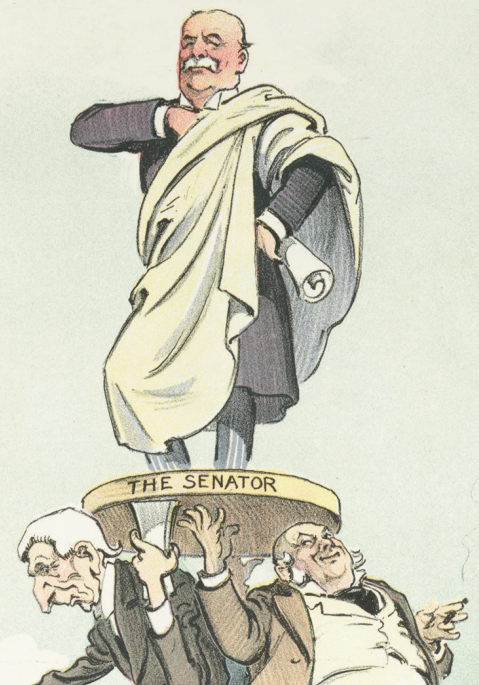


A REPUBLIC NO MORE

**BIG GOVERNMENT
AND THE RISE OF
AMERICAN POLITICAL
CORRUPTION**

BY JAY COST



“A REAL TOUR DE FORCE.” — WILLIAM KRISTOL

After the Constitutional Convention in 1787, Benjamin Franklin was asked, “Well, Doctor, what have we got—a Republic or a Monarchy?” Franklin’s response: “A Republic—if you can keep it.”

WE COULDN'T KEEP IT.

So argues Jay Cost, one of America’s preeminent political analysts, whose timely new book, *A Republic No More*, will leave readers enlightened and outraged.

We like to think we’ve evolved from the blatant cronyism of the Gilded Age, but as government has grown things have only become worse. Today’s politicians have professionalized the pathways of corruption so thoroughly that they can easily defy detection and retain plausible deniability. The law doesn’t keep up with corruption because the people who write our laws seem to prefer it that way. And by far the worst corruption happens when our two political parties agree with each other.

Cost traces the history of how America ceased being a republic and became a special interest democracy where the contours of public policy depend not so much on the common good, but rather on the push-and-pull of the various interest groups and corporate interests encamped in Washington D.C.

As voters turn their attention to the 2016 presidential election, *A Republic No More* offers a sweeping history of American political corruption and how it is worse than ever in the age of Obama. Cost demonstrates that a president who promised to change the system became a willing participant, along with both parties in the U.S. Congress—at a cost of hundreds of billions of dollars to taxpayers.

A REPUBLIC NO MORE REVEALS :

- How Boeing, GE, Pacific Gas & Electric, Verizon, and Apple spend virtually nothing on corporate taxes, and lobby big time to keep it that way.

- Why the United States government has wasted about \$1 trillion on farm subsidies that benefit millionaires and giant agribusinesses at the expenses of consumers.

- How corrupt politicians were bought off by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac—and how it contributed to the financial collapse of 2008.

- The Medicare reimbursements that allow lobbyists to game the system and raise the costs of healthcare for everyone else.

- Why sensible tax reform has not happened in nearly 20 years because scores of interest groups, which want to preserve their indefensible tax breaks, buy off key members of congressional tax-writing committees.

- That the worst instances of corruption are actually in the policy domains where the two political parties agree with each other—e.g. farm subsidies and reimbursement rates for Medicare Part B.

- Why political corruption has not gotten better in the last 100 years. In fact it has gotten worse.

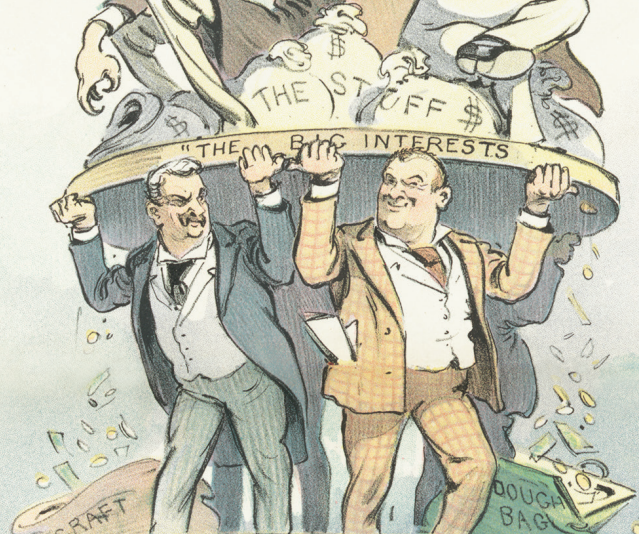


To schedule an interview with Jay Cost contact:

Lauren Miklos | lmiklos@encounterbooks.com | 212.871.6310

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JAY COST



JAY COST has been a top political analyst for a decade. Currently a staff writer for *The Weekly Standard*, he got his start with RealClearPolitics.com. His work has been featured in *The Wall Street Journal*, *New York Post*, *National Review*, FoxNews.com, *National Affairs*, and *Policy Review*. His first book, *Spoiled Rotten*, was a critical history of the Democratic Party published in 2012 by Broadside Books. He received a B.A. with High Distinction in government and history from the University of Virginia and an M.A. in political science from the University of Chicago. He resides in Pennsylvania with his wife and two children.

“He has mastered a remarkable range of material, and produced a full-bore, non-caricatural critique of liberalism...”

—*The New Yorker*

“One of the most acute political analysts of American politics today”

—Rich Lowry, *National Review*

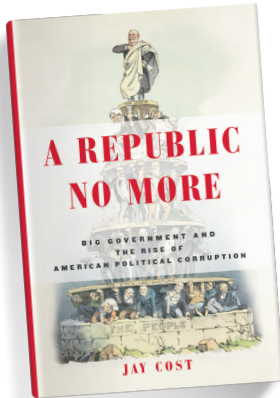
“He is manifestly among the nation’s best young journalist-scholars.”

—*Claremont Review of Books*

“Jay Cost may be the most insightful political analyst of his generation.”

—Jonah Goldberg, author of *The Tyranny of Clichés and Liberal Fascism*

CONTINUE READING ABOUT THE AUTHOR ON REVERSE →



“The Constitution, he argues, creates a limited government that is incapable of exercising the wide economic powers officeholders have embraced since the 1790s without rewarding well-placed insiders and auctioning off favors. It’s an original thesis—and a disturbing one.”

—Michael Barone, *Washington Examiner*, American Enterprise Institute, and co-author of *The Almanac of American Politics*, 1972-2014

“His narrative is detailed and lively, accessible to citizens and scholars alike... A real tour de force.”

—William Kristol,
editor of *The Weekly Standard*

“His book is accessible to liberals and conservatives who share an interest in governance for the public good.”

—Thomas B. Edsall,
online political columnist for the *New York Times*

“Jay Cost provides a map to the moral geography of modern government. The moral of this dismaying story is that as government becomes bigger, so does the number of transactions that look a lot like corruption.”

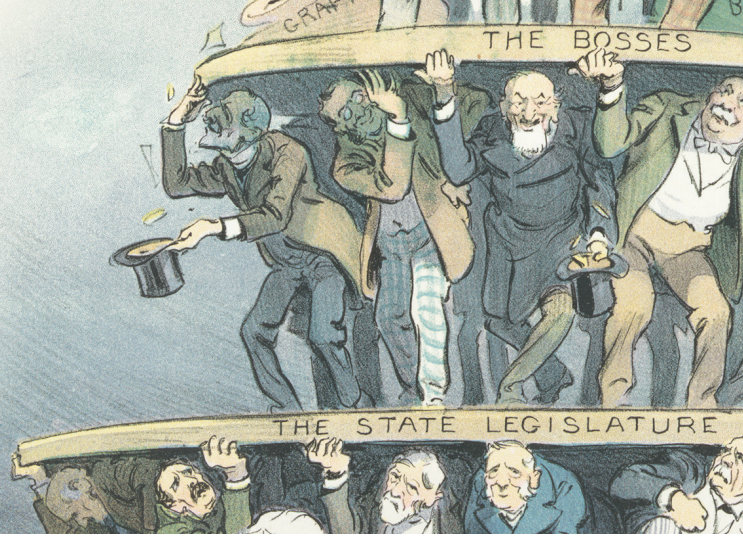
—George F. Will



To schedule an interview with Jay Cost contact:
Lauren Miklos | lmiklos@encounterbooks.com | 212.871.6310

JAY COST

AUTHOR Q&A



“I began to realize that corruption happens every day in ways that are not only legal, but perfectly acceptable.”

Why did you want to write a book about corruption?

COST: It was an idea I got after looking at Obamacare. Looking closer at it—it just was so crooked in its fundamentals.

Isn't corruption just a problem of law enforcement?

COST: That is what I used to think. But looking at public policy I began to realize that corruption happens every day in ways that are not only legal, but perfectly acceptable.

So what is corruption to you?

COST: To me, corruption is what happens when the government favors special interests over the common interests. So, actual illegal acts are included in that—like when a Congressman is on the take, he is robbing the public to line his own pockets—but whenever the government gives some group or faction a special favor, that is corruption.

In your book you say the problem of corruption is one that the Constitution tried to deal with. What do you mean?

COST: One of the main ideas behind checks and balances was to stop factions from getting control of the government to produce corrupt public policy. Factions within the government would fight each other so the only result would be policies they could all at least live with.

So how do we have corruption if the Framers cared so much about it?

COST: We started ignoring the parts of the Constitution that were inconvenient, and we never took the time to really amend it to update it to our new needs. We grew the government beyond the initial grant of power and the system of checks and balances broke down, but we never rebuilt it.

**“By the way the worst types of corruption are where
[Democrats and Republicans] work together.”**

**Which side is more to blame—Democrats
or Republicans?**

COST: Both equally. They just have corrupt relationships with different groups. And by the way the worst types of corruption are where the two sides work together.

**What is the most outrageous example of
corruption you encountered when you
wrote your book?**

COST: Fannie Mae, 1992–2007.

Has corruption gotten better or worse?

COST: Worse, much worse. There are now more ways for the government to be corrupt, and now it is more professionalized, more complicated, and harder to get people outraged about it.

How do we fix it?

COST: We have to take seriously the idea of checks and balances. If we want our government to do big, important things, we have to have institutions that can properly handle the powers.

**“We started ignoring the parts of the Constitution
that were inconvenient”**



To schedule an interview with Jay Cost contact:

Lauren Miklos | lmiklos@encounterbooks.com | 212.871.6310

AN EXCERPT FROM

A REPUBLIC NO MORE



TO BEGIN, A WARNING TO THE READER: this book is about political corruption, but it is not about Watergate. It is not about Abscam. It has little to say about Teapot Domes, and you will not find a word between these covers about Monica Lewinsky or Paula Jones. There are books out there that chronicle, in lurid detail, these events.

This book is not one of them.

All of those stories have a few items in common. Somebody breaks the law and (more or less) gets punished for it. There is a “perp walk” of some sort to reassure us that—in the end—good triumphed because indecency was exposed for what it was. Even if the bad guys go to the grave escaping the long arm of the law, the arm of the historian reaches farther still, and the audience can rejoice in the culprits’ reputations duly suffering for their civic transgressions.

This book, rather, has much more to do with the guys who got away with it, in particular the guys who flaunted it while getting away with it. In the 1890s, as Congress was writing tariff laws governing sugar, Pennsylvania’s political boss, Senator Matthew Quay, admitted: yes indeed, he was speculating in the sugar markets, that he would go right on doing so even as he voted on the sugar tariff, and there wasn’t a damned thing anybody could do about it, thank you very much.

He was right. A decade later, William Randolph Hearst exposed his successor, Boies Penrose, as being on the take from Standard Oil. Nothing came of it, and Penrose was reelected several times thereafter. He died in office.

Why did nothing happen to those men? Simple: *they were not breaking the laws of their day.* That is the fascinating feature about corruption—oftentimes, it has absolutely nothing to do with illegal activity. There are plenty of ways, as we shall see, to be corrupt without being criminal. More often than not, the criminals merely lack self-control or self-awareness. That makes them easy targets for rebuke, and thus reasons to feel good about ourselves and our government.

But as Quay and Penrose prove, the law often has trouble keeping up with corruption, in no small part because the people who write the laws like it that way. Perhaps George Washington Plunkitt, a sachem

(or boss) of New York City's Tammany Hall about a century ago, put it best:

“

Everybody is talkin' these days about Tammany men growin' rich on graft, but nobody thinks of drawin' the distinction between honest graft and dishonest graft. There's all the difference in the world between the two...I've not gone in for dishonest graft—blackmailin' gamblers, saloonkeepers, disorderly people, etc.—and neither has any of the men who have made big fortunes in politics.

There's an honest graft, and I'm an example of how it works. I might sum up the whole thing by sayin': 'I seen my opportunities and I took em.'

Just let me explain by examples. My party's in power in the city, and it's goin' to undertake a lot of public improvements. Well, I'm tipped off, say, that they're going to lay out a new park at a certain place.

I see my opportunity and I take it. I go to that place and I buy up all the land I can in the neighborhood. Then the board of this or that makes its plan public, and there is a rush to get my land, which nobody cared particular for before.

There was nothing honest about Plunkett's fraud, but he was on to something in drawing the distinction he did. "Dishonest" graft is directly making other people worse off, or breaking the law. While "honest" graft is technically legal,

and the victim is the common good, not a particular individual. What Plunkett was doing in his day would be outlawed today, but "honest" graft nevertheless survives, in different forms, always changing to stay one step ahead of the law.

Why is this the case? The answer to that question is the subject of this book.

So, what follows is not a tale of heroes and villains. Herein you will not find clear cut victories, glorious moments of truth being spoken to power, or exhilarating climaxes where the hard-charging civic hero triumphs and the citizen's faith in government is restored. If you're looking for that, go read *All the President's Men*. Similarly, the story here does not have the satisfaction that Calvinism supplies: government in this account is not a hopeless, immoral cesspool, where everybody is out for themselves and nobody does what is right, and the only thing to do is await the cleansing hellfire unleashed by the Almighty. If you're looking for something like that, *House of Cards* is for you.

Instead, this book is about corruption as a permanent, institutionalized feature of our government. Less sexy, perhaps, but it makes for an interesting puzzle. After all, our Founding Fathers were frankly concerned about corruption, so much so they designed a system to prevent it from occurring. Yet it has occurred anyway. Understanding this irony is the purpose of the book in your hands. While this may not offer much by way of emotional gratification, it is—on closer inspection—much more fascinating. And it can teach us some very important lessons about how our government actually works.