

# Toward Stronger Ethics in Government Relations

Fixing the Flaws  
In Today's Political System

Tom Hoog

# The Pervasive Role of Money

- Campaign contributors purchase privileged access to lawmakers
- Non-contributors are frozen out from opportunities to argue their case
- Ill-informed lawmakers can impose flawed rules and regulations
  - One-sided rules can give contributors unfair advantages – and can put non-contributors out of business

# Skewing Government Relations

- Lobbyists become money-runners instead of sources of information
- Honest advocates are at a disadvantage; lobbyists are pressured to 'pay to play'
- Both sides 'game the system'
  - Lawmakers align fund-raising with votes
  - Lobbyists exploit their access to gain favors

# Abuses Amid the 'Money Chase'

- Abramoff's abuses: swaying lawmakers with free meals and junkets
- Leadership PACs: 'a ticket to luxury lawmaking'
- The 'revolving door' lets lawmakers – and staffers – quickly join lobbying firms
- Weakened institutions help lobbyists thrive

# Fixing the Broken System

- The long-term solution:  
public financing of campaigns
  - Interim steps: full and timely disclosure,  
promoting greater transparency
- Stronger ethics and professionalism  
among government relations firms
- Forthright advocacy by interest groups
- Fearless national 'watchdog' groups  
and more vigilant journalists