

Republican, Democratic strategists discuss impact of SuperPACs on elections (Video)

ELECTION 2012 | OCTOBER 4, 2012 | BY: JOHN GUZZARDO |



Video: [Campaign Finance Numbers Out: What Do They Mean for 2012?](#)

RELATED TOPICS

- [election 2012](#) (<http://www.examiner.com/topic/election-2012>)
- [Campaign Finance](#) (<http://www.examiner.com/topic/campaign-finance>)
- [SuperPAC](#) (<http://www.examiner.com/topic/superpac/articles>)
- [Republican](#) (<http://www.examiner.com/republican>)
- [Democrat](#) (<http://www.examiner.com/democrat>)
- [Advertising](#) (<http://www.examiner.com/topic/advertising>)

The candidates in the 2012 Presidential Election are utilizing every weapon at their disposal and, thanks to [campaign finance](#) (<http://www.examiner.com/topic/campaign-finance>) reform legislation, so-called "527" groups have become a critical part of the process. A [Tuesday conference on campaign finance at Rutgers University's Eagleton Institute for Politics](#) (<http://www.c-span.org/Campaign2012/Events/Discussion-on-2012-Campaign-Money/10737434601-1/>) illustrated the similarities and differences between two of these groups. Priorities USA Action, a pro-Obama PAC, and American Crossroads, a conservative PAC, discussed some of their tactics with the audience.

Voters and politicians alike have expressed distaste for PACs due to the exemption they enjoy from individual and group contribution limits. Both PACs believe their existence to be a result of the "law of unintended consequences." In an interesting irony, Jeffrey Pollock, a pollster for Priorities USA Action, told the audience that President Obama doesn't like the so-called

"SuperPACs."

"We were actually late to the game," Pollock admitted. "We were late to form, and late to raise money."

Pollock cited how Romney's own fellow Republicans, [particularly Newt Gingrich, assaulted Romney's record at Bain Capital](#) (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/24/newt-gingrich-mitt-romney-bain-capital-obama-super-pac_n_1542687.html). He did point out that the PACs job, by its very nature, is to attack the record of its candidates opponent. "It's not that anyone has anything against Mitt Romney for being rich."

However, Pollock did admit he enjoyed his job. "It's a lot of fun to do what I'm doing."

Priorities USA Action was joined by Jonathan Collegio, Communications Director for American Crossroads, a conservative PAC. He noted that many of the SuperPACs were developed by the left, citing MoveOn.org, among others. He cited labor unions being one of the original PACs, with over \$200 million being spent to assist President Clinton's campaign. Collegio also noted that missteps by politicians do tend to backfire, citing President Obama's accusation of American Crossroads receiving illegal contributions.

"As soon as he said that, we saw anduptick in American Crossroads fundraising," Collegio stated.

Both sides agreed that the role of PACs and SuperPACs alike have created a new normal in the election



http://cdn2-b.examiner.com/sites/default/files/styles/large_lightbox/hash/19/0a/190afd1b6b66dae3e71a7e5ee10d19c.jpg

Campaign finance reform laws have led to the rise of so-called "527" groups, which enjoy exemptions from fundraising limimits.

cycle. [Both also agreed that the SuperPACs focus on holding opponents accountable](#) ([http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-250_162-57524491/rove-backed-group-launches-new-\\$11-million-ad-buy/](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-250_162-57524491/rove-backed-group-launches-new-$11-million-ad-buy/)).

However, they also admitted that the [advertising](http://www.examiner.com/topic/advertising) (<http://www.examiner.com/topic/advertising>) they create is concentrated on a small number of states. Mike Duhaime, a [Republican](http://www.examiner.com/republican) (<http://www.examiner.com/republican>) strategist and professor at Eagleton, told the group that candidates should have every right to be able to raise as much money as possible.

Maggie Morgan, a Democratic strategist, stated that many of the swing states, according to the latest polling, appears to be trending towards Obama. Morgan said this was happening in spite of the fact that Romney's campaign, and associated PACs, are outspending Obama in those very states. She appeared very amused when her Republican counterparts stated Romney could make a comeback.

"Mitt Romney is going to be so exceptional tomorrow," Morgan said with great sarcasm. "There's going to be a seismic change."

One salient point made was that the [PACs are not allowed to communicate directly with campaigns](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bipartisan_Campaign_Reform_Act). (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bipartisan_Campaign_Reform_Act). Another was that while significant contributions to PACs were made by corporations, many of the PACs advertising and campaign decisions are driven by individuals. One audience member put them all on the spot by asking how they would feel about PACs being banned. Morgan was quick to point out that election lawyers would be able to figure out ways around the legislation, but could also create more accountability which could benefit the electorate. Collegio stated that the question brings to mind the very thing which has dogged the American people for generations.

"Should the elected representative do what he believes is right, or what the electorate thinks is right?"

The panelists all agreed that as the result of the rise of 527s and campaign finance laws, no presidential contender will likely ever take public matching funds again, citing the decision by [former candidate John McCain to take public funds in 2008 versus President Obama's decision not to](http://firstread.nbcnews.com/news/2008/06/19/4433516-mccain-to-accept-public-financing?lite) (<http://firstread.nbcnews.com/news/2008/06/19/4433516-mccain-to-accept-public-financing?lite>). McCain was hamstrung by the decision and unable to overcome Obama's warchest of advertising funds, and this decision is widely credited as the reason Obama won the White House. They also agreed that despite the amount of money flowing into elections, the real solution is disclosure of who is donating the money.

"We are not going to unilaterally disarm," Pollock stated of the desire of voters to end the influence of money in the campaigns. "But there has to be a better way than this."



John Guzzardo, Elections Examiner

John Guzzardo is a writer with a passion for politics. When he is not working on his novel series based on his days as a college newspaper editor, he is busy keeping up-to-date on all the political happenings he can. Email him with comments or story ideas at jguzzardo1@gmail.com or visit his...

MUST-SEE PHOTOS



Electoral map projection of the presidential race for 2012



Hillary Clinton and Christina Aguilera: Bosom Buddies



Mystery woman