WHY DO MILLIONAIRES RUN OUR COUNTRY?

Dr. Nicholas Carnes

Sanford School of Public Policy

Duke University
I didn’t vote for anyone from the working class.

I didn’t have any other choice.
Why aren’t these on the ballot?
Percent from Working-class Jobs

- Citizens
- City Council Members
- State Legislators
- Congress Members
- Supreme Court Justices
- Presidents (postwar)
Percent from Working-class Jobs

- Citizens: 54%
- City Council Members: 9%
- State Legislators: 4%
- Congress Members: 2%
- Supreme Court Justices: 0%
- Presidents (postwar): 0%

Current Job

Last Non-political Job
Percent from Working-class Jobs

- Citizens: 54%
- City Council Members: 9%
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Percent from Working-class Jobs

Citizens: 54%
City Council Members: 9%
State Legislators: 4%
Congress Members: 2%
Supreme Court Justices: 0%
Presidents (postwar): 0%
Percent w/ Net Worths < $1 Million

- Citizens: 91%
- City Council Members: n/a
- State Legislators: n/a
- Congress Members: 44%
- Supreme Court Justices: 44%
- Presidents (postwar): 33%
Does it really matter?

Legislators from white-collar backgrounds . . .
. . . vote more conservatively on economic bills
. . . devote less energy to economic problems
. . . have more conservative economic values
. . . create economic policy that favors the rich
Does it really matter?
Why doesn’t government do more to combat rising inequality?

Because millionaires and white-collar professionals are calling the shots.
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Why are there so few ____ in office?
Why are there so few ___ in office?

women
Why are there so few ___ in office?

women          racial minorities
Why are there so few ___ in office?

- women
- racial minorities
- blue-collar workers
Some Possibilities

Theory 1:
Voters prefer wealthy, white-collar candidates.
Some Possibilities

Theory 1:
Voters prefer wealthy, white-collar candidates.

Theory 2:
Blue-collar workers aren’t up to it.
percent of member's career spent in working-class jobs
% who follow public affairs most of the time (1960-2008)  
% who think politics isn't too complicated (1960-2008)  
% who think gays should be allowed to adopt (1992-2008)
# who follow public affairs most of the time (1960-2008)

- Professionals: 3,254
- Workers: 4,309

# who think politics isn't too complicated (1960-2008)

- Professionals: 3,154
- Workers: 3,787

# who think gays should be allowed to adopt (1992-2008)

- Professionals: 741
- Workers: 939
Then what’s keeping workers out?

Institutions
- *fundraising*
- personal and career disruptions

Interest groups
- strained labor movement
- well-funded, sophisticated pro-business groups

Parties
- gatekeeping and network effects
None of these are deal-breakers!

Institutions
- fundraising
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Interest groups
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Parties
- gatekeeping and network effects
None of these are deal-breakers!
Those of us who care about political inequality need to pay as much attention to *who governs* as we do to *who lobbies* and *who participates*. 
The Cacophony of Money

Two-thirds of the $50 million spent on Mitt Romney’s behalf in Ohio has come from outside “super PACs” and other so-called independent groups, and yet Mr. Romney has lagged behind in all of the major Ohio polls. Hundreds of millions in third-party spending from unlimited checks, much of it from undisclosed donors, has also failed to give Mr. Romney a clear lead in any of the other swing states.

If Mr. Romney loses the presidential race— which is far from a sure thing— the cause of campaign finance reform may be closer than ever. That is a development that should give some cause for optimism.
90% Of Life Is Just Showing Up, And The 99% Don't

By Matthew Yglesias | Posted Sunday, Dec. 18, 2011, at 12:35 PM ET

It may seem obvious that the disproportionate political influence of the top one percent of the income distribution comes from their ability to bribe politicians with campaign contributions, but it's worth noting that the economic elite are considerably more politically engaged in a fairly comprehensive way:

For example, 41 percent of the very wealthy reported attending a political meeting. Only 9 percent of Americans did so in 2008. And 68 percent of the very wealthy reported giving money to a political candidate, party, or cause in the last four years. In 2008—a year in which “small donors” were numerous—only 13 percent of Americans donated to a political candidate or party. Again, there are small differences in the wording of the questions between the two surveys, but they are not likely responsible for the 55-point gap.
Those of us who care about political inequality need to pay as much attention to who governs as we do to who lobbies and who participates.
When Union Members Run, Working Families Win!

The New Jersey State AFL-CIO Committee on Political Education (COPE) ensures that the voice of New Jersey's working families is heard in the political arena. Our WORKER/VOTER program sponsors worksite voter registration for union members throughout the year. When elections approach we organize "LABOR WALKS" in which thousands of union member volunteers walk the state's election precincts and join with local union affiliates at their workplaces, informing our union sisters and brothers about candidates' positions on working family issues. And on Election Day we mobilize thousands of volunteers to Get-Out-The-Vote.

No one can represent working families and their unions better than working people themselves. That's why the New Jersey State AFL-CIO sponsors an ongoing program to recruit, train, mentor, and support union sisters and brothers running for elected office. Through the New Jersey State AFL-CIO Labor Candidates School, union members gain the skills they need to succeed in the political arena. New Jersey voters have elected union members to public office 692 times since 1997! These working men and women have a proven track record of placing the interests of working families first.

Now, for the first time in New Jersey history, union members serve in powerful leadership positions of both houses of the New Jersey State Legislature. Senator Steve Sweeney (Ironworkers 399) is the Senate President, Assemblyman Joe Egan (IBEW 456) is a Deputy Majority Leader and the Chairman of the Labor Committee, Assemblyman Thomas Giblin (IUOE 68) is a Deputy Majority Leader and the Vice Chairman of the Regulated Professions Committee, Assemblyman Nelson Albano (UFCW 152) is the Vice Chairman of both the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee and the Law and Public Safety Committee, Assemblyman Paul Moriarty (AFTRA) is the Vice Chairman of the Consumer Affairs Committee, Assemblyman Wayne DeAngelo (IBEW 269) is the Vice Chairman of the Telecommunications and Utilities Committee, and Assemblyman John Amodeo (IUOE 825) serves on the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee and the Transportation, Public Works and Independent Authorities Committee. As a result of labor's successful program to recruit, train, mentor, and support union members' election campaign efforts, labor's success in the legislative arena has grown substantially and many statewide pro-worker policies and laws have been implemented including:
Welcome!
How community organizing transformed New Haven

Ned Resnikoff, @resnikoff
5:00 PM on 01/14/2013

In 2009, twelve murders occurred in New Haven, Connecticut. By the next year, that number had doubled. Then, in 2011, that number shot up again—this time to 34 homicides. In a city whose population barely scrapes 130,000, the continually rising murder rate had many community members deeply shaken.
I’ll only be voting for rich people and white-collar professionals.

And so will you.
Warning: Backup Slides!
Does it really matter?

“[Blue-collar workers] know that the merchant is their . . . natural patron and friend; and they are aware that however great the confidence they may justly feel in their own good sense, their interests can be more effectually promoted by the merchants than by themselves.”

--Alexander Hamilton
Does it really matter?

“[bourgeoisie] jurisprudence is but the will of your class made into a law for all, a will, whose essential character and direction are determined by the economical conditions of existence of your class.”

--Adam Smith
Does it really matter?

“[bourgeoisie] jurisprudence is but the will of your class made into a law for all, a will, whose essential character and direction are determined by the economical conditions of existence of your class.”

--Marx and Engels
Does it really matter?

“The proposal of any new law or regulation of commerce which comes from [dealers in any particular branch of trade or manufacture] ought always to be listened to with great precaution . . . . It comes from an order of men, whose interest is never exactly the same with that of the public, who have generally an interest to deceive and even to oppress the public, and who accordingly have, upon many occasions, both deceived and oppressed it.”

--Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*
Does it really matter?

“I’m a small businessman at heart. Always will be. . . . Running a small business here in Butler County was one of the proudest times of my life. And it gave me a perspective on our country that I’ve carried with me throughout my time in public service.”

--John Boehner
Does it really matter?

Average (Rescaled) AFL-CIO Scores (House Only)
% of State Leg. from the Working Class

% of Rally / Meeting Attendees from the Working Class

% of Confident People from the Working Class

% of Campaign / Party Staff from the Working Class

Union Density

Legislative Professionalism
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<th>Reweighted</th>
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The Conventional Wisdom

“Voters repeatedly reject insurrectionist candidates who parallel their own ordinariness . . . in favor of candidates of proven character and competence.”
Promoting political equality
1. Get the money under control
2. Promote greater participation
3. Get the working class into office
What needs to happen?

Make it a priority.

Figure out how to do it right.
What needs to happen?

Make it a priority.

Figure out how to do it right.

Recruitment +
Seed money +
Training +
Grassroots support =

High-quality lawmakers from the working class

*Requires more testing
Does it really matter?

Chamber of Commerce Scores

liberal

conservative