What's at stake: How do we create an affirmative government devoted to both freedom and equality in the pursuit of happiness and the preservation of earth and species? Does the US Chamber of Commerce help or hinder?

My blog:

War Department/Peace Department

http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/

Newsletters

http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/

Index:

http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/


Contents #1

[These items lead to an exhaustive assessment of the USChamber of Commerce.]

Abramsky, CofC’s Attack Plan
US CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

CEO pay revealed, WRITE SEC

Claiborne D.,
SumOfUs.org us@sumofus.org via uark.edu

to James

Corporations will have to start disclosing how much CEOs are paid compared to the typical worker if the SEC implements a new rule. But corporate lobbyists are fighting like mad to stop it. Tell the SEC to resist corporate pressure and stick to its plan to require disclosure.

James,
After years of delays, the SEC has just voted to enact a potentially game-changing provision of the Dodd-Frank Act on CEO compensation, and corporate America is fighting like mad to stop it.

The new provision requires corporations to disclose the amount their CEOs make compared to the salary of the median worker. Corporate actors are shocked because the rule is surprisingly strong -- it doesn't allow many of the usual gimmicks that corporations use to skew data. This new rule could set off a revolution at Walmart and other companies that are getting rich off of underpaid staff.

The US Chamber of Commerce and other big business organizations are frightened, and are fighting back, pressuring the SEC to change its mind during a sixty-day comment period going on now. Sign our petition to the SEC today to ensure that your voice is heard, and the SEC makes the right call on corporate disclosure.

Tell the SEC to resist corporate pressure and get corporations to publish information on their CEO pay!

This data is valuable for investors, as it helps them determine which companies are dangerously overloaded at the top. The new disclosure will create downward pressure in the industry by rewarding companies with more reasonable salary hierarchies. It will also get workers talking, and put overpaid executives in the spotlight. This could be a game-changer for out-of-control inequality. Help us ensure that the provision stays in place, to stop the wild greed at the top of the largest companies in the US.

Unsurprisingly, corporate lobbyists are doing everything they can to stop these new rules, and if it looks like the public isn't paying attention, the SEC might just give in and water down its disclosure requirements. We can't let them get away with that. Let's flood the SEC with comments demanding the strongest possible rules for holding CEOs accountable to their investors and the public. We know regulatory agencies speak up when the SumOfUs community speaks -- the Federal Communications Commission just cited our comments in its decision making it cheaper for incarcerated people to call their families.

What are you waiting for? Click here to submit a comment to the SEC demanding more disclosure on CEO pay.

Thanks for all you do,
Claiborne, Taren, and the team at SumOfUs.orgTruthOut: Federal Regulators Finally "Mind the Gap", 22 September, 2013. SumOfUs is a world-wide movement of people like you, working together to hold corporations accountable for their actions and forge a new, sustainable path for our global economy.
Political leanings: Pro-business/conservative

Spending target: At least $50 million

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is the world’s largest business organization — representing the interests of more than 3 million businesses — and advocates a pro-business agenda in Washington, D.C. Although the chamber occasionally supports some Democrats whom it judges to be pro-business, the bulk of the organization’s efforts skew sharply toward electing Republicans. Of the direct political donations given by
the chamber’s political action committee in 2012, for example, 89 percent went to Republicans.

The chamber is a 501(c)(6) — an IRS designation for nonprofit trade groups. It can accept unlimited contributions and does not have to disclose its donors.

The Chamber of Commerce reported spending $35.7 million (mostly attacking Democrats or supporting Republicans) in the 2012 campaign cycle. That total was third among conservative-leaning outside spending groups, trailing only the amounts spent by the American Crossroads/Crossroads GPS twins, and Mitt Romney’s super PAC, Restore Our Future. However, that count includes only money disclosed to the Federal Election Commission, and since not all election-related spending is required to be disclosed to the FEC, the chamber’s true total was likely higher. Tom Donohue, the chamber’s president and CEO, had dismissed a $50 million spending target for 2012 as too low, explaining: “Some people would say that’s a round number in the past. … I would say this is a more important election.” News reports describe the chamber as having pledged to spend $100 million to support corporate-friendly candidates in the 2012 cycle.

The chamber spent more than $1.3 million on television ads attacking Sen. Jon Tester, the vulnerable Democrat from Montana. One of these spots made a number of dubious claims that we challenged in our article ”‘Government Run’ Nonsense.” Tester would go on to win reelection despite the chamber’s involvement.

For the 2014 cycle, the Wall Street Journal reported that the chamber intends to spend at least $50 million to “support establishment, business-friendly candidates in primaries and the general election, with an aim of trying to win a Republican Senate majority.” The use of “establishment” candidates signals a challenge to tea party-backed candidates, many of whom supported the government shutdown last fall — an effort deeply opposed by many business leaders, including the chamber. So far, the chamber has spent over $14 million for the 2014 cycle in independent expenditures, nearly $12 million of which was spent for Republicans. Over $1 million each was spent in support of Republican senate candidates Jack Kingston of Georgia, Cory Gardner of Colorado, and Mitch McConnell of Kentucky.

The establishment-tea party battle began last fall with a special election to fill the vacancy in Alabama’s 1st Congressional District. The chamber spent around $200,000 in support of Bradley Byrne, who would go on to defeat tea party favorite Dean Young in the primary, and then coast to victory in the general election.

In December, the chamber launched ads supporting three Republican congressmen, including one, Mike Simpson, who faced tea party challenger Bryan Smith. Simpson won the Republican primary in Idaho with 62% of the vote.

1.

**Why the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Doesn’t speak for me!**

- Of the 32 million dollars the US chamber spent on the 2010 midterm election, 94% went to climate change deniers.
- With a 200 million dollar annual budget, the chamber spends more than the next 5 lobbying groups combined.
- In 2009 the chamber received 55% of its money from just 16 donors.
- The chamber is set up in such a manner that it is not required to reveal who its donors are.
The US chamber is a corporate front group allowing large corporate interests to shield their donations to a group with a very partisan and regressive agenda.

The US chambers power comes from the claim that it represents three million businesses, but it doesn’t.

The chamber spends tens of millions of dollars each year lobbying congress in an attempt to block all attempts at progress on climate legislation.

**History of the US Chamber of Commerce**

- Founded in 1912 as the world’s largest business federation
- Headquarters in Washington D.C. directly across from the White House
- The Chamber lobbied against involvement in WWII.
- It lobbied against the Civil rights act of 1964
- It supported the Joseph McCarthy hearings demanding the hunting down of subversives and communists in the 1950’s
- In the 80’s and 90’s it fought to weaken the clean air standards, oppose the hazardous waste dumping ban, and lobbied to oppose the Kyoto greenhouse gas treaty
- In 2009 one of the Chamber’s vice presidents for environment, technology and regulatory affairs called for a Scopes Monkey Trial on the science of climate change
- Most recently the chamber petitioned the E.P.A. to take no action on climate change on the grounds that Populations can adapt to a warmer climate via a range of behavioral, physiological and technological adaptations.
- The chamber supports the construction of the Keystone Pipeline to bring tar sands oil across the U.S. to be refined and shipped around the world from the Texas Gulf coast.

Edward Hejtmanek  [Mr. Hejtmanek is a Fayetteville businessman. –D]

**LOCAL CHAMBERS QUITTING US CHAMBER**

Dick,  The web address that has the list of cities that have quit the U.S Chamber is available at [www.fixthechamber.org](http://www.fixthechamber.org)  See also [http://chamber.350.org/about/faqs/](http://chamber.350.org/about/faqs/)

Thanks, Edward
US Chamber of Commerce Outside Spending | OpenSecrets

https://www.opensecrets.org/.../detail.php?...

Center for Responsive Politics

US Chamber of Commerce Outside Spending ... For Republicans: $25,005,331. Against Republicans: $1,125,000. Total Electioneering Communications: $0

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce's own history of itself describes it as .... In 2011, the Chamber hosted a "GOP Holiday Party" honoring the Republican National ...

Former GOP Florida Gov. Jeb Bush made the obvious official this week when he announced ...

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce's political team is led by Scott Reed, left, and Rob Engstrom, a pair of veteran GOP tacticians who have helped transform the ...

More news for US Chamber of Commerce and Republican Party

CNN

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce's political team is led by Scott Reed, left, and Rob Engstrom, a pair of veteran GOP tacticians who have helped transform the ...

[See Source Watch for a comprehensive analysis. –D]
U.S. Chamber of Commerce, a powerful business lobbying group in the United States. The U.S. Chamber played a major role in the Republican victories in the 2010 midterms and offered support to all pro-business candidates, regardless of party affiliation.


topics.nytimes.com/.../chamber_of_commerce_us/i...

The New York Times


10. The biggest winner in primaries: US Chamber of Commerce

www.washingtonpost.com/.../the-biggest-winner-in-pr...

The Washington Post

May 21, 2014 - The country's largest business lobby aims to break tea party's hold on Republican Party.

11. The U.S. Chamber Of Commerce Is Saving the GOP ... - Time

time.com/.../chamber-commerce-2014-elections-tea-party-republican...

Time

Jul 14, 2014 - Tom Donohue U.S. Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Tom Donohue speaks during a news conference at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

www.factcheck.org/2014/02/u-s-chamber-of-commerce-2/

FactCheck.org

Feb 7, 2014 - The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is the world's largest business lobby and the bulk of the organization's efforts skew sharply toward electing Republicans. A challenge to tea party-backed candidates, many of whom supported the... 

12. Chamber of Commerce gives ultimatum to GOP - Kevin ... 

www.politico.com/.../chamber-of-commerce-2016-election-immigration...

Politico

May 12, 2014 - The GOP shouldn't even field a presidential candidate in 2016 unless... U.S. Chamber of Commerce President Tom Donohue said Monday.

CONTEXTS

Review: 'The Divide' by Matt Taibbi

By MATT WELCH. WALL STREET JOURNAL, April 11, 2014.
After the last financial crisis, big banks paid fines rather than facing prosecution. When the polemicist who made Goldman Sachs synonymous with a "vampire squid" writes a book called "The Divide," with a subtitle that references "the wealth gap," one may reasonably anticipate some undergraduate-style fist-shaking about income quintiles and the predatory rich. But one would be wrong. Matt Taibbi's "The Divide" is primarily concerned with the grotesquely unequal application of American justice, between the too-big-to-jail Wall Street elite and the too-poor-to-fight minority underclass. "The cleaving of the country into two completely different states—one a small archipelago of hyperacquisitive untouchables, the other a vast ghetto of expendables with only theoretical rights," Mr. Taibbi maintains, "is a terrible story, and a crazy one." The characterization is typically overwrought, but the general indictment is broadly correct.

**The Divide**

*By Matt Taibbi*

*Spiegel & Grau, 416 pages, $27*

Mr. Taibbi's tale begins inside a Manhattan courtroom last year, as New York County District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr. brings the first prosecution against a bank since the 2008 financial meltdown. "If we've learned anything from the recent mortgage crisis," Mr. Vance says, "it's that at some point, these schemes will unravel and taxpayers could be left holding the bag." So which of the nation's many culpable financial institutions is getting its belated comeuppance? A small, family-owned Chinatown operation you've probably never heard of called Abacus Federal Savings Bank. Mr. Taibbi argues that this "collection of freaked-out immigrant patsies" was guilty of little more than not detecting early enough that some of its non-deadbeat loan clients were underreporting their incomes on mortgage applications.

"Everyone got what they wanted from the Abacus prosecution," he writes. "The city got to say it was being tough on financial crime. The press got to run a thrilling picture of harsh justice. Mr. Vance got a line to add to his résumé. The only losers were the public, who had no idea that the real culprits for the financial crisis were being set free, while the bank on trial had nothing to do with the losses that had been suffered by almost every ordinary American in the crash."

This technique of whiplash juxtaposition is Mr. Taibbi's main narrative device. Abacus, whose 19 defendants were reportedly chained together for their first perp-walk through the courtroom, is held up against 2008's parade of horribles—Countrywide, Citigroup, JPMorgan Chase, AIG—each of which, eventually, signed non-prosecution agreements with the Department of Justice, paying massive civil fines for such offenses as mortgage fraud and discriminatory lending practices instead of having the institutions or their employees suffer criminal sanction.

It would be one thing to simply point at such judicial disparity and cry foul. Mr. Taibbi's contribution is to trace the bureaucratic process that created a prosecutorial doctrine that calls for weighing "collateral consequences"—that is, anything that might hurt innocent bystanders—when deciding whether to bring a
case against a corporation. "Prosecutors may take into account the possibly substantial consequences to a corporation's officers, directors, employees, and shareholders," reads a 1999 Justice Department memo written by a then obscure lawyer named Eric Holder.

By 2009, Mr. Holder's collateral-consequences memo had melded with the concept that some banks were so important to the economy that they were "too big to fail." When Mr. Holder's Justice Department announced that it would not prosecute the Swiss bank UBS for its role in the Libor price-fixing scandal but would instead extract a $1.5 billion settlement, the attorney general explained the logic: "I'm not talking about this case, but in others that we have resolved, the impact on the stability of the financial markets around the world is something that we take into consideration." Not only were large banks essentially immune from prosecutions, their executives were, too.

Such delicate enforcement could not be in sharper contrast, Mr. Taibbi argues, to the routine police and prosecutorial overreach exercised against minority and immigrant populations in the United States. He profiles a resident of Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood with a previously clean record, who gets cited for riding a bicycle on an empty sidewalk, then goes to court three times to contest a $100 fine he can't afford. He introduces us to a Colombian immigrant entrepreneur and 10-year resident of Georgia who gets deported into a Bosch-style Mexican hellscape after being caught at a roadside checkpoint while driving without a license. And several chapters are filled with a roster of less sympathetic gutter punks, zombiefied prostitutes and former street criminals routinely stopped, fined and marginalized with a relentlessness out of proportion to anything the rest of us would recognize as a dignified or free life.

Mr. Taibbi aims to outrage more than persuade, so readers who are more skeptical than he about, say, the racist motivation of cops, or the presumed guilt of most major financial institutions, will find reasons to be suspicious of the author's characterizations of police-suspect encounters. Even I, who tend to agree with his underlying assumptions, wished for a more intellectually rigorous consideration of the opposing point of view: Maybe aggressive policing does reduce crime, and maybe bailing out the big banks really did avert the next Great Depression. It would be interesting to see what a writer of Mr. Taibbi's talent would produce if he slowed down and concentrated on proving beyond a shadow of a doubt the exact details of claims that are almost too lurid to believe, such as the shocking assertions in his chapter on the Lehman Brothers/Barclays sale of 2008.

But at heart "The Divide" is a face-slap, not a legal brief. Though Mr. Taibbi doesn't couch it in these terms, his warning is all about moral hazard, in two senses of the phrase. When swindlers know that their risks will be subsidized, and their potential crimes will be punishable only through negotiated corporate settlements, they will surely commit more crimes. And when most of the population either does not know or does not care that the lowest socioeconomic classes live in something akin to a police state, we should be greatly concerned for the moral health of our society. —Mr. Welch is editor in chief of Reason and co-host of "The Independents" on Fox Business Network.
A new book from Jim Wallis!

**Sojourners [sojourners@sojo.net]**

**To:** James R. Bennett  
**Tuesday, March 05, 2013 8:56 AM**

Dear Dick,

"My concern is not whether God is on our side; my greatest concern is to be on God’s side.”—Abraham Lincoln

**Jim Wallis’** newest book, *On God’s Side: What Religion Forgets and Politics Hasn’t Learned About Serving the Common Good*, examines the deepest problems this world faces. What we need is a commitment to an ancient idea whose time has urgently come: the common good.

How do we work together, even with people we don’t agree with? How do we treat each other, especially the poorest and most vulnerable? How do we take care of not just ourselves, but also one another?

*On God’s Side* will be released on April 1, but **you can read an exclusive excerpt** in the April issue of *Sojourners* magazine!

To be inspired to make a spiritual and practical commitment to the common good, [order your subscription](mailto:sojourners@sojo.net) to *Sojourners* magazine. If you order today, you’ll receive our very best price!

Don’t miss any of this! [Sign up today](mailto:sojourners@sojo.net) and get your copy of *Sojourners’* April issue.

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**END US CHAMBER OF COMMERCE NEWSLETTER #2**

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Dick Bennett

**Newsletters**


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