voluntary, public funding of campaigns as embodied by the Fair Elections Now Act (S.752, H.R.1826) so that lawmakers will listen more to regular voters than to deep-pocket special interests.

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