

3.2.6 Practice: Campaign Finance

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I researched the 2014 Senate race for the state of Alaska.

Question 1:

The total amount of money spent on this race was 18,879,496 US dollars. I don't really think that this is an excessive amount. It seems like this is a lot of money, but in order to effectively campaign this really isn't all that much money. I remember this race, and I remember frequently seeing ads for these candidates online. Online advertising is expensive, especially on major websites. It makes sense that these candidates would be using this much money for advertising. The candidates need to be able to make themselves known and present themselves to the voters so the voters can make a decision. This seems perfectly logical to me.

Question 2:

In total, about 1.5 million dollars of this campaign money came from outside of the state. This is a fairly small amount, given that over 17 million came from inside the state. I think that people outside the state of Alaska aren't really interested in the campaign, besides the oil companies. Companies interested in drilling oil in Alaska are probably the most significant out of state donors in this particular campaign, because this is something that could potentially impact them. Otherwise, I think out of state donors were generally uninterested because the outcome of this election would not affect them.

Question 3:

Business and labor PACs made up several million dollars of the donations in this race. Significant contributors included labor unions, such as AFL-CIO, and business organizations such as realtors. I think that these people were interested in this campaign because they felt that it would have an impact on them. For example, a labor union might want to donate to the campaign of a candidate who supported raising the minimum wage. Similarly, Realtors may be interested in donating to the campaign of a candidate who favored lowering taxes on property, or something else that might benefit their industry. These campaign contributions are most likely motivated by interest in candidates whose action in the position they hope to win would benefit the contributors.