

ROLL CALL

Let's Tell the Whole Truth and Nothing but the Truth

May 1, 2007

By Paul A. Miller,

Special to Roll Call

Since the Jack Abramoff scandal broke two years ago, it has become the hip thing to bash the lobbying profession and those of us who represent the needs and interests of every conceivable group in this country. Lobbying isn't just done by large corporations or labor unions. Lobbying is done by the Girls Scouts of America; homeless advocates; those in favor of AIDS research; the American Cancer Society; small-business advocates; and those who are suffering from severe handicaps. Lobbying is important, and I won't waste your time in this piece trying to defend that. I've spent the past two years doing that.

I want to bring to light the hypocrisy we are seeing in our candidates running for office in 2008. It seems the new sure way to win re-election is to tell the American people and your constituents you won't accept money from federal political action committees or federal lobbyists.

Just as with so-called ethics reform, we are seeing candidates dance around the truth. I can respect those candidates who don't want to accept money from PACs or lobbyists, but let's not go on a crusade to bash lobbyists by making this the focal point of your campaign and then turn around and accept money from state PACs and state lobbyists or the clients they represent. It's only fair to the voters if you give them the whole truth.

Again, I don't have a problem with any candidate not accepting contributions from lobbyists, but let's make that from any lobbyist or any company or union retaining or employing lobbyists.

I have read a few interesting stories recently about candidates promoting the fact that they are going to set a new tone in Washington, D.C., by accepting campaign contributions from everyone but lobbyists. On principle, this seems to go against the principles America was founded on. Today our candidates are telling us that they will allow everyone in the country to participate in the political process except lobbyists. Isn't this discrimination?

Forget that fact. I can live with a candidate's decision to do that. What I think is hypocritical is for any candidate of either party to tell the American people that they won't accept lobbyists' money, but will accept money from lobbyists' clients and will hire lobbyists to work on their campaigns or will ask lobbyists to volunteer on their campaigns, not to mention raise them millions in campaign contributions (as long as it doesn't come from a "lobbyist").

If honesty is the policy of the 2008 candidate, here are my recommendations that they should agree to abide by:

- Return all contributions from any lobbyist, including state lobbyists and state run PACs.
- Return all contributions from any group, association, corporation or labor union that retains or employs lobbyists at the local, state or federal levels.
- Refuse any campaign contribution from any group, association, corporation or labor union that retains or employs lobbyists at the local, state or federal levels.
- Only accept contributions from "true" constituents in the amounts of \$100 or less. This will ensure that no candidate can be for sale.

Unless candidates are honest with people, lobbyists will continue to be blamed for all the problems in Washington. I'm not looking for sympathy. I'm looking to help candidates live up to the promises they appear to be making. It seems there are some loopholes in their promises that I am happy to help them close if they are serious about their pledge.

Politics has become a game of half truths. I think the 2008 elections should be about the whole truth and nothing but the truth. I think the American people spoke loud and clear in 2006. I think it's time for all candidates to hear them loud and clear.

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