

THERESA LADRIGAN-WHELPLEY: Welcome to INTEGRAL, a podcast production out of the Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education at Santa Clara University exploring the question: Is there a common good in our common home? I'm Theresa Ladrigan-Whelpley, the director of the Bannan Institutes in the Ignatian Center and your host for this podcast. We're coming to you from Vari Hall, on the campus of Santa Clara, in the heart of Silicon Valley, California.

This season of INTEGRAL, we're looking at the ways in which issues of economic justice intersect with the question of the common good. Today, we'll explore the impact of money on congressional representation. How is economic justice and the common good realized within our democracy today?

AUDIO CLIP: "Do you think Americans realize how much time their members of Congress are spending raising money?" "I don't."

ANNE BAKER: We know that between 2008 and 2012 more than half of the House depended on donor contributions for half of their campaign revenue, and around a quarter of these members are highly dependent upon out-of-the-district contributions. Meaning, 60% or more of their campaign receipts from donors are coming from outside of the candidate's home district. This trend is potentially problematic if it interferes with representation.

THERESA LADRIGAN-WHELPLEY: To unpack these issues, we're joined today by Anne Baker, Assistant Professor in the Political Science Department at Santa Clara, and Bannan Institute Scholar in the Ignatian Center. She teaches courses on American Politics, and her present research focuses on money in US Politics, particularly its impact on congressional elections and representation, as well as the apparatuses and strategies of political parties and interest groups. Welcome, Anne!

ANNE BAKER: Thanks Theresa. Over the past three decades the costs of winning a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives have increased exponentially. Data from the Campaign Finance Institute indicates that in 1986 an average House race cost \$360,000. By 2014, the average cost had risen to approximately \$1.5 million which represents an increase of more than 300%. This pattern of rising costs has also been mirrored in races for the Senate and the Presidency.

ANNE BAKER: So why have elections become so expensive? Advertising costs are primarily to blame—this includes the cost of airing political ads on television, radio, online and in printed mailings to voters. Those costs have risen over time and candidates have to keep getting their message out over many, many months of campaigning. Outside spending by Super PACs and other interest group organizations in congressional races may also be contributing to advertising cost hikes. But it is also the case that incumbent candidates go out of their way to raise large amounts of money to ward off would-be challengers creating an artificial money race in some contests that drives up overall spending.

ANNE BAKER: Candidates' need for more and more campaign money has many implications for the health of democracy.

ANNE BAKER: In today's podcast, we will examine this issue from several different angles. To start, let's hear from members of Congress about the money race and its impact on their ability to do their jobs. A rare bipartisan bill, called the Stop Act, was recently introduced in the House by Rep. David Jolly, a Republican, and Rep. Rick Nolan, a Democrat. The Act prohibits federal officials, including members of Congress, from directly soliciting campaign funds. Here is Rep. Jolly in a clip from 60 minutes on the issue of "dialing for dollars":

AUDIO CLIP:

Rep. Jolly: You can see that come and go from the callsweets both the Democratic headquarters and the Republican headquarters. And you can tell when members of Congress are missing in action. You know where they're at. Right, look at, look at how many members of Congress are not in the hearings or not on the floor are hard to find, and then I also know personal testimonies from colleagues. Right? Colleagues who told me they had to miss family vacation because there was an end-of-quarter deadline.

Woman: Do you think Americans realize how much time their members of Congress are spending raising money?

Rep. Jolly: I don't. I think they know there is too much money and politics, but the whole purpose of my stopbact is to pull the curtain back on the amount of time that members of Congress spend raising money. In any other profession, if you spend 20 to 30 hours a week doing a job other than what you are hired, you'd be fired. But we've accepted this political culture that somehow it's acceptable, and it's wrong.

ANNE BAKER: Members spend so much time fundraising that they may not be able to spend as much time discerning the common good through deliberation, and researching issues to craft well-thought out laws. This has been a common complaint in recent years.

ANNE BAKER: Political scientists, like myself, are also concerned about the impact of money on politics and relatedly the ability of members of Congress to do their jobs but for several additional reasons. Most broadly, we conduct studies to see if members of Congress provide representation to constituents differently, based upon their incomes. We do this to determine whether economic inequalities translate into political inequalities via distortions in representation.

ANNE BAKER: In *Unequal Democracy*, Larry Bartels, a political scientist, presents one of the seminal studies on this issue finding members of Congress are most responsive to the preferences of wealthy Americans across a variety of policy areas ranging from minimum wage increases to abortion laws (Bartels 2008; Gilens 2012). Conversely, they are shown to be only somewhat responsive to the preferences of the middle class, and not responsive at all to the preferences of the poorest Americans. Subsequent studies have confirmed most of these findings.

ANNE BAKER: My own research investigates whether political donors, rather than simply wealthy Americans in general, are causing House members to change their representative behavior in office.

ANNE BAKER: Likely as a consequence of their need to raise more campaign dollars, members of the House rely more and more upon funds provided by campaign contributors who live outside of their districts and states. But is this business as usual or a new development? Unfortunately, we face some data limitations here because of the way that the U.S. Federal Election Commission has campaigns report their contribution information. Political scientists have to use donors' zip codes and addresses to determine whether the money is coming to the campaign from inside or outside of a given congressional district. Since districts and zip code boundaries don't line up and there are millions of contributions in any given election cycle, there are only a few cycles where we have performed this matching process. Political scientist, Janet Grenk--zee conducted one of the early studies on this issue. She reported that 45 percent of campaign contributions came to House races from outside of the district in the late 1970s and that the percentage rose to 61 by the early 1980s. From my more recent study we know that between 2008 and more than half of the House depended upon donor contributions for half of their campaign revenue and a quarter of these members are highly dependent upon out-of-the-district contributions—meaning 60 percent or more of their campaign receipts from donors are coming from outside of the candidate's home district. More recent data from the Center for Responsive Politics confirms that in the 2016 election, seated members of Congress on average raised at least 65 percent of donor contributions from non-constituents.

ANNE BAKER: This trend is potentially problematic if it interferes with representation. Members of the House are intended to be the most locally focused of all federal officeholders, so any incentive to redirect their focus beyond their districts could detract from the representation they provide to their constituents.

ANNE BAKER: In the study I conducted on this issue, I discovered highly dependent members are less responsive to their constituents opinion preferences and that was when I measured those preferences in the broadest terms possible. Basically, if we think of representation as a Venn Diagram with one circle for constituents and one circle for the representative, the hope and expectation in a democratic system of government is that those two circles would overlap considerably...perhaps not perfectly, but considerably. However, in a series of statistical models testing this relationship I find members who are dependent upon donor contributions from outside of their districts are less ideologically responsive to their constituents' ideological preferences—in other words, the overlap between the two circles diminishes with increasing amounts of money from outside of the district.

ANNE BAKER: In these models, I examine the overlap in ideologies rather than particular policies because this is very much a baseline measure of generally how responsive the member is to constituents over a full term in Congress. Thus, the results are both surprising and a bit discouraging because they suggest these members are being more responsive to donors than their constituents using a very basic measure of representation that leaves the member lots of wiggle

room to diverge from constituents' preferences on some issues. Additionally, the members who received the most money from outside of their districts also tended to be among the more ideologically extreme members of the House. So, this trend may also relate to growing polarization in Congress. Only further studies will help determine whether this is the case.

ANNE BAKER: In light of this finding, it was important to examine the partisan and policy motivations of the people who make contributions to House candidates running in different parts of the country. What motivates these non-constituent donors? Figuring this out will help political scientists develop further tests of the impact donor preferences might have on representation provided by members of the House.

ANNE BAKER: When I closely examined the preferences of donors who give to House races nationwide using national survey data, I find that these donors are politically sophisticated and strategic. They make contributions to multiple House candidates and they do this irrespective of the partisanship of their own House member. Thus, it is likely not the case that donors contribute because they are represented by someone from the opposition party and want to back a substitute candidate to make sure their partisan preferences get represented in Congress. Rather, the results suggest they make political contributions to gain additional representation in Congress from multiple members.

ANNE BAKER: Moreover, when I examine their policy preferences I found conservative policy preferences on issues ranging from climate change to gun laws are more likely to lead the donor to contribute outside of their home district than liberal policy stances. This might be a consequence of the fact that liberal donors are known to be more likely to belong to interest groups, which may provide them with an alternative means of advocating their preferences.

ANNE BAKER: Further testing will be needed to achieve a complete picture of donor motivations.

ANNE BAKER: Yet these initial results provide me with new ways to evaluate representation in Congress. Gaining a better grasp of the preferences of donors enables political scientists then to determine the extent to which donors' policy preferences diverge from average voters' policy preferences and whether specific policies are crafted by members of Congress primarily to serve donors' economic interests. The propagation of such knowledge is one way that studies like this serve a transformative social function and specifically address issues of economic injustice.

ANNE BAKER: At its heart my research investigates the question of fairness on three different levels: first, do politicians give more weight to the preferences of some constituents over others; second, if politicians give greater weight to certain constituents' preferences, does that calculus alter the decisions they make in office in ways that fundamentally advantage certain groups of citizens over others; and third, what is the impact of what may turn out to be biased representation on the functioning of democracy and our well-being as a nation—Does it lead to contentious political polarization? Does it result in partisan posturing and gridlock in Congress? Does it further entrench us in a trend of growing income inequality that has contributed to a shrinking and

struggling middle class? Does it make public service a less appealing career option for our young people? The answers to these questions are stepping stones on a path that can allow us to discern what a just democratic society should look like and where we are headed as a country.

ANNE BAKER: If you are curious about the origins of your own House member's campaign contributions and want to see how dependent your member is on funds from donors who live outside of your district or state, there are resources that will allow you conduct your own investigation. To illustrate how to do this, one of my students, Megan Hallisy a senior here at SCU, is going to help us out. Hi Megan, thanks for being here.

MEGAN: Glad to be here.

ANNE BAKER: First, if you don't know who your House member is, the U.S. House of Representatives has a "Find your Representative" tool on their website. Can you pull up their webpage Megan and tell us what you see?

MEGAN: Sure, no problem.

MEGAN: I see a box where you can enter your zip code to discover who your House Rep is. {Not sure who you should enter here... may your home House members.}

ANNE BAKER: Great go ahead and do that.

MEGAN: It looks like you can also find the contact information for your member of the House there.

ANNE BAKER: Next, to see your member's campaign finance data, let's have you go to Open Secrets.org. This website is managed by the Center for Responsive Politics and uses data from House members' campaign finance reports. When you go to [opensecrets.org](https://www.opensecrets.org), click on the menu tab and select congressional elections. A box will appear on the left. You can enter your House member's name in the box or select the state where you live in the drop-down tab.

MEGAN: Okay, great. I chose to enter my former House representative, Mike Honda. I clicked on his name. When the page for the California 17th District House race opens, I can see how much money was raised and spent in my local House election. If I click on the geography tab, I am also able to see how much money each candidate raised outside of California and outside of my congressional district if I scroll down.

ANNE BAKER: What did you find?

MEGAN: In my case, Mike Honda raised 29 percent of his money outside of my state and Ro Khanna raised 22% from outside of the state but it also looks like both candidates received most of their money outside of my district from other parts of California.

ANNE BAKER: Interesting. We don't have time at the moment to examine many other aspects of your member's campaign fundraising on this page on the Open Secrets website.

Next Megan, you can go to votesmart.org to see your House member's issue stances and votes on different pieces of legislation. This website was created by Project Vote Smart.

MEGAN: When you get to the website, there appears to be a box at the top of the page where you can enter your House member's name.

ANNE BAKER: Which name do you want to enter?

MEGAN: I entered Ro Khanna who is my newly elected House member. After that, it looks like I can use the tabs at the top of the page to see key votes he cast, his issue positions, and endorsements from interest group organizations as well as other information about him.

ANNE BAKER: Great! Would you say that was easy?

MEGAN: Absolutely! It only took a few minutes of my time.

ANNE BAKER: Thank Megan!

ANNE BAKER: You can replicate the searches Megan performed and take this information and contact your member of Congress via phone or by sending an email or a short postcard that addresses the issues that matter to you. The only way to ensure that our House members stay truly connected to their constituents is for all of us to get involved and voice our opinions. Members need to know our thoughts about what constitutes the common good. If we want them to be responsive to our preferences in a money-driven political marketplace, we need to take it upon ourselves to remind them that our votes matter just as much as the campaign contributions they are pressured to seek in order to successfully pay for the costs of running for re-election. So, let's all do our part.

THERESA LADRIGAN WHELPLEY:

Thanks for listening to Integral, a Bannan Institute podcast of the Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education at Santa Clara University. Special thanks to Professor Anne Baker for her contributions to today's episode, and for all the contributors to our second season.

Join us again this fall for the launch of season three of INTEGRAL, in which we will be exploring issues of gender justice in the common good.

Technical direction for Integral was provided by Craig Gower and Fern Silva. Our production manager is Kaylie Erickson. Thanks to Mike Whalen for advisory and editorial support. You can find us on the web at scu.edu/integral or subscribe via iTunes, SoundCloud, Stitcher, or Podbean.

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