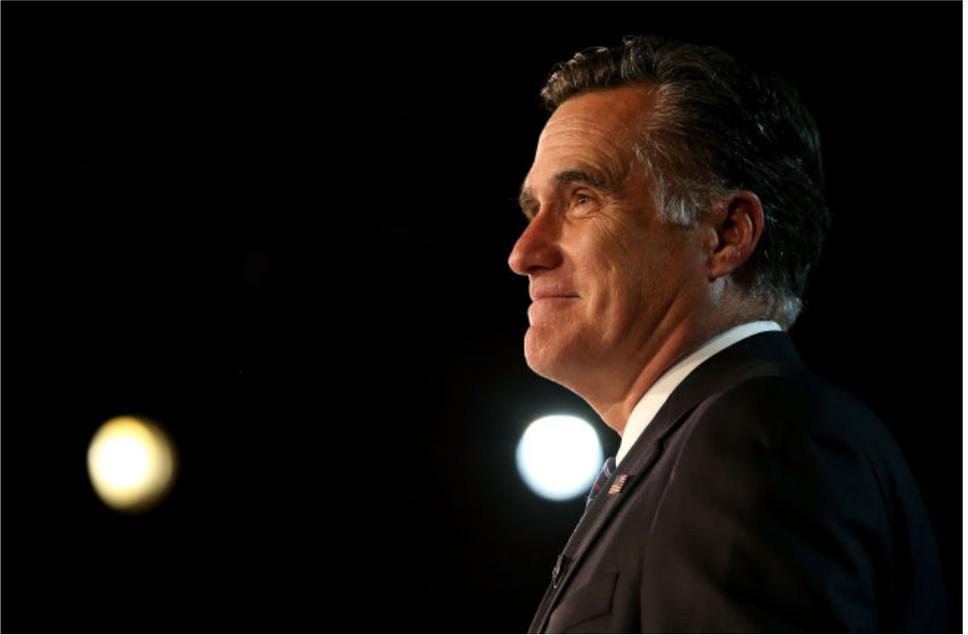


# Republicans for the (Regular) People

A new group aims to back campaign finance reform from the right.



The Rich Guy.

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By [Jean Card](#)

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Republicans and big money go together like desk jockeys and bad posture. For whatever reason, if no one reminds us to be better, we slump into the most unattractive and degenerative behavior. The next thing you know, it's time for a presidential election and no one on the right can do anything without The Rich Guys, leaving us with campaigns full of advisors who put quotation marks in the air with their hands when they talk about "real people" — because they don't actually know anyone outside of [the 1 percent](#). Okay, maybe the 2 percent. But still.

I mean, look at us Republicans now — Bush and Romney? Really? I'm not saying these guys are incapable of being populists, but hopefully we can all acknowledge that hailing from families and backgrounds of truly enormous wealth and privilege isn't the ideal platform from which to appeal to the middle class (or working families or whatever the pundits and political consultants are calling regular people these days).

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I'm not sure these Rich Guys can even appeal to a critical mass of small business owners and their families — the real people, the embodiment of the American dream and upward mobility, who should be the heart, soul and conscience of the Republican party.

All of this is why a new group that launched this week — Take Back Our Republic — is important and exciting for populists on the right. It is led by conservatives and aims to reduce the influence of big money in politics.

You read that right.

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The new group [says](#) it believes “that individual participation in the American political system is the best way to preserve and strengthen our liberty.” Can I get a “what what”?

Seriously, there isn't much to disagree with in this new group's platform. I know that most Republicans would agree with it without blinking; but then they would return to their big-money fundraisers and appointments with corporate lobbyists. They don't even realize that engaging in crony capitalism is actually eroding their bedrock beliefs about the importance of the individual.

Led by John Pudner — who launched Rep. Dave Brat's campaign, which unseated former House Majority Leader Eric Cantor— Take Back Our Republic is investigating campaign finance reforms that clearly differ from reforms traditionally proposed by the left. Pudner says he isn't concerned about there being too much money in politics, but rather the fact that the money has become “[transactional](#),” something many of us simply refer to as cronyism. His proposals would encourage regular folks to get involved in the political process (with credits or deductions for political contributions in the hundreds-of-dollars category). The group also hopes to protect small donors from public disclosure and the retribution that can come with it. I believe this is critical for those small-business owners I mentioned earlier — folks with well-developed, thoughtful political convictions who fear political involvement because it could turn off customers.

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Over time, reforms that shift the balance of big and small money could change the now-required behavior of candidates to spend hours of each day on the phone, dialing major donors. An added bonus: Those potential candidates who currently won't run because they don't want to be fundraisers might just look at running for office.

For much of my career, I worked at the National Federation of Independent Business, a small-business advocacy group with an \$80-million-plus budget. It has a lot of influence, and its money comes in through checks in the few-hundred-dollar amount. But it had more than 300,000 members (paying average dues around \$250).

Because of my experience there, I know the power of lots of small checks — each one of which is backed with conviction. If Take Back Our Republic can help unleash the activism of people on the right who aren't wealthy, the Republican party should experience a new birth, fueled by real people, not The Rich Guys.

TAGS: Republican Party



Jean Card is a writer and communications consultant with expertise in public policy and small business issues. She is a former speechwriter for the U.S. secretaries of Labor and Treasury as well as the attorney general. Follow her on Twitter: [@JeanCard](#)

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