Follow the Money

Trace how campaign funds move and what rules apply.

9-12.GOV.50 "Examine campaign finance laws and campaign funding and spending, including the impact of Supreme Court decisions, the nationalization of campaign financing, and the role of interest groups."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline sources of campaign money, circle rules about giving or spending it, and number two effects this money can have on elections.

Money in an Ohio House Race

1. Imagine a close House race in Ohio. A voter in Oregon can donate online to an Ohio candidate, while a national interest group can pay for ads aimed at Ohio voters. Campaign money now crosses state lines quickly. National groups focus spending on competitive races, so candidates may seek support from donors far outside their districts.

2. Federal law limits an individual's direct gifts to federal candidates and bars direct corporate gifts. Campaigns report donations and spending to the Federal Election Commission. In Citizens United v. FEC (2010), the Supreme Court protected corporations' and unions' spending on independent political ads. The ads cannot be coordinated with a candidate's campaign.

TWO ROUTES FOR CAMPAIGN MONEY

Money route	Key federal rule
Direct gift to candidate	Limits apply; corporations barred
Super PAC independent ad	Unlimited fundraising; no candidate coordination

3. After Citizens United and a related court ruling, super PACs could accept unlimited contributions from individuals, corporations, and unions to fund independent ads. Super PACs report their donors, though a donor organization might hide its own funders. Interest groups can also use traditional PACs to make limited direct gifts to candidates. Each route shapes election messages.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How can people outside Ohio help fund the House race, and why might national groups choose that race?

2. How did the Citizens United ruling change what corporations and unions can pay for, and what restriction still applies?

3. Compare two ways an interest group can support a candidate through a PAC. How do the rules differ?

4. Why might a super PAC's donor report not show every original source of its money?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A national interest group wants to influence a close Senate race in another state. In 3 to 4 sentences, propose one lawful direct funding route and one independent route, then explain one possible effect on voters.

Follow the Money

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline sources of campaign money, circle rules about giving or spending it, and number two effects this money can have on elections. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How can people outside Ohio help fund the House race, and why might national groups choose that race?	**An out-of-state voter can donate online, and a national group can pay for ads. National groups focus spending on competitive races.**
2	How did the Citizens United ruling change what corporations and unions can pay for, and what restriction still applies?	**It protected their spending on independent political ads. The ads cannot be coordinated with a candidate's campaign.**
3	Compare two ways an interest group can support a candidate through a PAC. How do the rules differ?	**A traditional PAC can make a limited direct gift to a candidate. A super PAC can raise unlimited funds for independent ads but cannot coordinate those ads with the campaign.**
4	Why might a super PAC's donor report not show every original source of its money?	**A donor organization may give to the super PAC without revealing its own funders.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The group's traditional PAC could make a limited direct contribution to the Senate candidate. The group could also donate to a super PAC that buys ads without coordinating with the candidate's campaign. Those ads might bring a national issue into the race and affect which issues voters discuss.

Accept other lawful plans that distinguish limited direct contributions from independent spending without candidate coordination. Effects on voters should be plausible, not presented as certain.