
The Tin Cup Congress

In between fundraisers, they squeeze in
a few hours to govern.

by Philip M. Stern

What is the effect on members of Congress of the skyrocketing need for campaign funds and the resulting, never-ending scramble for money? What is its impact on the legislative process? How has campaigning been affected? To find out I interviewed several current and former members of Congress. Here is what they told me:

► **Former Congressman Michael Barnes of Maryland**

Mike Barnes represented a Maryland suburb of Washington, D.C., from 1978 to 1986, when he ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. Senate. He has a mild-mannered mien, but he is passionate about campaign-finance reform. These convictions were solidified by his 1986 experience as a senatorial candidate, when raising money was a constant preoccupation. "There was never a waking moment that I was not either raising money or feeling guilty that I was not," Barnes said. He now practices law in Washington.

As I spoke to political consultants, they all said I should not even consider running for the Senate if I weren't prepared to spend 80 or 90 percent of my time raising money. It turned out that they were absolutely correct. That's an absolute outrage, because the candidates should be talking about the issues and meeting with constituents and voters and working on policy questions.

As a congressman, I had plenty of phone calls from political directors of PACs, in which the

Philip M. Stern is co-chairman of Citizens Against PACs. This article is adapted from his book, The Best Congress Money Can Buy, to be published this month by Pantheon, \$17.95. ©1988 by Philip M. Stern.

conversation went something like this:

"Mike, we're getting ready to make our next round of checks out and just want to let you know that you're right up there at the top. We really think we can help you with a nice contribution."

"Gee, that's great. Really appreciate it. Grateful to have your help."

"Oh, by the way, Mike, have you been following that bill in Ways and Means that's going to be coming to the floor next week? It's got an item in there we're concerned about—the amendment by Congressman Schwartz. You know, we'll be supporting that and we hope you'll be with us on that one. Hope you'll take a good look at it, and if you need any information about it, we'll send that up to you."

That conversation is perfectly legal under the current laws of the United States, and it probably takes place daily in Washington, D.C. It is an absolute outrage! You know, if that conversation took place with someone in the executive branch, someone would go to jail.

I remember standing on the floor of the House one night when we were voting on the issue of regulations affecting the funeral industry, which were, in my view, eminently reasonable. The funeral industry was opposed to this regulation. A rumor swept across the floor of the House that anybody who voted against the regulation would get \$5,000 from the industry PAC for his or her upcoming campaign. I don't know if that rumor was true or not, but it flew around the place. Everybody was sort of laughing about this. There's not a doubt in my mind that that rumor had an effect on votes. I was standing next to a

guy who, as he put his card in the machine [that registers representatives' votes], said, "You know, I was going to vote against the industry on this thing, but what the hell, I can use the \$5,000."

During the months preceding an election, I would say that more than half the conversations between congressmen relate to fundraising. "How are you doing with your fundraising? Will you stop by my fundraiser? God, I'm having a tough time getting money out of X—do you know anybody over there that could help? Do you have access to a rock group or a movie star that could help me with my fundraising?" More often than not the question is not "Who's your opponent?" or "What are the issues in your race?" It's "How much money have you raised?" Money permeates the whole place.

► Former Senator Charles McC. Mathias of Maryland

Mac Mathias's moderate stances often enraged more conservative members of the Republican party. But they made him popular with Maryland Democrats, and helped him win three successive Senate terms, beginning in 1968. Mathias's seniority made him the chairman of the Senate Rules Committee, which handles campaign-finance reform legislation. In 1986, Mathias chose not to seek reelection. A factor in that decision was what he called the "daunting" prospect of having to raise millions in campaign funds.

The need to raise money has now gotten so serious that the practice has grown up in the last several years of providing "windows" in the Senate schedule. A window is a period of time in which it is understood that there will be no roll-call votes. Senators are assured that they won't be embarrassed by being absent for a recorded vote. Windows usually occur between six and eight in the evening, which is the normal time for holding fundraising cocktail parties. The Senate majority leader says, "There will be a window between six and eight"—or between seven and nine, or whatever. That is a euphemism for saying that's the period in which you can go out and raise money while the Senate's in session.

I did one of those TV debates for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. I was shocked because one of the Chamber's people, in the course of the discussion, said, "You can't do away with campaign contributions because no public official would do anything for you. How would you ever get anything done?" In some circles that is really the naked truth—that is, this is an outright lever that you *buy* to get governmental action. And this person said so right on the air.

► Former Senator Thomas Eagleton of Missouri

After his reelection in 1980, Tom Eagleton and his wife decided he would not seek another term in 1986, largely because he was disaffected by the pressures of fundraising. But the Eagletons kept the decision to themselves for two years. Senator Eagleton now practices law and teaches in St. Louis.

There were about three compelling reasons not to seek reelection, and the money-raising factor was very high on the list. I just did not want to go through what I called the tin-cup routine—that is, begging for money, literally, from Maine to Hawaii. Psychologically, I didn't want to do it. It was just making me view the whole process of seeking reelection in a very negative way. My wife and I knew in '80 that that was the last one I was going to go through. After raising \$1.3 million, I said, "I'm just not going to do the tin-cupping again."

So the question of where the money was going to come from wasn't a problem for me for the final six years. When Mr. X came in to see me on behalf of, or opposed to, a certain amendment, I didn't have to put money on the scale and say, "How does this factor out in fundraising?"—as might be the case if I were running for reelection. If I'd been thinking of running again, I'd have said, "That's a good potential fundraising source. Those people are some big bucks."

From '80 to '86, the cost of a Senate race in Missouri on the Democratic side went up three and a half times. Thus, for the last two years, a senator is personally spending 60 or 70 percent of his time either thinking about, planning, or implementing fundraising strategy. And the other 30 percent, he is spending being a senator.

I had any number of senators come up to me and say, "Someday I guess I'll make the decision to retire. I know how you feel about the money-raising thing. God, I feel the same as you do...except I just want one more term." You could talk privately to a hundred members of the Senate—90 of them would deplore the present fundraising system. But not all 90 of them would vote to change it.

► Senator Kent Conrad of North Dakota

In 1986, Kent Conrad won a narrow election in a senatorial campaign that was extraordinarily expensive for that state. Total spending was about six times what it had been six years earlier. Both Conrad and his opponent, Republican in-

Mondale: It Was A Nightmare

by Tom Hamburger

"You can't imagine the nightmare of this," says Walter Mondale.

The nightmare was his schedule. In the years he spent running for president, between 50 to 60 percent of his waking time was devoted to the quest for funds, according to a review of Mondale's schedule and interviews with him and his aides.

On Sunday, June 26, 1983, for instance, the campaign hired a helicopter to fly Mondale to four New Jersey communities. But if you couldn't pay the \$500 to \$1,000 admission fee, Mondale probably wouldn't see you. And don't try this "I want to meet the candidate before I decide to contribute" stuff either. It's cash up front. No money, no Mondale.

With individual contributions limited to \$1,000, Mondale had to greet a lot of people. "In the early days, you'd go to a home and you'd raise \$20,000 and you'd say 'Wow,'" Mondale said. "But when you realize you're short of your goal" you'd try to make sure the financial returns were guaranteed. So Mondale adopted the no-more-auditions rule and tried to attend a fundraiser only if the return of \$50,000 was likely.

While television shows the candidates seeking votes at the factory gates and on the dairy farms, Mondale said, the real campaign footage should show them "going from living room to living room, from banquet hall to banquet hall" soliciting funds.

"The pressure to raise money drives the candidate to fundraiser after fundraiser until it absorbs his entire campaign," Mondale said. "Even without knowing it, the pressure of fundraising can move a candidate away from poverty issues, children's issues, and education concerns, and toward the things in which you can raise money." "Fundamentally it's wrong, because it takes so much of your time to raise money when you should be with the public answering questions."

Tom Hamburger reports from the Washington bureau of the Minneapolis-St. Paul Star Tribune.

A week in Mondale's presidential campaign

Tuesday, June 21, 1983

2:20 p.m./Leave for New York City.

5:15 p.m./\$1,000-per-person reception at the 21 Club. Estimated amount raised: \$50,000.

6:15 p.m./\$1,000-per-couple fundraiser with real-estate people. Estimated amount raised: \$25,000.

7:45 p.m./\$1,000-per-couple fundraiser dinner. Estimated amount raised: \$50,000.

Wednesday, June 22

8:05 a.m./\$1,000-per-person fundraiser breakfast. Estimated amount raised: \$25,000.

9:15 a.m./Return to Washington, D.C.

1:15 p.m./Return to airport for flight to Philadelphia.

5:30 p.m./\$250-per-person fundraiser. Estimated amount raised: \$25,000.

6:45 p.m./Fund-raiser at private home. Estimate unavailable.

Thursday, June 23

8:10 a.m./\$500-per-person fundraiser breakfast. Estimated amount raised: \$10,000 to \$12,500.

9:55 a.m./Fly to Pittsburgh.

11 a.m./Arrive in Pittsburgh and meet with David Roderick, chairman of the board of U.S. Steel.

Noon/Attend lunch organized by Roderick and Pittsburgh's mayor.

5:45 p.m./Private meeting with fund-raiser.

6:30 p.m./\$1,000-per-person fundraiser cocktail party. Estimated amount raised: \$50,000.

7:45 p.m./\$1,000-per-couple fundraiser at private home. Estimated amount raised: \$25,000.

9:30 p.m./Return to Washington, D.C.

Friday, June 24

Part of the day devoted to making telephone contribution requests.

Saturday, June 25

Noon/Depart for Minneapolis.

2 p.m./Arrive in Minneapolis and meet with Tom Borman, Minnesota fund-raiser, and campaign staff.

4:30 p.m./\$50-per-person fundraiser with farmers. Estimated amount raised: \$5,000.

Sat., June 25 (cont.)

5:45 p.m./\$500-per-couple fundraiser. Estimated amount raised: \$62,500.

7 p.m./\$100-per-person reception at the Landmark Center in St. Paul. Estimated amount raised: \$25,000.

8:45 p.m./Return to North Oaks home.

Sunday, June 26

7:30 a.m./Fly to New York City, then pick up helicopter and fly to Seacaucus, N.J.

12:10 p.m./Drive to a \$500-per-person fund-raiser. Estimated amount raised: \$125,000.

1:45 p.m./Take helicopter to Princeton, N.J.

2:20 p.m./\$250-per-person fundraiser at private home. Estimated amount raised: \$37,500.

3:20 p.m./Take helicopter to Orange, N.J.

4:45 p.m./\$500-per-person fundraiser at private home. Estimated amount raised: \$50,000.

5:45 p.m./Take helicopter to Sadie River, N.J.

6:30 p.m./\$500-per-person reception at private home. Estimated amount raised: \$50,000.

7:45 p.m./Fly to New York City.

Monday, June 27

8:15 a.m./Reception for lawyers paying \$100 to \$250 each. Estimated amount raised: \$15,000 to \$37,500.

9:30 a.m./Visit headquarters of Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union.

2:30 p.m./\$250-per-person fundraiser. Estimated amount raised: \$25,000.

4:15 p.m./Meet with staff.

6:50 p.m./Fund-raiser hosted by New York area officials. Estimated amount raised: \$50,000 to \$60,000.

8 p.m./Fund-raiser dinner at private home. Estimated amount raised: \$20,000 to \$25,000.

Tuesday, June 28

9:15 a.m./Private meetings with potential fund-raisers and others.

1 p.m./Depart for Atlanta.

4 p.m./Meet with Georgia supporters, press and staff.

6 p.m./Attend fundraiser. Estimated amount raised: \$30,000.

Note: The amounts raised at each fund-raiser listed above are estimates arrived at by multiplying admission price by turn-out predictions in Mondale's travel schedule.

Source: Mondale campaign documents.

Reprinted from the Minneapolis-St. Paul Star Tribune.

Michael Barnes: "I was standing next to a guy who, as he put his card in the machine, said, 'You know I was going to vote against the industry on this thing, but what the hell, I can use the \$5,000.'"

cumbent Mark Andrews, got half their money from PACs, far more than the average in a senatorial contest. And both traveled to distant states in search of contributions from wealthy individuals.

You ask if I've already started raising money for the next time. The answer is absolutely.

Those who want to represent the broad public interest find themselves in a terrible dilemma. If you're going to run successfully in the country today, you have to have sufficient funds to do so. Take my own state. I spent about \$900,000 in my campaign, my opponent probably three times that much. There's no way you can raise that kind of money in a state like North Dakota. So you're going to California to raise money for a race in North Dakota. You're going to New York to raise money for a race in North Dakota. It just doesn't make any sense. It's in the national interest to put a cap on spending.

► **Congressman Mike Synar of Oklahoma**

Since he came to the House in 1978 at the age of 28, Mike Synar has been one of the few members of Congress who refuse to accept campaign contributions from PACs. He says he raises all he needs from two mammoth barbecues a year—one in his district and one in Washington. Those are unusually successful events. In the 1984 and 1986 elections, he took in \$335,000 and \$271,000, respectively. Synar is an advocate of campaign-finance reform and of government aid to election campaigns in particular.

In 1978 when I ran for office, a winning person spent about \$52,000 to get elected. Today that number is over \$400,000. What that means is that someone like Mike Synar, if he was sitting in Muskogee, Oklahoma today, could not run for the United States Congress.

The second problem is the amount of time that a member of Congress has to spend raising money. When you figure that an average race

costs \$400,000 to win, and you figure that there's only 24 months in a campaign cycle, and you divide those out, you're talking about having to raise somewhere in the neighborhood of \$20,000 a month. Think of the amount of time that you have to focus to do that.

With more and more demands on the elected officials' time, they try to seek the path of least resistance, and the path of least resistance is large globs of money from political action committees. So PACs have a disproportionate role in the process. Individual contributors aren't competitive with PACs.

How bad is it? Well, I'll tell you how bad it is. If you're a Republican from Oklahoma and you want to run against Mike Synar today, you could fly here to Washington, D.C. and based upon my liberal voting record walk around this town for two days and raise \$250,000 and become a legitimate candidate for my office without ever having raised a penny in my home district. I think there's something wrong when you can become a legitimate candidate without showing any sense of support financially or organizationally within your own district.

► **Congressman Jim Leach of Iowa**

Jim Leach is one of a handful of House members who refuse to take campaign money from PACs and is at the forefront of the campaign-reform movement in the House. In 1985 and 1986, he joined with Synar in sponsoring a bill to limit the amount of PAC money any House candidate could receive in an election.

Prohibit group giving, period. I'd make all contributions individual. I would also prohibit giving from outside the state. Why allow an Iowan to influence a Nebraskan or a New Yorker to influence a Californian? That's why in my own campaigns I don't accept PACs and I also don't accept out-of-state gifts.

We have \$10 or \$20 receptions throughout the district. We have a hog roast, we have barbecues

in which we seek small contributions. But it's very time-consuming and difficult as contrasted with the people around Washington. Every night of the week here, there's a reception at the Capitol Hill Club for candidates, and they can raise \$10,000 to \$150,000. That takes me three weeks. Twenty events. But on the other hand, my way gets more people involved in the process. And I think it makes them feel a little bit more part of it. For example, how much a part of a campaign is someone going to feel if they give \$10 to a candidate who just got \$10,000 from ten different unions? Or ten different businesses?

►Congresswoman Claudine Schneider of Rhode Island

When Claudine Schneider first ran for Congress in 1978, she raised a total of \$40,000—almost all through bake sales, art auctions, and the like. PACs that year gave her a grand total of \$1,700. Yet she received 48 percent of the vote. So when she ran again in 1980, her cause was no longer regarded as hopeless and the PACs came through with nearly \$106,000. She won comfortably that year, with 55 percent of the vote. In ensuing years, her popularity has increased (she has won, successively, 62 percent, 68 percent, and, in 1986, 72 percent of the vote) and so has the PAC money she has received. In 1986, even though she does not sit on any of the lucrative "PAC heaven" committees, she received \$163,000 from PACs, nearly half her total campaign receipts.

When I went to the PACs for money in 1978, they said, "You've got to be kidding. Rhode Island is a hard-core Democratic state. They haven't had a Republican since 1938. Not a chance." Secondly, the comments were, "Wait a minute, that's a very ethnic state." We have a lot of Italians in my district, and I had many older Italian men and women say to me, "You know, you ought to be home making spaghetti and having babies." And that was very frustrating. And the PACs basically anticipated that: "The likelihood of [the voters] selecting a woman is pretty slim. So I'm afraid we, you know, can't help you on two counts." So it was both a woman and a Republican that were the deterrents to many to make contributions.

I don't spend much time raising PAC money at all, now. It didn't require a whole lot of effort to go and raise the \$163,000 of PAC money I got in 1986. The fact is that it was coming in; I wasn't about to say, "Hold off, boys." My feeling is whenever I can raise money, even though I got

68 percent of the vote, or whatever, is that what I raise today, I won't have to raise tomorrow. I spend more time strategizing and trying to figure out who I would like to get money from that I haven't yet. I'm on the Science and Technology Committee. So what am I doing that would be of interest to, for example, the high-tech community?

►Former Congressman Toby Moffett of Connecticut

Toby Moffett was 30 years old when he was elected to Congress as a member of the post-Watergate class of 1974. He soon won a seat on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, one of the PAC hot spots, handling legislation regulating the oil, chemical, broadcasting, and health industries. An unalloyed liberal (he might prefer the term "progressive"), he made an unsuccessful run for the U.S. Senate in 1982 against incumbent Republican Lowell Weicker. He is now a TV anchorman in Hartford.

In my 1982 Senate race, we had some fundraising people, the kinds of people that you bring on when you've got to raise a lot of money—I mean, very cold-blooded. You know, never mind the issues, let's get the money in. And I remember very, very well their telling me in, maybe September, that we had to come up with \$25,000 immediately for a down payment on a television buy. And I remember sitting down with a member of the House from the farm states, and he said, "How's it going?" I said, "Horrible, I've got to come up with \$25,000." He said, "How about some dairy money?" And I said, "Oh, no! I can't do that." Remember in the seventies, dairy money had a pretty bad name.

He said, "Well, I can get you ten or fifteen thousand." I said, "Really?" He said, "Yeah. You know, your record has been pretty good on those issues. I think I can do it." Well, I went back to him the next day and said, "Let's do it."

By the time I got to the last month of the campaign, I was telling my wife and my close friends that here I was, somebody who took less PAC money, I think, than anybody running that year, but I felt strongly that I wasn't going to be the kind of senator that I had planned on being when I started out. I felt like they were taking a piece out of me. One day it was insurance money, the next day it was dairy money.

I remember during the Carter years, right in the middle of the hospital-cost-control vote—the hospitals and the AMA were just throwing money at the [House Commerce] Committee

[which was handling the bill] as fast as they could. It was coming in wheelbarrows. The PACs took those 10 or 15 [swing] votes, and they really went to work on 'em. It was just no secret.

► Former Congressman Bob Edgar of Pennsylvania

Bob Edgar was elected to a lopsidedly Republican congressional district in the Philadelphia suburbs in the post-Watergate year, 1974. In 1986 he left the House and made an unsuccessful run for the U.S. Senate.

A hundred days before the November 1986 election for the Senate, I realized that I had to raise \$2.5 million. That's \$25,000 a day, every day, from that hundredth day down to zero. Anyone who has ever raised money knows that if you're a really good fundraiser, you can probably raise \$25,000 in one event. Think about raising that today and waking up tomorrow morning knowing you had to raise it tomorrow, the next day, the following day, to raise enough money to continue to keep your message on the air. Eighty percent of my time, 80 percent of my staff's time, 80 percent of my events and meetings were fundraisers.

It has a terrible impact on you, when you start making choices in your schedule. Rather than going to a senior center, I would go to a party where I could raise \$3,000 or \$4,000. I started to go to fundraising events—three, four, five a day. That whole fundraising fever has a dramatic impact on a campaign that wants to talk peace-and-justice issues, women's rights, senior-citizen rights, environmental issues.

So, in addition to some form of public-private financing of campaigns, I'm very much for opening up the airwaves so that people can get access to their candidates without the candidates having to spend a bundle. They're public airwaves.

► Former Congressman Tom Railsback of Illinois

In the House, where he represented a southeastern Illinois district from 1966 to 1982, Railsback's name was associated prominently with the cause of campaign-finance reform. Along with his Democratic colleague, Dave Obey of Wisconsin, he sponsored the Obey-Railsback bill, to limit the amount of money any congressional candidate could receive from PACs. In 1982, Railsback was defeated in the primary by a conservative Republican. He now practices law in Washington, D.C.

When I became ranking Republican on the

Judiciary subcommittee that dealt with patents and copyrights, I thought it was just a subordinate, secondary committee. Then we got into this doggone copyright revision that occurred in the mid-seventies. All of a sudden, the members of that subcommittee were the subject of lobbying activities by the broadcasters, by the sports people, by the movie industry, and by the cable-television industry. I have never been lobbied more intensely in my 20 years as a legislator. Suddenly there were trips to Hollywood, invitations to speak to broadcasters, invitations to speak to the cable industry, independent TV stations, and so forth.

► Senator Lawton Chiles of Florida

In 1970, as an unknown state senator, Lawton Chiles spent 92 days hiking across Florida and transformed his long-shot candidacy into a seat in the United States Senate.

In 1976, Chiles limited contributions to \$10 and refused to accept contributions from out-of-state donors. In 1982, when the Republican party promised to underwrite his opponent heavily, he apologetically raised the ceiling to \$100 but added a new restriction: he would not accept PAC contributions. Last year he announced he would not seek reelection in 1988.

When I sit down with my fellow senators, they say, "The bane of our existence is fundraising. We're having to do it over six years and we're having to go to Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Florida. A lot of us spend a lot of time there. But that's what I have to do at night. That's what I have to do on weekends. And of course, for these big, big PACs, I have to be pretty careful about what my voting record is going to be."

I think if out-of-state contributions were prohibited, you'd have a better chance of those people in your state making the decision based on the merit of the candidate. I think if one candidate, who usually would be an incumbent, can go raise all kinds of out-of-state money, I think he can [distort] his record very much.

A lot of people seem to think that somebody gives you a PAC contribution, then they come in and say, "I expect you to vote for this." It never happens that way. All that person wants you to do is to take and take and take, and then when he comes in, he never says, "I expect." It's always on the basis of, "This is a big one for me, and maybe my job's on the line." He doesn't need to say anything more than that because the hook is already in you, and if you've taken it, you know it, and you know you know it. □

TIDBITS AND OUTRAGES

LOOKS THAT KILL

After the recent Bing Bang Boom conference in Miami to promote the purchase of smaller weapons, the show's promoter said: "What we're trying to do is show the contemporary woman that she can carry a concealed weapon and still look good."

SURE, NOW IT SEEMS LIKE A QUIRKY HABIT, BUT COME OPENING DAY IT COULD COME IN PRETTY HANDY

In Kingston, Rhode Island, Sara Sprague, a high school student, has been sent to the principal for singing "The Star Spangled Banner."



THE BAND PLAYED "TAKE THE A TRAIN" AS THE GUEST OF HONOR MADE HIS WAY FROM THE BACK OF THE ROOM TO ACCEPT THE AWARD At the 17th Anniversary Dinner of the New York State Rifle & Pistol Clubs, the guest of honor was Bernhard Goetz.

THEY'RE HOLDING OUT FOR INCREASED DENTAL BENEFITS AND A 13% COLA

According to the *Philadelphia Daily News*, the AFL-CIO cannot find a spokesman for their new TV ads.

BRING YOUR #2 FONDUE FORK TO THE EXAM

The Connecticut legislature is considering establishing a state license for restaurant critics.

I HAVE A NUMBER



HIS VISION
HONOR THE DREAM
DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. 1929-1968
D.C. Lottery
THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA LOTTERY AND HARBORLANDS GAMES CONTROL BOARD

AS A FLOOD OF JAPANESE IMPORTS CONTINUES TO SWEEP OVER OUR NATION'S SHORES, AMERICAN BUSINESS IS ROLLING UP ITS SLEEVES AND FIGHTING BACK WITH ONE IMPORTANT WORD: QUALITY

An executive of the Beech-Nut Company recently told *BusinessWeek* "So suppose the stuff was all flavor and sugar? . . . Why get so upset about it? Who were we hurting?"