



## Three Myths About... *Campaign Contribution Limits*

Forty-six of the 50 states and the Federal government in some way impose limits on the amount individuals and organizations can contribute to the campaigns of their preferred candidates for local, state, and federal office. Here's the reality behind three common myths often asserted about contribution limits:

**Myth #1:** *Contribution limits prevent corruption.*

**FALSE.** CCP compared all 50 states' contribution limits on individuals to public corruption data and found **no relationship** between the existence of contribution limits and corruption levels. In fact, four of the ten least corrupt states in the country allow unlimited contributions from individuals to state legislative candidates (Oregon, Nebraska, Utah, and Iowa).<sup>1</sup>

**Myth #2:** *Contribution limits improve the quality of governance.*

**FALSE.** After comparing *Governing* magazine's ranking of all 50 states on the quality of their governance with each state's individual contribution limits, we found **no correlation**. Moreover, two of the top three states in *Governing's* rankings – Utah and Virginia – have no limits on the size or source of campaign contributions.<sup>2</sup>

**Myth #3:** *Contribution limits curb the legislative influence of corporations, labor unions, and wealthy donors.*

**FALSE.** Political scientists have found that “campaign contributions had no statistically significant effects on legislation...”<sup>3</sup> Ironically, limits tend to divert money away from candidate's campaign committees and into independent groups like Super PACs.

**THE VERDICT:** While also failing to achieve their intended goals, ultimately contribution limits restrict the freedom of citizens to contribute to the candidates and causes of their choice.

*More information on how to access the research described above is available on the back of this brief.*

## Further Reading

1 Matt Nese and Luke Wachob, "Do Lower Contribution Limits Decrease Public Corruption?," Center for Competitive Politics' Issue Analysis No. 5. Available at: <http://www.campaignfreedom.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Issue-Analysis-5.pdf> (August 2013).

2 Matt Nese and Luke Wachob, "Do Lower Contribution Limits Produce 'Good' Government?," Center for Competitive Politics' Issue Analysis No. 6. Available at: [http://www.campaignfreedom.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/2013-10-08\\_Issue-Analysis-6\\_Do-Lower-Contribution-Limits-Produce-Good-Government1.pdf](http://www.campaignfreedom.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/2013-10-08_Issue-Analysis-6_Do-Lower-Contribution-Limits-Produce-Good-Government1.pdf) (October 2013).

3 Stephen Ansolabehere, John de Figueiredo, and James M. Snyder Jr., "Why is There so Little Money in U.S. Politics," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 17, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 17.



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