

# THE UNDERMINING OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

HOW CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS CORRUPT  
OUR SYSTEM AND HARM US ALL

CLAYTON D. PEOPLES



“This comprehensive analysis of the impact of campaign contributions on legislative success has the great virtue of explaining complicated issues in ways that are clear to those who are fresh to the topic, while at the same time providing convincing original results that may come as a surprise to those who already know the basics of the campaign–finance literature. Indeed, it presents revealing new discoveries using statistical techniques that demonstrate the major role of financial donations to the 1999 and 2000 laws that contributed most heavily to the Great Recession of 2008, which is worth the price of admission alone. This book has to be seen as the starting point for anyone new to the issue as well as for those social scientists who aim to advance our knowledge of campaign finance as it becomes increasingly important in determining legislative outcomes.”

—**G. William Domhoff**, author of *Who Rules America*

“Let this book *finally* put to rest the suggestion among some academics that money in politics does not matter. With clarity and directness, Clayton Peoples complements an important political science debate with the skill and sensitivity of sociology. The upshot is not pretty, at least for the Republic, a democracy deeply corrupted by money, and an urgent need to fix it.”

—**Lawrence Lessig**, Roy L. Furman Professor of Law and Leadership, Harvard Law School, USA



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# The Undermining of American Democracy

The public believes that politicians in the US favor special interests over their constituents and that our political institutions have become corrupt—and they are right. A growing body of evidence shows that special interests have disproportionate sway over policy via campaign contributions and lobbying. In this book, the author presents this evidence in a logical, understandable way; he then illustrates how campaign contributions harm our economy, exacerbate inequality, and undermine our democracy. One of the most startling findings of the book is that campaign contributions led to the Financial Crisis and Great Recession. The author concludes that campaign contributions have effectively created an oligarchy in the US, and, thus, reform is needed to save our democracy. The final chapter of the book suggests a number of different reforms that could be pursued—and highlights some ways in which these reforms can be achieved.

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**Clayton D. Peoples**

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**This book is dedicated first and foremost to my beloved family members, who have supported me throughout the process. It is also dedicated to those who have engaged in social action to bring about positive change in society.**



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