



Spotlight

On Political Money
and the Yeas \$ Nays

Nonpartisan accountability coverage of U.S. House members ■ www.voterama.info ■ @VoteramaDC

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Donors Give, Congress Votes, Citizens Cope

House Push for Deregulation Aligns With Campaign Receipts

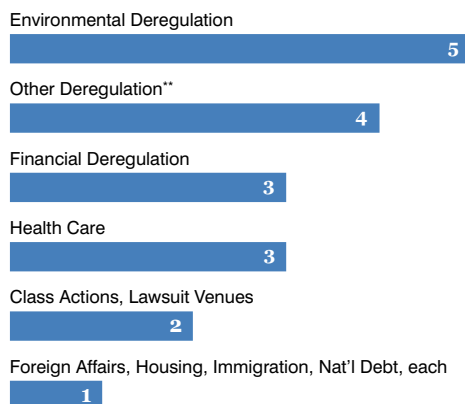
With huge contributions flowing into presidential and congressional races at the same time growing numbers of economically pressed voters are rebelling against entrenched powers in both parties, it's not surprising that the issue of campaign-finance reform has become a flash point in the U.S. political discussion.

Bernie Sanders, running for president as a Democrat, has led the way in stoking public displeasure over the extent to which interest groups and wealthy individuals influence outcomes on Election Day and the policy-making that follows. Donald Trump, while personally wobbly on the issue, has brought into electoral politics many individuals who decry the campaign-finance system as an enabler of the establishment they seek to topple. And Hillary Clinton, pummeled by Sanders over ties to Wall Street, features a detailed political-money reform agenda on her presidential campaign's website.

Based on numbers from previous cycles, House races in 2015-2016 appear likely to attract more than \$1 billion in publicly reported contributions, and Senate races this cycle could garner more than \$800 million in disclosed donations. In addition, Supreme Court rulings in 2010 and creative interpretations of IRS rules governing nonprofit groups have enabled businesses, labor unions, interest groups and wealthy individuals to bring unlimited sums of money to bear on congressional races, with the sources of many of those donations not disclosed to the public.

Final Passage Votes on Major House Bills*

Number of Votes by Category, January-March, 2016



*All major bills were sponsored by Republicans, who control the House.

**Other than environmental and financial deregulation.

It is difficult for the public to relate such high-flying numbers to the mundane business of making laws. To help shed light on the connection, this newsletter provides a snapshot of three typical months in the legislative life of the U.S. House — describing all major bills passed during the period and listing relevant donations received by the bills' leading sponsors. While perfectly legal, the associations shown here offer a glimpse of how special interests advance their agendas, which may or may not coincide with those of everyday constituents watching from the sidelines.

During January-March of 2016, GOP leaders brought to the floor and passed 21 major bills, 15 of which were tailor-made for the party's business wing — 12 dealing with financial, environmental and other forms of deregulation; one undercutting class-action lawsuits by consumers; one bemoaning the national debt and one designed to move civil litigation from federal to more-business-friendly state courts. The following pages provide details of these measures and associated campaign contributions.