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## How Not to Enter Politics (A Satire)

**JEFF BRINDLE** | October 31, 2022, 03:21 pm | in [Caucus Room](#)

Prior to a college class I teach on Tuesday evenings, students will often stop by the Adjunct Office and ask to speak with me.

This happened not too long ago when a student stopped by and asked me how to get involved in politics and elections in New Jersey.

The student's ambition was to one day run for office, or, in the alternative, to influence elections.

As I was meeting with him, and before making suggestions, he let me know that his family had money. In his words, they never had a problem providing significant financial support to him and would not hesitate to do so in the future, whatever he chose to do.

The student began the conversation by stating that there was a candidate locally he was interested in helping. He wondered how he should go about getting involved.

Knowing this student's background and interest in running for office, my response to him was simple: There is no need for you to begin your political journey helping out a local, municipal party, or a local candidate in his/her quest to be elected to the township committee.

"Forget about wasting your efforts on a campaign for Township Committee," I said. "Instead begin pursuing your own career, either as a candidate or starting a dark money group. And by all means, if you run for office and win, begin thinking about the next, higher office for which to run.

My advice centered around the fact that this young man was well-off monetarily. So why should he waste his time helping a local political party or candidate for local political office. Why not run yourself, perhaps for Congress.

My suggestion, however, was that he first use some of his money as seed money to create an independent committee, otherwise known in some circles of a “Dark Money Group.”

I told him not to waste his time on party politics as political parties are much more diminished these days as well as regulated by law.

By pursuing this course, organizing and running an independent group, he would kill two birds with one stone: enhance his credibility with his party by spending money independently in support of the party’s candidates, thereby enhancing his prospect to be selected to run for whatever office he chooses in the future.

Besides, as an independent group under U.S. Supreme Court rulings, his organization could receive contributions in unlimited amounts, spend on the election in unlimited amounts, and at the same time make candidates and others in the party not only grateful to him, but dependent upon him in the future.

“The advantage that you would have by organizing an independent group and financially supporting candidates over political parties and candidates is significant,” I told the student.

The political parties have contribution limits imposed upon them, making it more difficult for them to raise money, are regulated in terms of how they organize; and must disclose to the public all of their financial activity, their contributions, the amount contributed, and how they are spending the money.

“The candidate themselves,” I said to this young man “are also highly regulated by law.” They are subject to contribution limits, which, incidentally in New Jersey have not been raised in 18 years. Also, they must disclose their financial activity.

“Moreover, whereas the law does not place any restriction on how independent groups may spend their money, candidates themselves are subject to how they can use their money in addition to being subject to penalties for misuse of funds.”

So in my closing remarks to this student I asked, “Why wouldn’t you want to use your money to form an independent group rather than get involved helping the party or a candidate other than yourself?”

“There is such an imbalance in the electorate and such an advantage “Dark Money” groups have over parties and candidates, it would be a fools errand to do other than pursue “Dark

Money,” which by doing so not only will you increase your influence over the electoral process but also places you in a position to run for whatever office you please,” I said.

The student looked at me, somewhat taken back, considering my suggestions.

In reinforcing my suggestion, I said, “this is what you have to do in today’s politics.”

As noted in the headline above, this is a satirical piece. The advice that I would truly give a student, and have, is quite the opposite. Indeed begin at the local level, get involved in party politics, help a number of candidates on their campaigns, get your street cred in this way, learn the ins and outs of politics, electorally and governmentally, and then attempt to run for office.

If this were the approach taken by younger people, government in the future would be well-served.

*Jeff Brindle is the Executive Director of the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission.*

*The opinions presented here are his own and not necessarily those of the Commission.*

