

## Corruption at the Conventions: The Facts

*"I look forward to the day, by 2008, when Americans can turn on their TVs and watch the Nokia Democratic Convention, or the AT&T Republican National Convention."*

- Bradley Smith, former Republican member of the FEC

Our campaign finance laws and the presidential public financing system were created to end the undue influence of corporate donors and special interests in our elections. Contradicting the spirit of these laws, political parties continue to funnel millions of dollars in corporate contributions through so-called nonpartisan host committees for their national party conventions. The Federal Election Commission (FEC) has approved this maneuver, allowing wealthy corporate executives privileged access to elected officials at the conventions.

- Approximately 80% of the estimated \$112 million needed to hold the conventions will come from private donors, primarily large corporations.<sup>1</sup>
- Since 2005, corporate donors to the 2008 conventions have spent an average of \$7 million each lobbying Congress and the Bush administration.<sup>2</sup>
- For the political parties, the conventions are the perfect opportunity to circumvent existing restrictions on soft-money donations, because donors can make lavish contributions to the conventions' host committees.
- Fundraising for the so-called non-partisan host committees is almost always carried out by elected officials and their associates from the convention party – Democrats in Denver, Republicans in the Twin Cities.<sup>3</sup>
- In return for sizeable donations, host committees offer corporate executives exclusive access to elected officials at the conventions – the greater the donation, the greater the access to advertising opportunities and influential convention attendees.
- Corporate donations to the host committee are tax deductible, meaning that, ultimately, it is taxpayers who subsidize corporate privilege at the conventions.
- "Presidential" donors who give \$1 million to the Democratic Convention receive VIP access to the Pepsi Center convention hall and all host committee-sponsored events, numerous advertising opportunities, and the opportunity to attend private events with Colorado Governor Bill Ritter, U.S. Senator Ken Salazar, and other party officials. For \$5 million donations to the GOP Convention, corporate donors receive similar perks.<sup>4</sup>
- Both parties advertise the convention as a unique opportunity for corporate donors to connect with top elected officials. In his talking points for meeting with potential corporate donors, Republican Governor Tim Pawlenty from Minnesota offered corporations the chance to "connect with influential government officials (Cabinet, President, next President)."<sup>5</sup>

For more information or to take action on this issue, visit our website at  
**[www.WhiteHouseForSale.org](http://www.WhiteHouseForSale.org)**

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<sup>1</sup> Weissman, Steve. "Inside Fundraising for the 2008 Conventions: Party Surrogates Gather Soft Money While Federal Regulators Turn a Blind Eye." *The Campaign Finance Institute*. June 3, 2008.  
<[http://www.cfinst.org/books\\_reports/conventions/2008Conventions\\_Rpt1.pdf](http://www.cfinst.org/books_reports/conventions/2008Conventions_Rpt1.pdf)>.

<sup>2</sup> Cummings, Jeanne. "Lobbying Loophole Funds Conventions." *Politico*. June 30, 2008.  
<<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0608/11453.html>>.

<sup>3</sup> Drinkard, Jim. "Loophole Lets Corporations Fund Political Conventions." *Citizens for Ethics*. June 5, 2008.  
<<http://www.citizensforethics.org/node/31896>>.

<sup>4</sup> Wayne, Leslie. "Candidates Forgo Soft Money, but Conventions Rake It In." *New York Times*. June 7, 2008. <[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/07/us/politics/07convention.html?\\_r=2&adxn1=1&oref=slogin&pagewanted=print&adxn1x=1213730065-w/u4oKo0liDBYcsIhEmDnA&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/07/us/politics/07convention.html?_r=2&adxn1=1&oref=slogin&pagewanted=print&adxn1x=1213730065-w/u4oKo0liDBYcsIhEmDnA&oref=slogin)>.

<sup>5</sup> Weissman. Appendix B.