



BIG MONEY OUT VA

“DEMOCRACY LOSES WHEN BIG MONEY WINS”

The Corrosive Impact of Money in Politics: Healthcare Industry Contributions

Background: Although America’s health care is most expensive in the world, the U.S. ranks No. 97 in access to quality health care. Americans are ranked 89th out of 130 countries in satisfaction with their health-care options, Gallup World Poll surveys.

The Influence of Corporations and Special Interests:

- In 2018, the healthcare industry employed more than 5 lobbyists for each member of Congress, spending more than \$700 million on lobbying and support for actual or potential members of Congress. In the same year members of this industry gave \$225 million to federal candidates, outside money groups and parties.
- Pharmaceutical lobbyists effectively prevented the government from negotiating drug prices, a big factor why the U.S. spends \$1 trillion more than needed for quality care.
- Lobbyists spent heavily against reforms to end surprise medical billing and against plans requiring hospitals to make their prices public.
- Common sense restrictions on opioid sales have been blocked.
- In Virginia, healthcare industry interests contributed more than \$12 million to candidates in 2018.
- From 2014 to 2019 in Virginia, the average health insurance premium on the individual market rose 147%.
- Anthem controls 40% of the health insurance market share and recently lowered reimbursement rates for nurse practitioners and physician assistants by 15 to 20%.

How This Affects You:

- Pharmaceuticals are about three times more expensive in the U.S. than in other countries.
- Hip replacements cost more than \$40,000 on average in the US, but \$11,000 in France.
- An MRI examination costs \$1,100 in the US, but about \$300 in Britain.
- America has fewer doctors per capita and they get paid nearly twice as much.
- More than 40 percent of Americans have high-deductible insurance plans.
- People are paying more for insurance coverage even as the industry is generating record profits, restricting patient choice, and making benefits less comprehensive.
- Rising health care costs have contributed to lower earnings for workers and fewer less-skilled jobs.

Personal Stories:

Olivia Newby, a Norfolk-based nurse practitioner, said [Anthem’s reimbursement reduction] would [have] an “absolutely devastating” effect on the independent practice where she works...and the surrounding community — predominantly working-class people of color. “We were already busy, overwhelmed, short-staffed in trying to accommodate the patients,” Newby said. “That loss of income may mean we can’t afford support staff. Or maybe we put off buying new equipment. It’s that trickle-down effect that impacts the quality of patient care.”

Small Business Owner, Carol Sharp Schwaber says “I can tell you that it is extremely hard to provide insurance that not only business owners but our employees can afford. Even employers with the best intentions, can hardly afford to successfully run a profitable business and provide good insurance for their employees and themselves. It is a terrible situation.”