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Is trouble brewing for Republican Leadership on Campaign Finance Reform?

[HR 1](#), or the “For the People Act”, passed in the House on March 8th, 2019. But this sweeping anti-corruption bill, which among other things includes campaign finance reform, may be DOA. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has said he won’t let this bill be brought up for consideration on the Senate floor, effectively killing it. Given how the [GOP views](#) campaign finance reform, (they don’t like it, they don’t like disclosure requirements, or contribution limits, or measures that limit the amount of money corporations can spend in elections) this is no surprise.

In recent political history, and definitely since the Supreme Court’s 2010 decision in *Citizens United*, the Republican party has been starkly anti-campaign finance reform; they believe trying to limit spending by individuals and corporations in elections is a violation of freedom of speech. Despite this, national polling done by [Pew Research Center](#) shows that more than 75% of people in the US would support limits on campaign spending. That includes 72% of Republicans.

This paper is an op-ed version of a larger independent research paper. The title was the last part I wrote. Originally, I just put “Creative Title” as a place holder. After finishing the op-ed, I came back to the title and probably spent about 30 minutes with it. I made it a question after looking at other op-ed titles and seeing that many of them used questions; I thought that kind of title lent itself well to my op-ed. “Brewing” was an intentional choice. The last book we read for the class was about the Tea Party, and even though the op-ed isn’t about them, but Republicans in general, it was my little shout out to the class.

The choice to use “DOA” was very intentional. I was trying to make the piece sound much more casual and informal than it was in the original academic paper, and more like how an op-ed should sound.

This first paragraph had nothing to do with the research paper. It was a relevant news item that was a way into the op-ed, a way to relate a current issue to the biggest and most important points of my research paper that I discuss later in the piece. I found this topic of HR 1 as the connection by accident. I was not even thinking about this piece when it popped up as an NPR notification on my phone. After reading the article, I realized it was the perfect current connection for the op-ed.

The second paragraph is where I started to pull in information from my research and academic paper to start to build support for the main argument of the op-ed, which was also the main conclusion of the academic paper.

So, if more than 2/3 of their constituency favor some degree of campaign finance why are Republicans in Congress so against reform? Why is there this rift between GOP leaders and the GOP voters? Does this rift matter? Interestingly, some of these answers may be found 930 miles away.

I used the rhetorical questions in the third paragraph deliberately. I was posing questions the rest of the piece would answer as a way to try to engage readers, something I had seen done in many other op-eds. The last sentence was the start of a story I was telling to answer the questions in a more engaging, less formal way, that I had in the academic paper.

Missouri, November 8th, 2016, election night. Missourians overwhelmingly voted ([70-30](#)) to approve [Amendment 2](#), and establish campaign contribution limits, while simultaneously voting in a [wave of Republicans](#), the party who opposes campaign finance reform. There are several reasons these two seemingly conflicting events happened on the same night. One of them is Amendment 2 and campaign finance weren't major issues during the campaign. Of the four major party candidates running for Missouri Governor and Senator, only Democratic gubernatorial candidate Chris Koster explicitly mentioned campaign finance on his campaign website. Democratic Senate candidate Jason Kander only made vague reference to it while neither Republican candidate had any mention of it.

From this paragraph until the end, I spent a lot of time focusing on style. I was presenting some of the research from my academic paper, and was mindful of the style, balancing a more casual and informal tone without making it too simplistic. I was trying to mimic the general style of op-eds. That is why the first sentence is not grammatically correct; I was playing with grammar in ways that you can't do as much in academics. I was trying to stick with my storytelling established in the paragraph above and use it to lead into my research and conclusions, in a less formal way.

Coverage of Amendment 2 and campaign finance reform in Missouri's leading newspaper, *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, was also relatively low. Of the 1,433 articles in the paper about the election in the year leading up to it, only 62 articles (4.3%) mentioned campaign finance reform or contribution limits. Only 12 articles even talked about Amendment 2. When it was addressed, most of the articles were informational, about what the amendment did, or editorials encouraging Missourians to ["Take back Missouri government by approving Amendment 2"](#).

This data came from the primary source research I did for the academic paper. I had actually looked at three different Missouri News Papers from three different regions of the state to get this information. But I decided to only share these two data points from just one of the papers because op-eds are supposed to share some information to back up the argument, but not nearly as much as was shared in the source of that data, a study or academic paper. These data points were the most relevant to the argument I was making in the op-ed, and I chose to use the data from the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* because it was the paper with the highest circulation in the state.

Lack of coverage, lack of opposition, lack of debate about campaign finance reform among statewide candidates, plus the fact that before this amendment passed, [Missouri was one of only 12 states](#) that had no campaign finance laws (meaning one [St. Louis billionaire](#) was the biggest individual donor of political cash, spending nearly \$45 million in elections since 2008) it begins to make sense why so many in Missouri supported this amendment.

This paragraph served three purposes for me: (1) to briefly sum up the information I had presented above, (2) to add additional points that I could not fit before but were still important, and (3) to lead into the next part about why I was even looking at this amendment in this election.

But that still doesn't answer why they simultaneously voted a wave of Republicans into office when the GOP platform clearly does not represent what Missourians want in terms of campaign finance reform.

This one sentence paragraph was mostly a stylistic choice, to give the reader a break from the longer paragraphs before and after it, and as part of the bridge to get to the "so what".

In Missouri and nationally about 70% of people, Democrats, independents, and Republicans, support laws limiting money in elections. But sparse coverage in Missouri newspapers and [national polling](#) indicates that almost no one believes that money in elections is a major problem facing the nation. People care much more about the economy, health care, and education than they do about campaign finance reform. Missourians are still voting for Republicans because they like the GOP's platform on those issues that are more important to them.

This was the last bit of evidence I included from my research paper to back up my main argument and answer the questions I asked. It also connected the story of this one ballot amendment in Missouri in 2016 to the national level and the present.

I used hyperlinks throughout the piece as my citations to follow how the genre of op-eds do citations.

Does it matter that Republicans seem to be out of touch with what the general public wants in the area of campaign finance? Maybe right now it doesn't. Since campaign finance isn't the most important issue to people, they will still vote for Republicans despite disagreement on that issue. But what happened in Missouri in the 2016 election shows that campaign finance reform has legs in the states. If it can get on a state ballot, it has the potential to pass. This undermines the Republican Party. So, it may not matter right now, but it could in the future. The Republican leadership are going to have to watch this issue.

I started this last paragraph with another rhetorical question, again to fit in with the genre of op-ed. I asked that specific question to start to tie everything together and relate my research to the introduction about Republicans blocking HR 1. The rest of the paragraph is also finally answering the "so what" question. I waited until the end to reveal what the "thesis" of the op-ed was because that is what my professor told us to do. An academic paper should have the thesis at the top because people who read them are doing so for a purpose and will read the whole thing even if you give away the ending at the start. Op-eds are not the same; the whole time I was trying to build to this moment and keep the readers in suspense about why all of it is important, so they would read and be engaged throughout the entire piece.

If more states do what Missouri did, continually fighting against campaign finance reform may cause them to appear out of touch with the voters, causing problems.