

Candidates Find Donors Scared After Watergate

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Money, which is supposed to be the mother's milk of politics, has become the dirty word of 1974 campaigns, thanks to the lingering shadow of Watergate.

Across the nation from New Jersey to California, "dirty money" is an important collateral issue this fall. Voluntary vows of poverty are in fashion among candidates. New laws which require greater disclo-

sure are on the books in three dozen states. And the critical climate is scaring away lots of money.

"Financing is tough," said a Democratic campaign fundraiser in Harrisburg, Pa. "The fat cats aren't around and the architects and engineers have been scared away by all the bad headlines."

George Young, a Republican political consultant in Los Angeles, voiced a similar complaint:

"The feeling has started permeating that there is something morally wrong with giving to a campaign. The broad brush that has exposed special interests has also discouraged the legitimate giver . . . Why should he have people at church look at him and point him out as doing something wrong? It's a good case study in overkill."

The net effect, ironically, may be just the opposite of what many reformers have hoped for. Scarce campaign money and greater disclosure are helping entrenched incumbents, according to field reports from Washington Post special correspondents, by making it harder for challengers to mount respectable campaigns against well-known political figures. Meanwhile, special-interest money from labor and business groups is playing an even larger role in campaign financing.

"In one sense," said Fred Wertheimer, lobbyist for Common Cause, "the congressional

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aces are taking place as though Watergate never happened. Greater special-interest money is coming in while everyone talks about 'how clean I am.' The gap between incumbents and challengers will be even greater. We find people don't want to touch politics in '74. The reality is that it will be harder to challenge the incumbents."

Scandals over special-interest contributions helped generate the nation's current mood for reform, yet federal reports indicate that those major groups from organized labor, medicine, business, agriculture and others have already spent more than \$13 million on this year's federal campaigns—up \$2 million from the last nonpresidential year of 1970.

Meanwhile, the traditional advantages for incumbents have been strengthened, if anything by the scarcity of smaller individual contributions, according to The Washington Post's correspondents.

In Missouri, a Republican campaign director said one GOP congressional candidate needs \$50,000 to \$100,000 for a convincing challenge, but so far has raised \$2,000. Sen. Thomas F. Eagleton, the Democratic incumbent, had collected \$411,655 to little more than \$15,000 raised by his Republican opponent, former congressman Tom Curtis.

In Washington state, Democratic Sen. Warren Magnuson is getting traditional help from special interests which have a stake in his decisions as Commerce Committee chairman—\$34,000 from transportation industry people, \$40,000 from labor unions. But Magnuson is also picking up a lot of traditional Republican money. Going into the state primary, he outdistanced his opponent, state Sen. Jack Metcalf, \$359,000 to \$15,000.

According to Post special corre-

spondent Shelby Scates, Washington businessmen are wary of contributing to an underdog GOP campaign when they know that their gifts will be open to public scrutiny under the state's new law. Lobbyists in the state are more wary of helping challengers and not a single incumbent in Washington's legislature was defeated in the September primary.

Though many of the 36 new state laws are tougher than the new federal legislation awaiting final action next week, congressmen and senators will be relieved of those state-enacted restrictions. A provision in the new federal bill pre-empts all state regulation of federal elections—and would become effective immediately, with other provisions in the new law won't be applicable until 1975.

In Maryland, Sen. Charles McC. Mathias Jr., the Republican incumbent, promised to reject any gifts larger than \$100, a pledge he took after rais-

ing \$80,000 at a fund-raising dinner. Even so, Mathias is outspending his opponent, Democrat Barbara Mikulski, by as much as 10 to 1.

Mathias has raised about \$250,000 compared with Mikulski's \$25,000. His campaign managers, nevertheless, are concerned because those funds are committed and they're having trouble raising more.

Across the country, the money squeeze is evident even among incumbents. Sen. Adlai E. Stevenson III (D-Ill.) has trimmed his budget from \$1 million to \$600,000. The United Republican Fund of Illinois is trying to borrow money against the proceeds from an Oct. 24 dinner so it can distribute cash to candidates now.

In Pennsylvania, Gov. Milton Shapp said he will spend about \$1.3 million, which is roughly one-third of what he spent getting elected in 1970.

In Delaware, the Republican congressional candidate sent his campaign workers door-to-door soliciting money. Delaware's two candidates for attorney general have so far raised \$49,000 between them—compared with \$165,000 spent on that race four years ago.

Dr. Herbert Alexander, director of the Citizens Research Foundation, the nation's leading monitor of campaign spending, said candidates are turning to direct-mail solicitation in attempts to raise small contributions from a broad spectrum of citizens, but that costs a lot of money itself—\$20,000 for a single mailing in a congressional district.

"All of these candidates are running into each other trying to get those small givers," Alexander said. "It's just darn tough."

While Alexander welcomes the tougher disclosure and enforcement laws enacted by the states, he is worried that the long-term impact of tight money will hasten the adoption of full public subsidy for election campaigns.

"One of the strategies of reformers who want public financing," Alexander said, "was to put the squeeze on politicians. Make them go hungry for a couple of years, then they'll vote for public financing. That strategy is working beautifully."

Money has also emerged as a potent issue. Candidates argue over which one has the cleanest campaign funds. In Indiana, GOP challenger Richard Lugar complains that Sen. Birch Bayh, the Democratic incumbent, took \$2,500 from the Seafarers Union while Bayh attacks Lugar's Circle Club, a group of GOP fat cats who gave \$1,000 each.

In Colorado, Democratic challenger Gary Hart is making Watergate money a major issue against Sen. Peter Dominick, the Republican. Over in South Dakota, Hart's old leader, Sen. George McGovern, is catching heavy flak on

the same issue—the \$1.2 million which McGovern has already spent in his re-election campaign including \$460,000 left over from his 1972 presidential campaign when he was the financial underdog.

In Oklahoma, former congressman Ed Edmondson, a Democrat, ran the most expensive gubernatorial campaign in the state's history two years ago. He lost. This year he's boasting about his poverty—a scaled-down campaign budget with a limit of \$700 on individual gifts.

In Georgia, the Republican gubernatorial candidate, Macon Mayor Ronnie Thompson, embarrassed his own party by declaring that he will refuse any campaign aid from the state GOP unless it is "clean and untainted and, by that, I mean it does not come from such sources as ITT, the milk industry and Georgia Power Co. and other special-interest groups."

In Florida, Gov. Reubin Askew has imposed a voluntary ceiling of \$300 per contribution. "I could have raised \$850,000 with three well-placed testimonial dinners," he said, "but it would be wrong."

The voluntary vows of restraint have become one of the popular tactics this fall for candidates trying to convey the wholesomeness of their fund-raising. Rep. Charles Vanik, Ohio Democrat, made the ultimate promise—that he

would accept no campaign money at all—but then Vanick has only lightweight opposition this year.

Rep. William Widnall, 68-year-old ranking Republican on the House Banking and Currency Committee, was criticized two years ago when he took campaign money from some savings-and-loan people. This year, facing a tough young challenger, Widnall has vowed to take nothing larger than \$100 from any individual. He expects to meet his campaign budget of \$40,000.

"I can't say it's the greatest experience I ever had, but I think I'm going to come out of it all right," Widnall said.

His opponent, Andrew Maguire, originally agreed to a \$1,000 ceiling on his contributions but that went out the window and he has since accepted two \$2,500 gifts in the interest of mounting a well-financed campaign.

Widnall said New Jersey's new disclosure law has scared away people as well as money—campaign managers and treasurers.

"They figure they're going to be investigated," he explained. "Why the hell should they buy into something like that?"

According to a spring survey, 16 of the 27 U.S. senators up for re-election voluntarily adopted some form of limitation on their fund-raising. Most of them accepted provisions of the new federal law which is nearing final en-

actment, but won't apply to this year's races.

In the House, one congressman, Rep. Paul N. (Pete) McCloskey Jr. (R-Calif.), started with a \$100 ceiling for each donation, but had to abandon it because his primary opponent was waging too vigorous a campaign through the mass media. Now McCloskey and his Democratic opponent have agreed on a \$500 limit for the fall fund-raising.

In Vermont, Rep. Richard W. Mallary, the incumbent Republican, gave a break to his opponent, Democrat Patrick J. Leahy. Mallary and Leahy agreed on spending limits of \$80,000 for the Democrat and \$72,000 for the Republican. Mallary said he figured his opponent deserved a 10 per cent spending edge because an incumbent has so many other advantages.

In New York, former Attorney General Ramsey Clark, the Democratic senatorial nominee, is defying all of the established assumptions in his campaign against Sen. Jacob K. Javits, the Republican incumbent.

Javits is expected to spend \$1 million, and Clark has raised \$200,000 so far with a voluntary limit of \$100 per gift. To date, Clark hasn't bought a single TV ad, the staple of campaigning in a large state like New York. He is trailing by 10 percentage points, according to recent polls.

If Clark's shoestring campaign is successful, it could knock the bottom out of the campaign industry.