

CRIMES AGAINST DEMOCRACY

Hearing on Complaint Filed by Democracy North Carolina

The State Board of Elections hearing (Feb./March 2006) targets "crimes against democracy," not an individual or a single group. It's a mistake to fixate on the whether House Speaker Jim Black broke the law. Such a finding would obviously have significant political consequences, but the hearing raises broader questions about a campaign finance system that is increasingly viewed as out of control.

People can argue about long-term solutions, and more action on that front is urgently needed, but the immediate question is: Can the government -- we, the public -- police the trafficking of large amounts of money between ambitious donors and ambitious politicians?

The State Board of Elections is doing its best, using its limited powers and very limited resources, to tackle a system out of control. As Democracy North Carolina's original complaint requested, the Board is focusing on special interests and numerous individuals who used a variety of illegal methods to funnel tens of thousands of dollars into political campaigns. The Board began with the video-poker industry and has followed leads that came up during that investigation to examine other special interests and donors.

Many of the relevant violations that we expect to surface during the hearings are listed in Democracy North Carolina's June 2004 complaint:

- * making donations in the name of another
- * making anonymous donations
- * exceeding the \$4,000 contribution limit
- * using corporate money for political donations
- * reimbursing individuals who made donations
- * making donations in cash in excess of \$100
- * making donations in exchange for material benefits
- * illegal solicitation of donations
- * providing false information about contributions
- * coercion of others to commit one or more of these offenses, and
- * conspiracy to make illegal donations.

For background on these abuses and on the individuals subpoenaed by the State Board of Elections, we suggest that people look at:

>> Our analysis of the money flowing into Michael Decker's campaign around the time he switched party affiliations to help Jim Black's bid to remain House Speaker:

www.democracy-nc.org/moneyresearch/2005/deckerrpt.html

and

www.democracy-nc.org/moneyresearch/2005/vppr12-05.html

>> Our complaint regarding video-poker donations:

www.democracy-nc.org/PDFs/VIDEOPOKERANDPOLITICALCORRUPTION.pdf
and
www.democracy-nc.org/moneyresearch/2004/VideoPokerComplainJune2002revised.pdf

Please let me know if you have any questions.

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