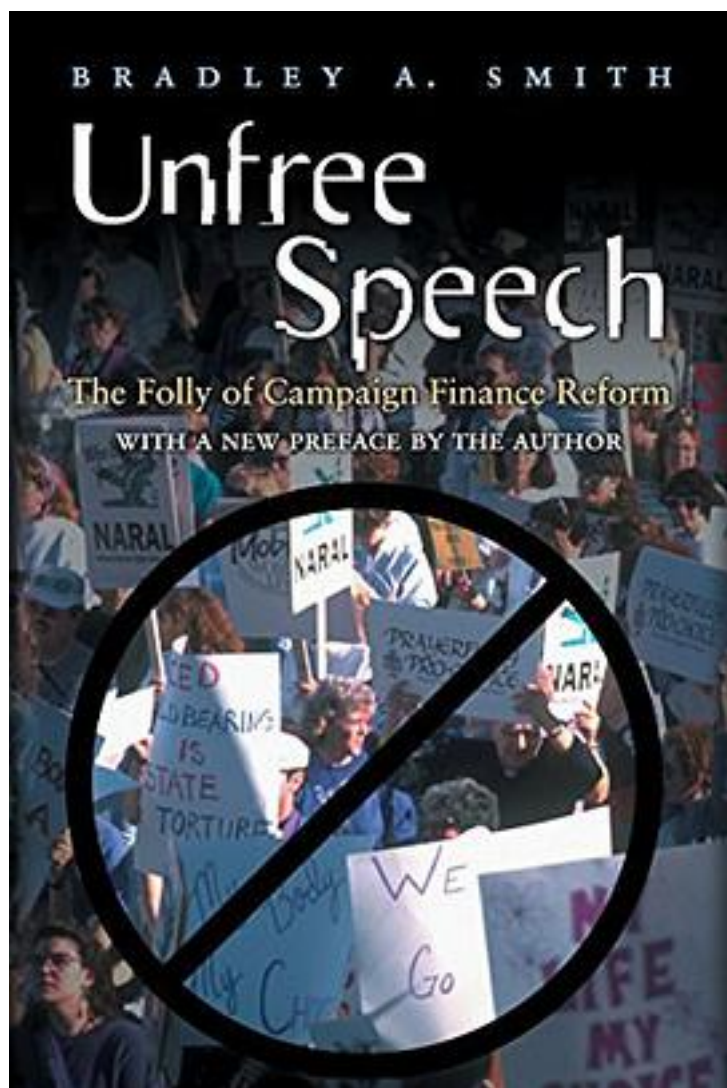


Unfree Speech



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At a time when campaign finance reform is widely viewed as synonymous with cleaning up Washington and promoting political equality, Bradley Smith, a nationally recognized expert on campaign finance reform, argues that all restriction on campaign giving should be eliminated. In "Unfree Speech," he presents a bold, convincing argument for the repeal of laws that regulate political spending and contributions, contending that they violate the right to free speech and ultimately diminish citizens' power. Smith demonstrates that these laws, which often force ordinary people making modest contributions of cash or labor to register with the Federal Election Commission or various state agencies, fail to accomplish their stated objectives. In fact, they have worked to entrench incumbents in office, deaden campaign discourse, burden grassroots political activity with needless regulation, and distance Americans from an increasingly professional, detached political class. Rather than attempting to plug 'loopholes' in campaign finance law or instituting taxpayer-financed campaigns, Smith proposes a return to core First Amendment values of free speech and an unfettered right to engage in political activity. Smith finds that campaign contributions have little corrupting effect on the legislature and shows that an unrestrained system of contributions and spending actually enhances equality. More money, not less, is needed in the political system, Smith concludes. "Unfree Speech" draws upon constitutional law and historical research to explain why campaign finance regulation is doomed and to illustrate the potentially drastic costs of efforts to make it succeed. Whatever one thinks about the impact of money on electoral politics, no one should take a final stand without reading Smith's controversial and important arguments.

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