

# Fair Elections Now Act Lobby Kit



**COFFEE CAMPAIGN  
FOR FAIR ELECTIONS**

Are you ready to promote the Coffee Party's democratically-chosen "Money in Politics" legislative priorities?

Over 95% of our voting members said the Coffee Party should support legislative methods of addressing the issue of special interests' disproportionate influence in politics. And 90% of voters mandated the Coffee Party's support for the Fair Elections Now Act (Fair Elections). The Coffee Party Lobby

Team has created a list of recommended actions your chapter may take to support Fair Elections. This document contains detailed instructions and effective messages to use in your lobbying efforts. Note: for our lobby guide to other legislative remedies dealing with money in politics, [click here](#). Also note that there is far more information here than any single chapter could act on. You are encouraged to use what makes sense in the context of your resources and environment.

Our efforts in support of Fair Elections will overlap with efforts to support other measures. You will hear more about this in subsequent email messages. Here's the current schedule:

- NOW - 8/20 Coffee Party calls to Congress on Fair Elections
- NOW - 8/20 Chapter planning/scheduling sessions for Coffee with Congress ([Planning guide here](#))
- 8/09 - 9/09 Coffee with Congress on Fair Elections, SPA, a Constitutional Amendment, and (possibly) DISCLOSE
- 8/09 - 9/09 Ally-with-Activists (details in the [Lobby Kit](#))
- 8/16 - 8/30 Letter-writing campaign (letters to be presented to members in September)
- 8/16 - 8/31 Shareholder Protection Act -- Call Congress and Letter Writing Campaigns
- 8/25 - 9/24 H. J. Resolution 74 - Call for Constitutional Amendment - Phone and Letter Writing Campaign

Here is the list of possible actions you and/or your chapter can take as part of the campaign:

- **Make calls to Congress** Fix Congress First has a [web page](#) that tells you whether your representative is a Fair Elections cosponsor, and suggests what to say to her or him on the phone. This great tool is provided by Lawrence Lessig, a Coffee Party friend who will be attending our convention in September.
- **Write letters to Congress** using (if you wish) the suggested in the second half of this document. We will take these to Capitol Hill in September.

- **Have Coffee with Congress** during the summer recess. The Coffee Party has a guide to meeting with your representative at the district office during recess. Your chapter may also wish to attend your representative's recess events. Call the local office for a list of public events and arrange a team of chapter members to attend these. While there, ask the member where she/he stands on Fair Elections, even if you already know. This will raise public awareness of your representative's position on the issue.
- **Engage the media** following the [Coffee Party Local Media Liaison Guide](#).
- **Promote Coffee Party Lobby Days in DC** – scheduled for September 16 and 17, when Coffee Party members will hand-deliver our members' letters directly to congressional offices in DC.
- **Ally with activists** during the Congressional recess – all Coffee Party chapters are encouraged to find and make the best use of local resources. This includes local member skills and connections, events organized by other activist groups, political campaign rallies, civic forums, and even showing up at Tea Party rallies. This is at the local chapter's discretion -- CP national only stipulates that alliances with other organizations and groups should pertain to passing legislation, and are not endorsements of any group's broader scope. It is entirely consistent with Coffee Party values if a chapter in one part of the country is working with members from a faction of the Tea Party to build support for a Constitutional Amendment to reverse Citizens United, while another chapter is working with MoveOn to lobby a member of Congress to sponsor Fair Elections. We have included a short list of reform organizations that host events and conduct physical campaigns in support of Fair Elections. This list is by no means comprehensive, and we encourage you to find other organizations to work with. Please [email us here](#) if you know of other organizations we should share with all chapter organizers.
  - MoveOn [www.moveon.org](http://www.moveon.org) is participating in "The Other 98%" campaign, which cleverly refers to those of average means who want their government to listen more to them and less to the 2% who appear to have disproportionate influence in public policy. MoveOn councils are in most major U.S. cities.
  - Tea Party [www.teapartypatriots.org](http://www.teapartypatriots.org) although there are several "Tea Party" groups, this one appears to be the most open and active. A thoughtful approach to discuss Money in Politics could create some agreement. Look for common ground. Walk the Coffee Party walk.

- League of Women Voters [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org) is a national organization that has well-informed, long-serving members who know how and whom to lobby. They are highly respected and can get the attention of lawmakers. They tend to be quite organized and purposeful, and are fiercely non-partisan and have a healthy respect for civil discourse. They are in favor of Fair Elections. They often have speakers who could present information on local, state, or national issues. Active leagues host numerous educational and civic events.
- Democracy for America [www.democracyforamerica.com](http://www.democracyforamerica.com) has activist groups across the country that hold regular meetings.
- **Review past Coffee Party campaigns.** [This web page](#) has numerous documents created for previous actions. If you need something else, it's probably here.
- **Have fun** – One thing often forgotten in volunteer organizations: Make your actions FUN. Grassroots efforts run on shared passion and camaraderie. Get together for potluck dinners. Hold phone call parties. Create teams. Invite speakers from other organizations. Mix a few “lightweight” things in with all the heavy lifting.
- **Increase your visibility** by wearing a Coffee Party T-shirt, hat or button -- let's remember to announce our membership in the Coffee Party as we work for Fair Elections. At events and meetings, we can introduce ourselves as a CP member and thus spread the word about our organization as we work for change. You are likely to find many allies along the way since our members agree with the majority of Americans on this issue.

### **Fair Elections Now -- Review**

The Fair Elections Now Act will create a voluntary campaign finance mechanism that is financed by surcharges on government contracts. Qualifying candidates who choose to opt-in are provided a competitive grant to finance their campaigns, and are thus freed from the need for conventional fundraising. The bill has over 180 cosponsors in Congress right now. If you wish to know more, here are some websites with more information:

- [Fix Congress First](#)
- [Fair Elections Now](#)
- [Public Campaign](#)
- [Former Senators' \(Bradley, Kerry, Rudman and Simpson\) Testimony \(pdf\)](#)
- [Common Cause](#)
- [Public Citizen](#)
- See Bill Text & Track activity: [GovTrack.us - H.R.1826](http://GovTrack.us - H.R.1826) / [GovTrack.us - S.752](http://GovTrack.us - S.752)  
[OpenCongress.org - S.752](http://OpenCongress.org - S.752) / [OpenCongress.org - H.R.1826](http://OpenCongress.org - H.R.1826)

## Messaging

On the following pages, you'll find a memo from one of the major national organizations that are promoting Fair Elections. It has polling data and some tested language you may use to enhance your chapter's persuasion activities. We think you'll find it interesting as well as inspiring. You'll also see that by promoting Fair Elections, the Coffee Party is bringing **welcome news** to the vast majority of Americans.

For those who prefer the "goods" without the descriptive text, here is a list of talking points you may wish to use in your written and spoken communications:

- "We would not dream of having special interests pay the salaries of members of Congress – they get paid by the public for whom they act. Why, then, do we not flinch when special interests pay for their election campaigns?"
- "It's time we return to government of, by, and for the people – not government of, bought, and paid for by special interests."
- "As long as politicians are accountable to the corporations and lobbyists who finance their campaigns, they're never going to be accountable to the people that elected them. It's time ordinary Americans had their voices heard. Our elected officials should be concerned with solving our problems and concerns, not those of special interests who can afford to pay for special treatment."
- "The problem with our political system isn't so much that individual members of Congress are corrupt but that the system is corrupt. Sure, there are bad apples in the barrel, but the real problem is that the barrel is rotten. No matter how honest you are, when your ability to get elected depends on collecting millions of dollars from special interests, there's no way you can be objective."
- "We should replace corporate-funded elections with Fair Elections. We need to put elections back in the hands of ordinary Americans. Politicians should work for us, not their corporate sponsors."
- "It's time we take the "for sale" sign off the Capitol lawn. We can't afford the price we're paying for corporate-sponsored government. We need to get our elected officials off the fundraising treadmill."

# FAIR ELECTIONS NOW:

## Elections of, by, and for the people

To: *Campaign Staff, Coalition Allies, and State Directors*  
From: *David Donnelly, Campaign for Fair Elections*  
Date: *July 6, 2010*  
RE: *Messaging on Fair Elections*

We have undertaken a two and a half month public opinion research project with Lake Research Partners, McKinnon Media, and Westen Strategies to assess public attitudes about the role of money in politics, support for comprehensive solutions like Fair Elections-style campaign reform, and responsiveness to positive and negative statements about the way money flows into elections and the policy-making process.

The results below are based on three building block pieces of research: 1) four focus groups held in Charlotte (May 11) and Denver (May 12) with swing voters, 2) a national online dial-test survey of 900 likely voters conducted from June 4-10, and 3) a national telephone survey of 1,500 likely voters conducted June 26-30.

This memo provides guidance for applying what we have learned to your public speaking, websites, talking points, materials, press releases, and other communication you have with the public. The first section will provide several strategic findings of the research. The second section will share actual language and themes that tested well in advancing our work to make government more accountable to everyday Americans.

### FINDINGS

**Finding #1. Public support for Fair Elections-style campaign finance reform is STRONG. A majority of every subsection of Americans, regardless of demographic and political identities, supports the measure.**

*63% of respondents support Fair Elections with just 23% opposed. Voters in “red” states supported the proposed measure by 62% to 25% and voters in “blue” states supported it 64% to 20%. Democrats provided a wide margin of 74% to 12% support, with independents at 60% to 25% and Republicans at 53% to 33%.*

**Finding #2. Opposition arguments about comprehensive reform are strong on their own, but are still beaten by pro-reform messages.**

*We tested a summary argument including “welfare for politicians” and wasting money on politics rather than on “education, jobs, or public safety” in both the online and telephone surveys. Our arguments consistently beat the opposition message in the online dial-tests by more than 20% and as high as 42%. In the telephone survey, with a slightly different structure that was tougher on our side, we still won by between 10% and 20% over the negative arguments. What this means is that we must consistently come back to our message when attacked by the opposition or when these arguments are made.*

**Finding #3. Statements that start with positive, aspirational language are stronger overall.**

*The public already is well-sensitized to the problem of money in politics, but they need to have hope that it can be addressed. Starting messages with hopeful or forward-thinking statements, or ones that tap into deep-seated patriotic ideals, improve the public's receptivity to supporting comprehensive reform.*

**Finding #4. It's important to connect money in politics to the issues Americans see in their daily lives with language that we use around the kitchen table.**

*What the public needs to hear is language that is accessible to all of us. We need to connect money in politics with unemployment, Wall Street ruining the economy, and BP.*

**Finding #5. The popular anger at business-as-usual in Washington will motivate the public to support Fair Elections-style reform.**

*People are angry at the way Washington works not simply because Congress seems out of touch. They're angry because Congress doesn't seem to be listening at all to their concerns. Congress appears to be more responsive to the needs of big donors and their lobbyists rather than the needs of everyday Americans. But Americans continue to be skeptical that you can change Washington overnight. In short, Americans may want to control what happens in Washington, but they'll settle for knowing that at least their voices can be heard by their elected officials.*

## MESSAGES THAT WORK

### Taglines

Several taglines tested well in both online and telephone surveys. These are the ones we will use:

- Fair Elections Now (name of the bill)
- Elections of, by, and for the people (or Government of, by, and for the people)
- Make Congress accountable to us

### Short Messages

The following short messages tested well throughout the research:

- It's time we return to government of, by, and for the people, not government of, bought, and paid for by special interests.
- As long as politicians are accountable to the corporations and lobbyists who finance their campaigns, they're never going to be accountable to the people that elected them. It's time ordinary Americans had their voices heard. Our elected officials should be concerned with solving our problems and concerns, not those of special interests who can afford to pay for special treatment.
- It's time we had a government that worked for working Americans, not for big corporations and their lobbyists. How many disasters does it take to decide it's time to fix our broken government?
- The problem with our political system isn't so much that individual members of Congress are corrupt but that the system is corrupt. Sure, there are bad apples in the barrel, but the real problem is that the barrel is rotten. No matter how honest you are, when your ability to get elected depends on collecting millions of dollars from special interests, there's no way you can be objective.
- It's time we take the "for sale" sign off the Capitol lawn. We can't afford the price we're paying for corporate-sponsored government. We need to get our elected officials off the fundraising treadmill.
- The only interests our elected officials should be paying attention to are the problems of everyday

Americans, not the special interests who pay for their campaigns. But everywhere you look in Washington there's a lobbyist with an open checkbook.

- We should replace corporate-funded elections with Fair Elections. We need to put elections back in the hands of ordinary Americans. Politicians should work for us, not their corporate sponsors.

**Full Messages** -- Below are four full-length messages in a form that can easily be adapted for speeches, op-eds, letters to the editor, and materials.

- **Of, By, and For [80% total convincing, 48% very convincing]**

*It's time we return to government of, by, and for the people, not government of, bought, and paid for by special interests. If big businesses want to invest in our government, let them pay their fair share of taxes rather than paying for politicians who'll write them special tax breaks. Right now, the biggest corporations in America pay a smaller percent of income tax than the average working family, and they even get special bonuses for outsourcing American jobs. Since the crisis on Wall Street less than two years ago, the banks have spent nearly a million dollars a day lobbying in Washington—while taxpayers have been bailing them out. The job of Wall Street bankers is to get a good return on their investment, and unfortunately, they've taken those skills to Washington. It's time we replaced corporate-funded elections with Fair Elections. We need to put elections back in the hands of ordinary Americans. Our leaders should work for us, not their corporate sponsors.*

- **Rotten Barrel [79% total convincing, 47% very convincing]**

*The problem with our political system isn't so much that individual members of Congress are corrupt but that the system is corrupt. Sure, there are bad apples in the barrel, but the real problem is that the barrel is rotten. No matter how honest you are, when your ability to get elected depends on collecting millions of dollars from special interests, there's no way you can be objective. And having to spend so much time fund-raising just discourages good people from running and prevents those who do get elected from doing what we sent them there to do: solve the problems of everyday Americans. It's time our elected officials started listening to the voices of everyday Americans, not their corporate sponsors. We need to clean up our elections, and do it now.*

- **Accountable [77% total convincing, 48% very convincing]**

*As long as politicians are accountable to the corporations and lobbyists who finance their campaigns, they're never going to be accountable to the people who elected them. It's time ordinary Americans had their voices heard. Our elected officials should be concerned with solving OUR problems and addressing OUR concerns, not those of special interests who can afford to pay for special treatment. It's time we take our government back, with elections that are fair to ordinary Americans, where candidates for Congress only get funding if they share the values and concerns of the people back home. And let big corporations pay their fair share for what we all deserve—fair, clean elections that put American voters back in the driver's seat—instead of paying for high-priced lobbyists. It's time we take the “for sale” sign off our government, so that it works for working and middle class Americans.*

- **Working Americans [75% total convincing, 43% very convincing]**

*It's time we had a government that worked for working Americans, not for big corporations and their lobbyists. How many disasters does it take to decide it's time to fix our broken government? We now know that the agency responsible for monitoring offshore oil drilling was owned and*

*operated by the oil companies. BP was even allowed to fill out safety inspection reports on the rig that blew up in the Gulf in pencil so regulators could just trace over them in pen. We know that Wall Street regulators looked the other way when they saw the rampant fraud and recklessness that cost so many people their homes and jobs. There's one common denominator—money—and there's one common solution: end legalized bribery dressed up as campaign contributions from big business. Let the people of a state decide who they want to run for Congress with small contributions, and let some of those big corporations that have been paying for politicians pay instead for fair elections and government that works for a change.*