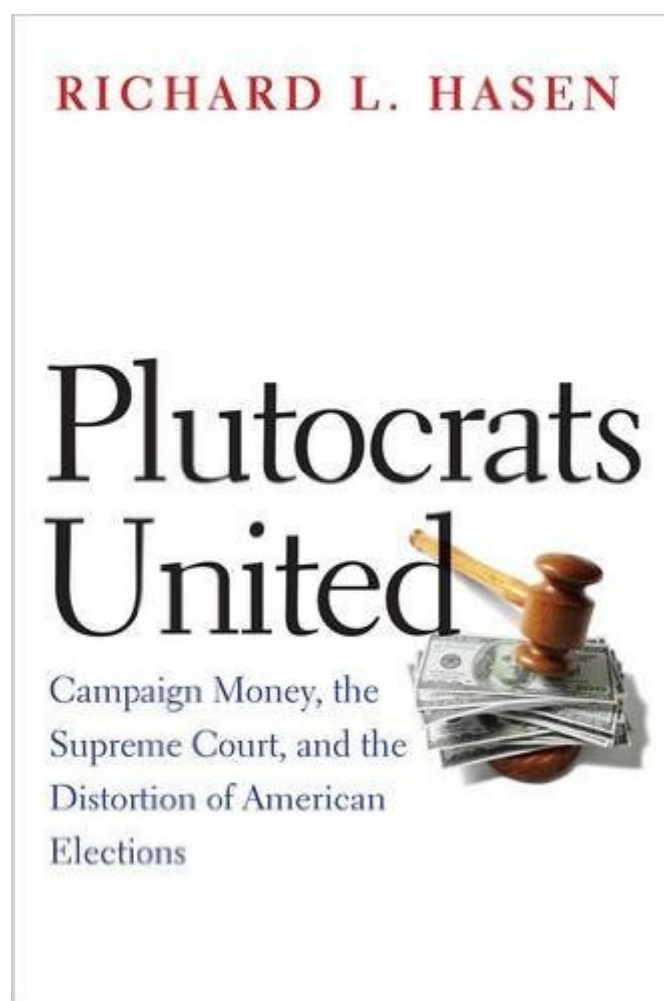


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Plutocrats United: Campaign Money, The Supreme Court, And The Distortion Of American Elections



Synopsis

From a leading expert on election law, a compelling answer to the dilemmas of campaign finance reform. Campaign financing is one of today's most divisive political issues. The left asserts that the electoral process is rife with corruption. The right protests that the real aim of campaign limits is to suppress political activity and protect incumbents. Meanwhile, money flows freely on both sides. In *Plutocrats United*, Richard Hasen argues that both left and right avoid the key issue of the new Citizens United era: balancing political inequality with free speech. The Supreme Court has long held that corruption and its appearance are the only reasons to constitutionally restrict campaign funds. Progressives often agree but have a much broader view of corruption. Hasen argues for a new focus and way forward: if the government is to ensure robust political debate, the Supreme Court should allow limits on money in politics to prevent those with great economic power from distorting the political process.

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Customer Reviews

Hasen explains that not all of the influence exercised by purveyors of Dark Money is considered corruption, in legal terms. But ingratiation is just as, or perhaps more, insidious and we can and must fight it.

This is the one to get, re campaign finance. Perfect touch, covers all the bases, both legal and political. Wonderful.

Rick Hasen is one of the nation's foremost experts on money in politics, and "Plutocrats United" is an engaging, no-holds-barred look at what's gone wrong with American democracy. Hasen's book had me right away, with a gripping scene of Republican presidential hopefuls going to kiss the ring of uber-donor Sheldon Adelson. The same kind of thing happens on the left, too, as Hasen makes clear. But, despite the allegations of reformers, the problem here isn't exactly bribery or corruption or vote-buying -- nothing illegal is going on here. Instead, the problems are perfectly legal (and, in fact, in large part protected by the Constitution, at least according to the current Supreme Court. Yet that makes the problem of big money in politics no less troubling, indeed, to some extent, it makes it worse. For years, Hasen has been a key voice on these issues, from his articles in leading law journals to the pages of the New York Times. His ability to cut through complex constitutional ideas and a morass of competing analyses comes through in every chapter of Plutocrats United. Hasen's writing makes the book a quick and easy read, despite the seriousness of its content. And his diagnosis of possible reforms is sober, clear-eyed, and pragmatic -- a valuable antidote to both those who say nothing can be done to fix American politics and those who expect pie-in-the-sky changes in the near term. (Disclosure: Hasen is a member of a nationwide, nonpartisan group of several hundred researchers, the Scholars Strategy Network. I am also part of that network, and have spoken with Hasen a few times and liked him. To be clear, I have no financial relationship with him, Yale Press, or the book, nor am I receiving any form of compensation for this review).

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