

Towards an Analysis of the 1996 U.S. Presidential Campaign Scandal and the Federal Campaign Finance Reform

Tuan Y. Cheng

Abstract

American political experience indicates that campaign finance reform often takes place after a major political scandal. That is, when the 1996 Presidential Campaign Scandal broke out, it raised the hope that the event might provide the impetus for Congress to overhaul campaign finance laws. However, the result proves that although the campaign scandal did exert pressure on Congressional legislative action, it failed to accomplish the goal of reform. The research also finds that the influence of political scandal for campaign reform is limited to a certain extent. First, scandal cannot produce reform action, but only provides an impetus for action. Second, scandal can only serve as the intervening variable to campaign finance reform, not the independent variable. And third, even as an intervening variable, the impact of scandal upon campaign reform is uncertain; because of differences in political nature and reactions, it is still dependent on a case-by-case basis.

Key Words: political contribution, political scandal, campaign finance system, 1996 U.S. presidential election, American party politics