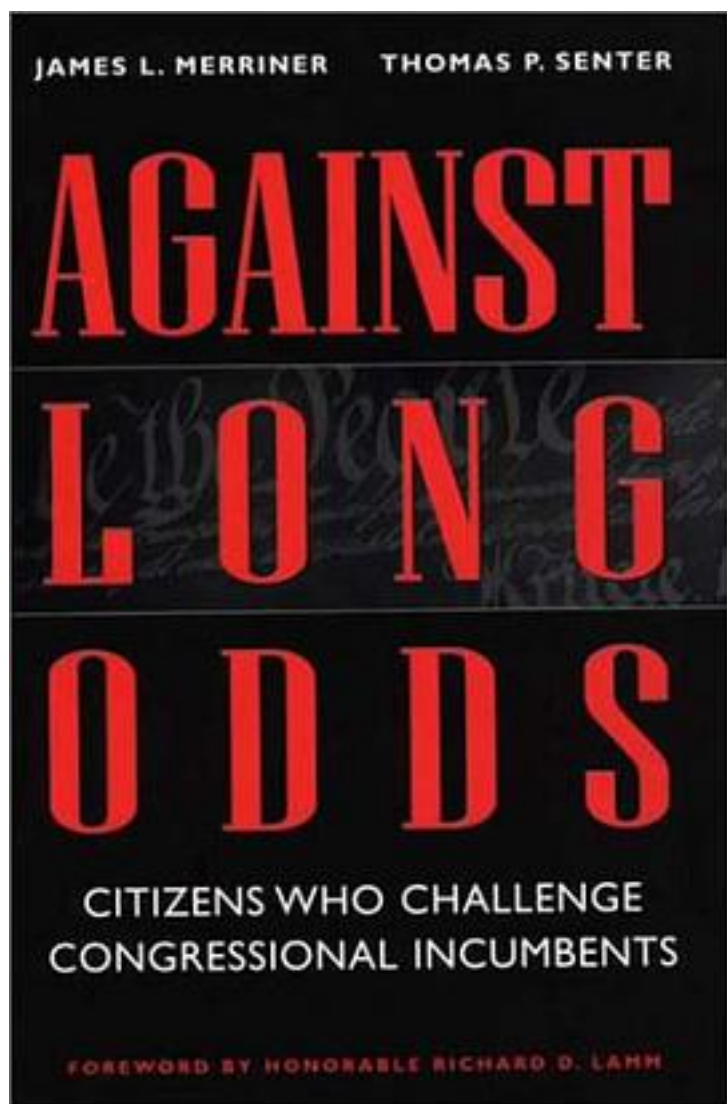


Against Long Odds



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While many books detail how senators and representatives operate in Washington, this one describes how they stay in power. The congressional elections of 1998 were the most expensive in history. Incumbency reelection rates were 98.3 percent in the House and 89.7 percent in the Senate, and this was a typical outcome after Watergate-era campaign reforms supposedly "reduced" the influence of money in politics. From the unique vantage of credible citizen-candidates who ran against congressional incumbents from Massachusetts to Hawaii during the 1990s, "Against Long Odds" tackles the question of why incumbents nearly always win. These citizen-challengers learned that the system is rigged against them. Incumbents prevail through a virtual monopoly on campaign cash, lavish congressional perks, local media and business backing, intimidation of their challengers' supporters, and sometimes outright dirty tricks. This is true for Republicans and Democrats; for conservatives, moderates, and liberals alike. This account details, as no other book has, how representatives and senators are zealous participants in a system that threatens to overturn the American traditions of free elections and the free exchange of ideas. Frustrated voters often complain that, no matter which party controls Congress, nothing ever really seems to change. Merriner and Senter explain why.

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