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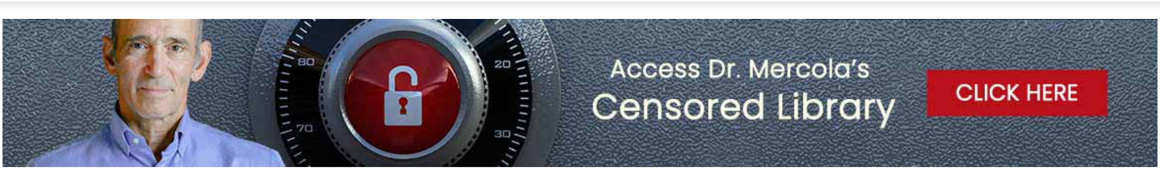

Leaked Audio Exposes Level of Corruption in DC

Analysis by Dr. Joseph Mercola Fact Checked

May 05, 2022
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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Leaked audio from an event held in March 2022 by Alabama U.S. Rep. Mo Brooks explains that seats on the most powerful committees in Congress must be bought, at a price of $1 million or more
- The money for these seats comes from lobbyists, who offer to pay the price of the seat in exchange for political favors
- "Special interest groups run Washington, and I don't mean that metaphorically," Brooks said. "I mean literally"
- This arrangement corrupts debate on public policy, but while the national media is aware of the issue, and both political parties are guilty of engaging in it, no one is bringing it to the forefront as a major public policy issue

If you had any doubt that U.S. politics are run by a pay-to-play system, listen to the striking commentary made by Alabama U.S. Rep. Mo Brooks in the video above. The leaked audio is from an event held in March 2022[1] and explains, in no uncertain terms, that seats on the most powerful committees in Congress must be bought, at a price of $1 million or more.

The money for these seats doesn't come from average Americans, who typically can't afford to donate that much. It comes from lobbyists, who offer to pay the price of the seat in exchange for political favors. "Special interest groups run Washington, and I don't mean that metaphorically," Brooks said. "I mean literally."[2]

The Truth About Corruption in DC

Brooks, who is running for Senate, said to event attendees, "I'm sure that you are very much concerned about why our Congress is so unresponsive to the regular needs of American citizens, why some of these policies that come out are so bizarre, so unfair, so skewered against regular Jane and Joe Citizen."[3] The reason is simple, he continued — it's because of the entrenched corruption. He continued:[4]

> *"Now here is how it happens. In the House of Representatives — I use that as an example because that's where I work — if you want to be chairman of a major committee, you have to purchase it. And the purchase price for a major committee, say like Ways and Means, minimum bid is a million dollars. And I'm talking literally here. I'm not talking metaphorically, OK?"*

He then goes on to explain that the committees are actually broken down into categories depending on their different price points:[5]

> *"We have committees broken down by A group, B group and C group. C are the cheapest, B are … middling, A is the most expensive. It's the most expensive because those are the committees that the special interest groups care the most about."*

In the U.S. House of Representatives, committees play an important role. They consider bills and issues as well as oversee agencies, programs and activities that fall within their jurisdictions.[6] The only congresspersons who can afford seats on the most expensive committees, however, are typically those who take lobbyists' money to do so:[7]

> *"So where does a congressman come up with $1 million to be chairman of one of these eight committees? You can't get it from Joe and Jane Citizen because Joe and Jane Citizen back home, they're not going to be contributing that kind of money. They don't have it. They need that money for their own families … And so you have to get it from the special interest groups."*

Politicians Depend on Money From Lobbyists in Quid Pro Quo

Money from special interest groups comes with strings attached, and the groups give it out strategically to gain leverage on politicians who will further their own agendas.[8] According to Brooks:[9]

> *"With the special interest groups, there is a quid pro quo. If you don't do what they tell you to do, they won't give you the money that finances your chairmanship. I had one guy who ran for the chairman of the NRCC, which is where the Republicans pay their money for these committee assignments and chairmanships, just as the Democrats pay theirs to the DCCC.*
>
> *And this guy who wanted to be chair of the NRCC actually had a brochure and that brochure had price listings written on it. And his argument for getting elected was, 'Elect me. I will charge you less.'"*

This arrangement, however, corrupts debate on public policy. "We need to be in a position of power," Brooks said. "You have to do what the special interest groups require, which undermines the public policy debate.

The money now is triumph."[10] He then gave the example of Rep. Thomas Massie, who was approached by a lobbyist from the medical device sector who offered to pay $500,000 so Massie could be on the Ways and Means Committee, which oversees tax policy — but only if he would sponsor a patent bill.

The Ways and Means Committee, by the way, is one of the most powerful and sought-after committees. To give you an idea of how coveted a seat on this committee is, Open Secrets explained:[11]

> *"When Congress is drafting tax legislation, there is no committee busier and more popular than House Ways and Means. Lobbyists often pay people to stand in the corridors of Congress watching committee members' every move. Because when it comes to this type of complex legislation, every detail counts for something.*
>
> *Special interests often use these behemoth bills as vehicles for their legislative wish lists, hoping the sheer size of the proposals will divert attention from their sought-after provisions. Since tax bills affect so many industries' bottom lines, it's little surprise that members should attract generous donations from a variety of sources, including health professionals and insurance companies."*

"Thomas is brilliant. He has patents, he's an MIT grad," Brooks said, so Massie agreed to look at the patent, which turned out to be harmful to small inventors. "The people with the power and the money are going to use that power and money to steal the patent rights from the person who actually had the idea, who should be reaping the rewards of that idea," Brooks said.[12]

Massie told the lobbyist he wouldn't sponsor the patent, so the lobbyist took back his offer to pay the $500,000. This story was published by USA Today in 2016, meaning it's no secret that such exchanges occur. At the time, Massie told USA Today:[13]

> *"It was one of the scummiest meetings I've ever been in. I left just reeling, thinking about the implications for how this place works, when you realize that the lobbyists pick who goes on which committee."*

There was only one thing that Massie wished he'd said differently to the press, Brooks said. He'd talked about lobbyists buying committee assignments, but really, he told Brooks, "It's a rental agreement. You have to pay it every two years."[14]

Most Politicians Are Working for Their Own Self-Interest

What's clear is that systemic corruption is present, with most politicians not fighting for the public but, rather, looking out for their own self-interest and wealth accumulation. Many political campaigns run on the platform that they're just like the average American, but personal financial disclosures reveal that more than half of Congress members are millionaires, with a median net worth of just over $1 million.[15]

Further, the top 10% of the lawmakers in terms of wealth are three times richer than the bottom 90%.[16] Many of them become multimillionaires by trading stocks and options. Are their successful trades just luck or do they benefit from their inside knowledge about the corporations they trade — and their power to wield legislation that affects the companies' futures?

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, for instance, earns $223,500 a year, making her the third-highest-paid elected official in the U.S.[17] Yet, since 2004, her wealth has increased from $41 million to nearly $115 million, according to OpenSecrets, which began tracking lawmakers' personal finances that year.[18]

In the last two years, nearly 75% of Pelosi's stock trades have involved Big Tech stocks, totaling over $33 million in trading. "That has happened as major legislation is pending before the House, controlled by the committees Pelosi oversees, which could radically reshape the industry and laws that govern the very companies in which she and her husband most aggressively trade," Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Glenn Greenwald wrote.[19]

Greenwald also revealed that Pelosi's five most-traded stocks in the last two years — Apple, Microsoft, Facebook, Amazon and Google — were those that stood to be most affected by pending legislation. And, not just any legislation, but legislation that she was working to negotiate and work through Congress.

Another example is Sen. Kelly Loeffler, R-Ga., who has an estimated worth of over $500 million.[20] She and her husband, New York Stock Exchange chief executive Jeff Sprecher, came under fire for suspicious stock trades worth between $1.2 million and $3.1 million that occurred immediately after a "closed-door coronavirus briefing in late January" 2020.[21] Among them:[22]

- Buying stock in an online travel booking site in February 2020, then selling it four days later, just before a ban on flights from Europe was publicly announced
- Purchasing stock in Citrix, which sells GoToMeeting teleworking software

Sen. Richard Burr, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, who receives frequent briefings about potential U.S. threats, also dumped stock, including in hotel companies, worth up to $1.7 million in late January 2020.[23] Sen. Dianne Feinstein from California and Sen. James Inhofe of Oklahoma also sold stock after Intelligence Committee briefings.[24]

Revolving Door: Politicians Often Become Lobbyists

Another issue is the revolving door between politicians, who are supposed to be performing a public service, and the private sector. After their political careers end, many go on to serve as lobbyists or work in the corporate world, which means that during their tenure, they want to keep doors open that may help them once they're no longer in politics. As noted by Open Secrets:[25]

> *"When American voters discard elected officials — and their staffs — lobbying firms and interest groups are quick to snap up the unemployed. Lobbying firms — which often charge steep fees from their deep-pocketed clients — can offer former government employees salaries far greater than those proffered by Uncle Sam, as well as continued influence on Capitol Hill.*
>
> *In return, firms get lobbyists who already have established connections in the federal government and whose résumés can act as a powerful draw for potential clients."*

In regard to former members of the 115th Congress alone, out of 106 members, 62 found new employment — nearly half of them with lobbying firms:[26]

> *"Lawmakers who exited their congressional offices in January 2019 landed in a variety of careers — but as usual, a good share of them spun through the revolving door to lobbying shops. While they technically couldn't lobby their former colleagues immediately (though the same wasn't true of the executive branch), they could keep themselves busy during their cooling-off periods by advising clients and bearing titles like 'strategic adviser.'"*

The Corruption Runs Deep

Regarding the pay-to-play corruption exposed by Brooks and Massie, while the national media are aware of the issue, and both political parties are guilty of engaging in it, no one is bringing it to the forefront as a major public policy issue.[27] Yet, the corruption runs so deep that, in the "Breaking Points" video above, it's pointed out that even Brooks and Massie aren't immune.

While Brooks has received money from real estate interests and developers, and the military-industrial complex industry, Massie has personally invited lobbyists to fundraising events. "He's playing the game himself here," host Krystal Ball says, referring to Brooks. "He's exposing the game in this regard, but in no way are his hands clean … They love to posture, but then they're just as guilty of playing the same game as everybody else."[28]

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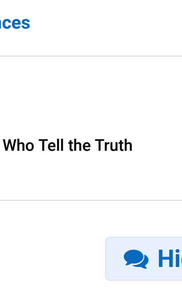

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kj1990
Joined On 8/5/2021 4:29:24 AM
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The most important thing is about how to FIX this issue…I don't have the answer, but I believe that the most efficient solution is by Constitutional amendments limiting the power of Congress, which would require a Constitutional convention. Check out the Convention of States organization if you're interested, and please be advised that any proposed amendments would have to be approved by 3/4 of the state legislatures afterwards, so it wouldn't be a quick destruction of the Constitution like some people who are opposed to it fear

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 5/5/2022 5:12:44 AM
Like | Dislike

sumosha
Joined On 11/12/2021 9:31:38 PM
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Technically most everything Congress does already violates the Constitution, so we don't need to wait for an amendment. Maybe our Scotus has some hope and can start overturning the unconstitutional laws, including the establishment of every agency which doesn't strictly fall in the enumerated powers of the us government. One can dream. On another note, I am concerned about the current convention of states as this is being organized by neocon types who aren't truly America First. I don't trust what they will ultimately push through. One point of issue is the distraction of term limits. At minimum, a term limit won't solve anything.

We know politics is controlled by the party (either one, they're the same), an unelected group. The party will just round up the next in line, to be trained by the former, just as they do today. At worst, it further entrenches the power of that party. There is no longer any incentive for a representative to work in the interests of their voters, there isn't even a reelection to worry about. It also ensures that any good representative will be removed promptly so they can have little to no impact. I wonder, why is this one of the main amendments that this convention of states proposes? I don't trust it.

Mark as Spam | Posted On 5/5/2022 6:56:19 AM
Like | Dislike

FJL
Joined On 6/19/2006 8:25:55 PM
Add as Friend | Send Message

movetoamend.org

Mark as Spam | Posted On 5/5/2022 7:05:13 AM
Like | Dislike

glennlawngirl
Joined On 12/13/2021 6:32:24 AM
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I agree. I donate to Convention of States Action (conventionofstates.com) because the only way the sick corrupt government is going to get fixed, is at the state level. They will never stop overspending overreaching self enriching on their own. South Carolina just signed onto convention and that makes 19 states! The feds are very afraid of a convention and lie that it will destroy the constitution. The only ones destroying the constitution are they themselves, both red and blue.

Mark as Spam | Posted On 5/5/2022 7:21:16 AM
Like | Dislike

HealthHopes
Joined On 3/12/2010 2:53:28 AM
Add as Friend | Send Message

Amendments do not require a constitutional convention. In fact, at a constitutional convention, all could be lost.

Mark as Spam | Posted On 5/6/2022 4:08:35 AM
Like | Dislike

grulla
Joined On 1/17/2012 8:03:55 AM
Add as Friend | Send Message

@"HealthHopes", "Amendments do not require a constitutional convention. In fact, at a constitutional convention, all could be lost." Much agreed, one issue at a time. THANKS!!!

Mark as Spam | Posted On 5/6/2022 8:20:28 AM
Like | Dislike

Cha27220
Joined On 3/16/2022 8:12:02 AM
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What I've learned more than anything since the Plandemic first started is that this world is run by evil, corrupt people. It is a bottomless cesspool of swamp creatures and it's disgusting. It won't change unless and until money is taken out of politics.

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 5/5/2022 7:29:39 AM
Like | Dislike

Shannon_Flaherty
Joined On 2/19/2021 6:52:36 AM
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This is nothing new. It has been going on for decades (or more). I have been saying since I learned about US "government" in high school that lobbying needs to be stopped. It disgusts me and so does "Privileged Scrub" Pelosi and her "birdbaths." She's nothing but a drunken idiot.

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 5/5/2022 7:18:42 AM
Like | Dislike

pinklucygirl
Joined On 10/11/2007 5:25:43 AM
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There is a movement in Texas called Texit that seeks to secede from the US because the federal government is so corrupt it is irredeemable. I'm beginning to think they are right. Washington is a giant vacuum sucking up the resources and soul of this country. It was a tragic day for America when Democrat Woodrow Wilson conned the American people into accepting the income tax "because it would only affect the top 1%." They waste our hard-earned money to pay themselves and their pals. They don't give a fig for honest, hard-working Americans. They promote the most outrageous left-wing ideas and foist it on the people. They do way more harm than good.

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 5/5/2022 11:11:56 AM
Like | Dislike

Keythong
Joined On 3/2/2021 12:07:23 PM
Add as Friend | Send Message

This isn't news, it happens in all representative systems where money can gain influence, especially when there is separate representative class, like the political class or clergy! Democracy was always a farce, and republicanism is a farce too, for similar reasons, because the representatives eventually seek to insulate themselves from consequences, thus are vulnerable to the temptations of graft, bribery, and other corruption. All hierarchical systems are vulnerable to this curse. Without meaningful consequences, misrule is inevitable.

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 5/6/2022 6:36:24 AM
Like | Dislike

wareagle82
Joined On 1/25/2022 10:01:46 AM
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Blaming lobbyists and "special interests" is a convenient dodge by Brooks and is designed to miss the point. Every transaction requires buyers AND sellers. A seat cannot be purchased if it's not for sale. What is evident is that Congress needs more people of Massie's mindset and fewer of the careerists who have turned public service into self-service. The only thing new here is the truth being broadcast outside of those private meetings where people help themselves while pretending to care about their constituents.

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 5/5/2022 12:04:38 PM
Like | Dislike

RedRavenSounds
Joined On 8/9/2021 12:25:52 PM
Add as Friend | Send Message

Good morning all. Does this NOT sound exactly like the lines from Mario Puzo's "The Godfather" when Solozo wanted Don Corleone to share his influence? " Don Corleone, all we ask is that you let us dip our beak, and share the judges and pezanovante politicians, you hold in your pocket like so many nickels and dimes." The only way to ever get this to stop is money OUT of politics. They are all crooks, that make the WORST of the old La Cosa Nostra (like Mad Sam Giffano') look like choir boys.

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 5/5/2022 10:59:45 AM
Like | Dislike

MPeary1947
Joined On 6/20/2006 2:14:35 AM
Add as Friend | Send Message

Vote ALL of them out and start from scratch. Ban lobbyists ... do term limits ... campaign reforms ... etc. Getting back to basics and cleaning house in ALL branches of gov't. will help give our nation a much needed 'reset' that our forefathers envisioned.

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 5/5/2022 8:36:14 AM
Like | Dislike

Piw6958
Joined On 3/19/2015 6:42:04 AM
Add as Friend | Send Message

I've never doubted this, it is obvious how the game is played.

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 5/5/2022 8:02:34 AM
Like | Dislike

wallguy
Joined On 12/19/2015 10:23:35 AM
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Tis the most noble thing you could do is to best understand how all this power structure has a cloaked dominion over your individual existence. It is very much the game of chess. Your position on the board provides your protections against their King and Queens army. But when you are just the lowly pawn on the chess board your positions are incredibly limited. Along with being the most disposable. The game was created to reflect a reality that is as old as time itself. The hierarchy is rarely ever denied control of the resources. Once power is established, it's never relinquished. Much like the board game of Monopoly teaches financial superiority. And it is only 100 yrs old. Chess has endured and captivated the minds of humanity for hundreds and still does. Life is a game.

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 5/5/2022 7:14:06 AM
Like | Dislike

jgeorge33
Joined On 11/19/2012 4:45:56 PM
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So it wasn't clear to me who are they paying the money to? Who gets the cash?

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 5/5/2022 2:53:04 AM
Like | Dislike

ChrisColes
Joined On 5/3/2009 2:40:01 AM
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jgeorge33 The cash goes to the re-election funds of their parties; so to climb the ladder of success as a member of your "party", you add to the general fund for the re-election of your party. So no person gets their hands on the money; it goes to the "Party" Today we all live within the most corrupt political system, and at every level of politics . . . AND administration. If I have got that wrong; please, someone show me how or why I have that wrong. Thank you.

Mark as Spam | Posted On 5/5/2022 3:40:36 AM
Like | Dislike

jusststeve
Joined On 1/5/2012 11:13:54 AM
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Sure looks that way Chris. Then Party Leaders McConnell, Pelosi divvy it out to use it as a big stick, toe the line. A big foundation to their current power to make or break legislation.

Mark as Spam | Posted On 5/5/2022 5:08:13 AM
Like | Dislike

Randyfast
Joined On 5/6/2010 8:42:42 PM
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Exactly, how is this "news"? Anyone who truly understands how the system really works (or 'doesn't' work) already knows that nothing is done in this society, without BIG MONEY controlling it! I've said as much - many times! Both Pelosi and Biden are so brain dead; they're lucky if they can remember their own name. Their riches can never fix that! The U.S. is being run by people who should be in an old age home, for people with dementia or a mental institution...how pathetic is that! Canada is no better; being run by a psychopathic dictator!

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 5/5/2022 6:18:24 AM
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