

## APGoPo Unit 4

# MONEY IN U.S. ELECTIONS

### EFFORTS TO REFORM

- Strategies to prevent abuse in political contributions
  - Imposing limitations on giving, receiving, and spending political money
  - Requiring public disclosure of the sources and uses of political money
  - Giving governmental subsidies to **PRESIDENTIAL** candidates, campaigns, and parties, including incentive arrangements
- The Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA):
  - established a fund for public donations to presidential campaigns (not done for congressional campaigns)
  - set up rules for the disclosure of all campaign financing and spending information
  - established the Federal Election Commission to regulate campaign financing
- Post-Watergate reforms
  - 1974 amendments to FECA established realistic limits on contributions and spending, tightened disclosure, and provided for public financing of presidential campaigns
  - The law had to be amended after the 1976 *Buckley v. Valeo* decision, but the basic outline of the act remained unchanged
  - *Buckley v. Valeo (1976)*
    - SC case that challenged most of the provisions in the Federal Election Campaign Act, as amended in 1974.
    - SC upheld the law's requirements that candidates, parties, PACs and groups engaging in express advocacy disclose their fund-raising and spending.
    - SC also affirmed voluntary public financing and limits on individual contributions.
    - SC struck down, as infringements on free speech, limits on campaign spending (unless the candidate accepts public financing), limits on contributions by candidates to their own campaigns (unless publicly financed)
- Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 (BCRA)
  - Enacted in 2002, BCRA constituted the first major revision of campaign finance law in more than 25 years
  - Bans unlimited soft money contributions to the national political parties and prohibits federal officeholders from soliciting soft money
- Soft money
  - Definition – Funds given to state and local parties by political parties, individuals, or PACs for voter registration drives and party mailings
  - Federal law does not require disclosure of its source or use
  - Although soft money is supposed to benefit only state and local parties, it influences federal elections
  - Mostly illegal now; Soft money >> purchased access to elected officials >> influence and the possibility or appearance of corruption