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Campaign Finance Reform Team Blast #8
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A Modest Proposal

In the 1 Dec 2015 issue of the Washington Post, Daniel Nemirovsky has given us an intriguing idea for managing campaign spending: tax it.

One of the most serious charges against our present system of financing our elections is that candidates with less money do not have the same opportunities to communicate their messages as do those candidates with big bankrolls. Nemirovsky says:

> There is a simple way to level the playing field. …
>
> We already know that taxation can influence activities such as tobacco and alcohol consumption. Why not apply the same incentive-based, corrective strategy to campaign spending? Under such a system, a political action committee or other advocacy organization's expenditures could be made subject to a "campaign expenditure tax" if the group were partially or solely taking part in efforts to elect or defeat a candidate or ballot initiative. [Washington Post, 1 Dec 2015]

He suggests that such a tax would be progressive: campaign spending under $1 million could be taxed at a rate of 30%; spending from $1 million to $10 million, at a rate of 60%; and spending over $10 million, at a rate of 90%.

To encourage small donors, Nemirovsky would use the tax structure. Then, groups with many small donors would be subject to a different tax rate from those with fewer but bigger donors.

Whether this is an idea that will take root, we can't predict; however, it seems worthy of a lot more discussion.

Happy Holidays !

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