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Of, By & For Utahns, Not New Yorkers

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Of, By & For Utahns, Not New Yorkers

Analysis of an Article V Amendment

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Introduction

The 2016 election cycle surprised even “Utah Insiders”, who failed to predict the remarkable success of President Elect Trump or Sen. Sanders. Both appealed to voter frustration with politicians who seemed to care more about donors than voters.

Public Choice theory claims politicians act in their own interest and that incentives & institutions matter. If true, what institutional reform, if any, could address voter concerns?

My research examines the effects of a constitutional amendment that limits campaign contributions to registered voters. Many are unaware that a non-Congress path is available under Article V of the U.S. Constitution:

“...on the Application of the Legislatures of two thirds of the several States, shall call a Convention for proposing Amendments....and shall be valid... as part of this Constitution.”

How 6 Candidates Funded the 2016 Election

Candidate	“In” Funds	“Out” Funds	% In
Rep. Paul Ryan – (R-WI-1)	\$211,826	\$16,304,725	1%*
Nancy Pelosi – (D-CA-12)	\$211,115	\$1,067,437	17%
Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO)	\$5,050,419	\$8,455,478	37%
Sen John Cornyn (R-TX)	\$6,469,475	\$2,794,542	70%
Jeff Jones (R-MI-12)	\$10,880	\$0	100%
Randy Perkins (D-FL-18) (Challenger)	\$0	\$680,219	0%

“In” funds were raised within their district, for Representatives, or within their state, for Senators. “Out” funds were raised outside their respective state or district.

2016: 125 House candidates raised 100% out of district, 93 raised 100% in district.

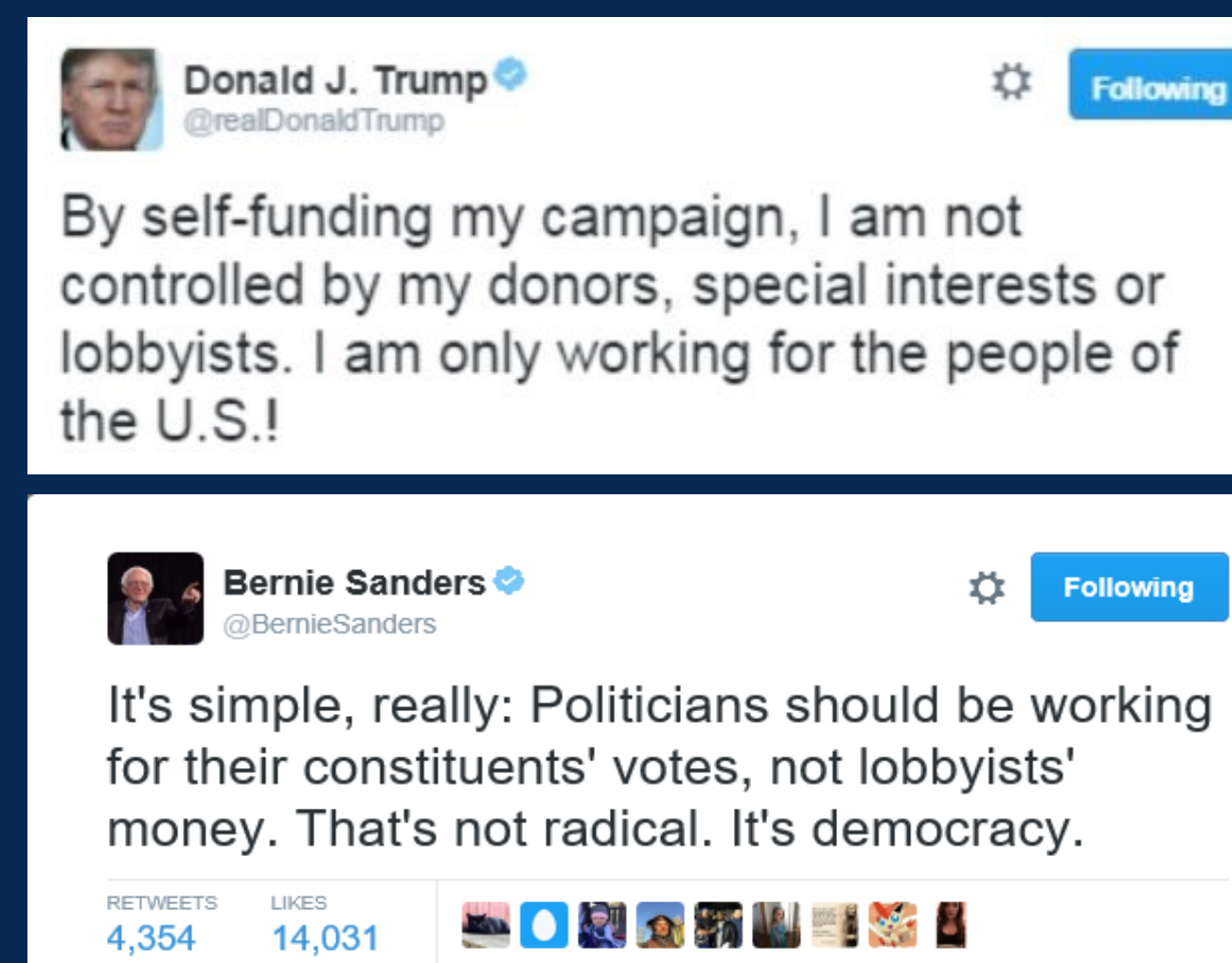
Source: OpenSecrets.org.

Methods

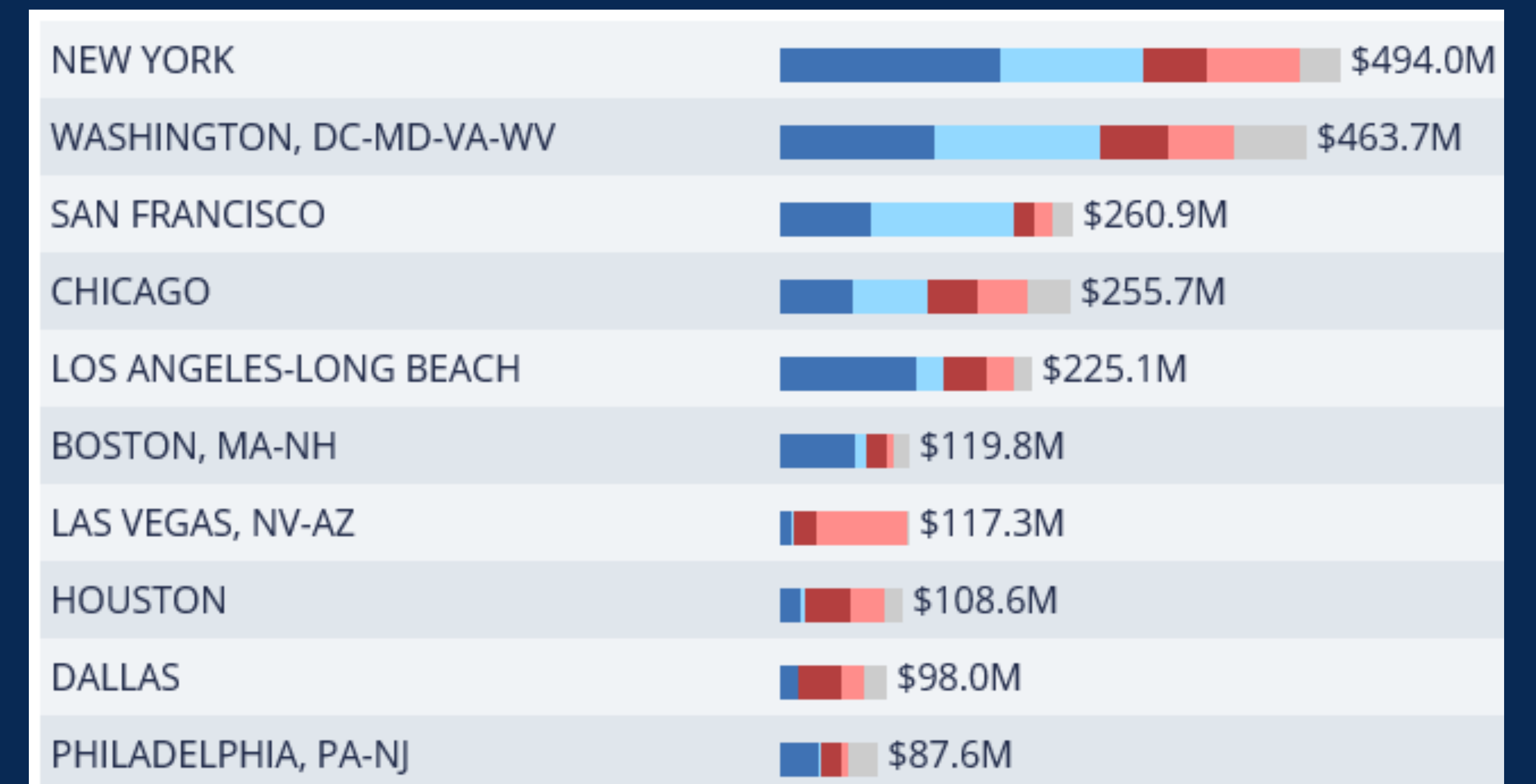
- Detailed candidate case studies of funds raised from within a candidate’s geographic district (U.S. House) or state (U.S. Senate)
- Evaluate the prevalence generally of out-of-district & out-of-state contributions, including those to the Utah congressional delegation
- Understand public opinion regarding money in politics
- Generate informed analysis of the consequences of a Voters First Amendment (VFA), including financial incentives facing Members of Congress.

The 2016 election cycle was year of Trump, tweets & anti-donor populism

Whether you believe Trump or Sanders are “working for the people”, their success reflects a deep desire by voters to have their policy preferences placed ahead of campaign contributors.



Who Funded U.S. Candidates in 2016?



Top 10 urban areas ranked by dollars raised for 2016 political campaigns. #1 individual (Steyer in SF) donated \$87 million to Democrats only (blue). Why should these donors have any influence outside their state or district?

Results

Research revealed the following:

- In 2016, 81% of campaign contributions to Utah candidates were from outside Utah.
- Also in 2016, New Yorkers donated more to Utah Senators than Utah voters did
- 84% of U.S. voters feel money has too much influence.
- 55% say candidates promote policies that directly help their campaign contributors.
- Post-VFA funding would diminish influence of wealthy donors.
- Future Research: How would VFA impact Congressional votes on appropriations & other issues?

Conclusion

This project was designed to understand the VFA’s impact. No reform solves all campaign finance issues, but it’s clear that voter influence would rise, and outsider influence would decline, on the representatives of “We The People”.

Further, the VFA may have a great impact on who donates & how much, may reduce fund-raising inequalities between challengers & incumbents and may create quantifiable real-time voter feedback on issues, with intensity. Unique in human history?

