

# Incumbents Given Edge In Campaign Donations

By Morton Mintz

Washington Post Staff Writer



JOHN GARDNER

... sees party monopoly

Groups with special economic interests contributed almost three times as much money to members of the House and Senate as to their challengers in last year's elections, Common Cause reported yesterday.

The citizens' lobby said the economic-interest groups—bankers, businessmen, dairymen, physicians and trade unionists, among others—gave incumbents seeking re-election \$3.9 million, compared with \$1.4 million to challengers.

The present system of private financing for congressional elections clearly supports a "monopolistic incumbency party," Common Cause

chairman John W. Gardner told a news conference.

"Public financing of primary and general elections for Congress would encourage real competition — something few members of Congress have had to face," he said.

The House has before it a Senate-passed amendment to the debt-ceiling bill that provides public financing for presidential primaries and House and Senate general elections.

Gardner and an aide, Frederic Wertheimer, charged that House members, while possibly willing to fund presidential contests, are balking at public financing for their own prospective opponents but aren't candid about it. Instead, they said, House members are "hiding" behind technical objections to the pending measure.

"It seems to us that the House has misread the country," which will not settle for reforming merely presidential races, Gardner said. He criticized not only the House Democratic leadership, but also Minority Leader Gerald Ford, the Vice President-designate. Ford and the White House have "done nothing" for public financing, Gardner said.

Gardner quoted the acting chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, Rep. Al Ullman (D-Ore.), as having warned colleagues Wednesday that public financing — which would provide \$90,000 to each House candidate in a general election — "could destroy every member of the House of Representatives."

Asked about this yesterday, Ullman said he meant to say that the House itself would be destroyed if each of its members had to be constantly looking over his shoulder at a similarly financed opponent.

Members would be so caught up in "day-to-day local politics ... that they simply would be unable to live up to their responsibilities in the Congress," Ullman told a reporter.

Yesterday's Common Cause report, the third of a continuing series by the group's Campaign Monitoring Project, analyzes contributions to congressional candidates by political committees registered with the Clerk of the House and the Secretary of the Senate.

The report supplements a September analysis by Common Cause showing that congressional candidates in 1972, with incumbents outspending challengers 2 to 1, expended \$10.6 million in primaries a 66.4 million in the November election.

The new report shows that between April 7, 1972, when a strict disclosure law became effective, and election day, registered political committees gave all congressional candidates in the general election \$13,235,385. The highlights:

- Business groups, such as the National Association of Manufacturers' BIPAC, gave \$1,708,189, 66 per cent of it to incumbents, 12 per cent to challengers and 22 per cent in races with no incumbents. However, these figures grossly overstate because many executives gave large sums as individuals; this was especially true for the oil industry. Business money went to Republicans over Democrats in a ratio of 2 to 1.

- Agriculture groups, dominantly milk producers, gave \$661,925, 57 per cent of it to incumbents, and health groups, such as the American Medical Association's \$947,395, 52 per cent of it to incumbents.

- Labor groups, especially the AFL-CIO's COPE, the Teamsters' DRIVE and International Ladies Garment Workers Union units, gave \$3,633,108, 53 per cent to incumbents, 27 per cent to challengers and 20 per cent in races money went to Democrats in a top-heavy ratio of 19 to 1 (\$3,454,822 vs. \$178,286).

- Miscellaneous interest groups gave \$1,499,123.

In addition to the \$8,449,740 received from all of the foregoing, Democratic and GOP campaign committees gave \$4,785,645; these committees, in turn, had received \$1,314,174 from the interest groups, bringing their grand total to \$9,763,914.