Quantifying Corruption *and* Making Data Accessible

CS 340: Software Engineering
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Background:
Campaign Donations

Prior to 2010 the FEC tried to limit campaign contributions to congressional candidates

In the "FEC V Citizens United" decision SCOTUS determined that individual contributions cannot be limited.*

Neat!

*Subject to some restribtuions

Problem:
Shifting Power to the Very Wealthy

This limitless contribution ability means that an individual who has more money can spend more money contributing to a campaign.

The issue being that those with more money can pay more to elect people they like; this could exacerbate currently existing problems with inequality.

Solution:
The Public Focuses on The Money

A public interest in where a candidate's funding comes from is an important check on the power of money in politics.

Many people *do* care about where a candidate's money comes from, but doesn't have the first idea where to find out.

Solution:
Quantifying Corruption

We've leveraged OpenSecrets data, cleaned it, aggregated, and made it accessible via a web app.

Demo:
Quantifying Corruption

You can follow along at

quantifying-corruption.herokuapp.com

Reflection: Challenges

- Scope creep
- Identifying atomic bits of work to be done
- Standardizing environments

Future Work: Ensuring Maintainability

- There are a couple necessary improvements before it's "production ready"
- There are a couple scripts that need to be run to integrate new data
  - This could be streamlined and automated so we could keep a publicly accessible record of where the money in politics is coming from

Questions:
What you got?