

Sample essay on the effect of romney and republican super pacs in the 2012 electi...

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The first Tuesday after the first Monday in the month of November 2012, saw a tradition coined in 1845 realized once again. The citizens of United States went to the polls in their respective states to elect their president. President Barack Obama sought reelection for a second and final term against the former governor of Massachusetts, Mitt Romney. November 6, 2012 saw Obama win the elections; with the Democratic Party dominating the senate and the Republican Party the House of Representatives.

Each candidate relied on a war chest of a different artillery, money. Money spent on the campaign trail, leasing venues, posters and so on drove each party forward. The funding from Super PACs also afforded them a plethora of television, newspaper, radio and internet ads targeted at the utter destruction of the other candidate. For all this to be possible, revocation of the limits on contributions to groups that made independent expenditures unconstitutional happened. Therefore, outside financing from trade unions and companies in the form of ads and other political tools became common place.

The U. S. Supreme Court altered the way spending of money occurred in elections and by whom. The Citizens United ruling revoked a ban that prohibited independent expenditures and funding electioneering communications. In a nutshell, corporations and trade unions had carte blanche to influence people, read voters, to vote for or against a candidate. Super PACs are shadow political parties i. e. independent committees that give support to an individual offering limitless, often anonymous, contributions from corporations, trade unions and individuals. Since it is still illegal for corporations and unions to make direct donations to candidates,

Super PACs, alternatively, run positive ads for their preferred candidate and negative ones about their candidate's main contender. Therefore, the Citizens United ruling resulted in the proliferation of Super PACs that poured limitless backing into political campaigns.

In the 2012 presidential elections, both parties received substantial contributions from Super PACs. It is important to know that President Obama publicly criticized the Citizens United ruling, referring to it as a threat to democracy and victory for Wall Street and Big Business. He further insisted that American elections not be financed by the most powerful interests. As a consequence of GOP Super PACs gaining strides for Romney's campaign, Obama cautiously showed his support for the Democratic Super PAC, Priorities USA Action.

The elections brought with it the drawing of battle lines. With over 500 Super PACs out there, each candidate had an arsenal behind him. The Republican's main contributor was Restore Our Future, while the Democrat's was Priorities USA Action. Something of note about these PACs is their affiliation with the candidate they support. Romney's 'Return Our Future' is the creation of his former aides with the singular goal of attacking Obama. In the Iowa caucus, this Super PAC destroyed Gingrich's credibility, thus, securing Romney's election as the GOP candidate. Quealy and Willis in their commentary, *Independent Spending: Week by Week* reported that Restore Our Future spent well over \$24M on ads designed to attack Obama. They also reported that Obama's Priority USA Action, headed by Bill Burton, his former aide, also spent \$10M on attack ads against Romney. In a newspaper article, "The 2012 Money Race: Compare the Candidates" by Ashkenas et al., they reveal

some of the biggest donors to these Super PACs. They are Sheldon and Miriam Adelson \$15M each and Bob J. Perry (\$10M) on the GOP side while on the Democratic side, James H. Simons (\$5M), Fred Eychaner (\$4.5M) with Steve Mostyn and Jeffrey Katzenberg each donating \$3M.

These Super PACs are by no means harmless. Their economic impact far reaches the annals of congress thereby granting them access to policy formation, alteration and consequently, amendment. Since these PACs rally around a candidate who is for their interests, or malleable to work with; it stands to reason that access to the policy makers, hence the policies themselves, is their intention. They indirectly offer the candidates the means to get to their destination for the future assurance of a mutually beneficial relationship. Despite spending over \$700M on the Romney campaign, nothing useful for Romney came of it for now. Slowly Super PACs are gaining ground and learning from past mistakes will undoubtedly change the landscape of politics in the USA.

The outside spending forced candidates to spend more time raising money; ignoring small contributors and their constituents. To handle the relentless negative ads, they needed more financing to reach out to the displeased voters. Since the Super PACs specialized in negative ads, it fell to the candidates themselves to not only answer to but also smoothen ruffled feathers of their supporters once bombarded by a barrage of negative publicity. It needed time and money to maintain control of the situation and ensure the campaign retains its momentum.

The astronomical expenditure in the 2012 elections, which were mostly from the GOP, damaged the democratic process. This materialized in various

capacities. For instance, monopoly of TV with negative ads at the expense of state-level contests. Other election races were entirely eclipsed due to broadcast monopoly. Another effect of the zealous spending is on the Republican Party's method of presidential candidate selection by suppressing moderates and boosting right wing extremists and their agendas. Romney referred to himself as "severely conservative." 'Americans for Tax Reform' Super PAC demanded all GOP candidates to approve and sign a no-new tax pledge; which unsurprisingly won in over half the campaigns it spent money.

Transformation of party systems is ongoing. These additional expenditures force campaign committees to evoke ruthlessness in resource and candidate prioritization. These results in outsourcing; whereby the party offloads some of their work to outside groups. The ease with which they operate coupled with minimal accountability makes Super PACs the hidden weapon for candidates whose campaigns have limits, restrictions and adhere to ethical practices.

Strategically, Super PACs represent an almost sure-fire way of securing victory in the election. The mettle of candidates is irrelevant and strong policy makers not required. The Super PACs turn presidential campaigns into ads wars. Retaliatory ads kept campaigns afloat, while delays sentenced one to defeat. After the "Stage" ad by Democrats, Romney's depleted war chest kept him off air sealing his fate in Ohio.

Fred Wertheimer, current president of the campaign finance reform group, believes that the threat of this money is not on the individual elections; rather on the corruption of government policies following. Another analyst,

Ferguson, contemplates on the permanent effect of these moneys. His outlook of the future is grim, expecting the US to devolve to a nation run by oligarchs as it is in Latin America.

Works Cited

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