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## **Redirect the outrage on convention spending**

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It is hard not to be outraged by national political convention spending — until one puts it into perspective. For example, the FFA (that's the organization formerly known as the Future Farmers of America) annual convention, which rotates between Louisville and Indianapolis, is a \$30 million dollar affair. Major sporting events such as a [BCS Bowl](#) game or [NCAA Final Four](#) see far higher spending. Someone's got to pay for it.

Or we could do away with conventions. But conventions continue to serve many important purposes, not least of which is presenting the party and its candidates to the nation, but also bringing party activists together from around the country, where they will often meet for the only time, taking care of party business, and more. Parties don't incur the expense of national conventions just for the heck of it, and political engagement should be encouraged, not discouraged. Do we want government to prohibit people from spending their money for what they value?

Perhaps we should do what some so-called reformers want, and have the government pay for campaigns and conventions. Actually, the federal government already subsidizes each major party convention with about \$18 million. Is this something we should spend tax dollars on? Which is a better source of outrage — a privately funded convention, or one funded with your tax dollars?

Worrying about convention spending is to mistake symptom for disease. If big labor, big corporations and lobbyists generally have too much sway, perhaps that is because government has too much power to dispense favors and run your life.

You can't have a government that spends \$4 trillion a year — one that dishes out crony contracts to Solyndra and other "friends" and that claims the right to regulate your health care, to force you to pay for others' contraceptives, and to subsidize some stranger's auto purchase — and not expect people to spend money to influence what that government does.

Let's focus our outrage. Runaway government is the root of public corruption. Influence peddling is just a symptom.