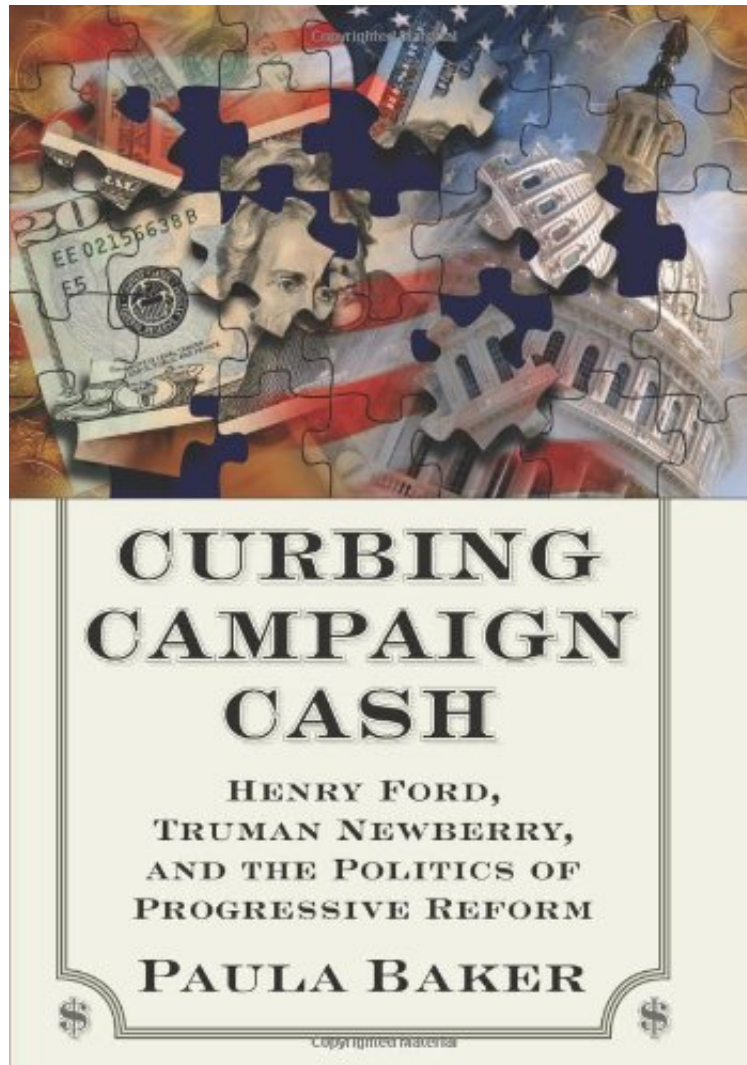


# Curbing Campaign Cash: Henry Ford, Truman Newberry, and the Politics of Progressive Reform

Paula Baker

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**Paula Baker : Curbing Campaign Cash: Henry Ford, Truman Newberry, and the Politics of Progressive Reform** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Curbing Campaign Cash: Henry Ford, Truman Newberry, and the Politics of Progressive Reform:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. excellent look at Progressive Era politicsBy david l. porembaImagine for a moment that you are at your kitchen table in Detroit, Michigan. It is late in the year 1918 and you are about to write a letter of complaint to your United States Senator about unsafe working conditions at your job making Ford cars. Putting pencil to paper, you realize that your senator is Henry Ford and it hits you that writing is

hopeless. Sound crazy? President Woodrow Wilson urged Ford to run for the seat and, making no public speeches or appearances, he very nearly won, the margin less than 9,000 votes. What kind of politician a man used to total obedience in his everyday business dealings, coupled with his specific mindset, would make, would be anybody's guess. *Curbing Campaign Cash* describes the 1918 Michigan U.S. Senate race between the esteemed Mr. Ford and one Truman Handy Newberry, Navy veteran of the Spanish-American War, former Assistant Secretary and Secretary of the Navy under President Theodore Roosevelt, Republican Congressman and one of the Detroit elites, albeit one who the ordinary voter knew very little of. Newberry's campaign team was prepared to spend as much cash as needed to overcome Ford's fame and presidential endorsement. And they did. Newberry's campaign committee spent nearly \$200,000 in 1918 dollars, when the cap, by law, was \$10,000, according to the 1912 Federal Corrupt Practices Act. The senator-elect was tried and convicted by Congress under this act but was eventually exonerated by the Supreme Court, which ruled (on appeal), that Congress had no right to regulate primary elections. This decision had its ripple effects, allowing southern states to hold whites-only primaries and set back campaign finance reformers decades. This book provides an excellent peek under the bushel basket at the contradictions of the Progressive Era which created divisions between reformers. It is interesting to note that there is still no legislation curbing campaign spending.

In the 1918 Michigan race for the U.S. Senate, auto tycoon Henry Ford faced off against a less well-known industrialist, Truman Newberry. Bent on countering Ford's fame and endorsement from President Wilson, Newberry's campaign spent an extravagant amount, in fact much more than the law seemed to allow. This led to his conviction under the Federal Corrupt Practices Act but also to his eventual exoneration in the first campaign finance case to be decided by the U.S. Supreme Court. In *Newberry v. United States* the Court ruled that Congress had no jurisdiction to regulate primary elections, a controversial decision that allowed southern states to create whites-only primaries and stalled campaign finance reform. In the first book in eight decades on this initial test of federal campaign finance regulations, Paula Baker examines this case study of state and local campaign spending to describe how politicians found their footing in an environment created by progressive reform and invented modern campaigns. Through this seminal election, she pries apart two persistent strains in American political culture: suspicion of money in politics and suspicion of politics itself. In reexamining the story of the 1918 election, Baker takes a broad view of the history of the political reform to probe some of the foundational arguments about why money in politics sometimes seems so corrupt. She follows the controversy as it unfolded beginning with progressive reform of politics and the remaking of campaigns then takes readers through the shifting scenes, from Detroit to Washington, where the Ford-Newberry conflict played out. Baker reexamines the political divisions between conservatives and progressive reformers to reveal contradictions in how Progressive Era federal finance regulations worked, with efforts to weaken the power of political parties and democratize politics actually making campaigns more expensive. And although the law opened the door to partisan prosecutions for spending, Congress remained unwilling to craft legislation that actually curbed spending. While legislation in recent decades largely has aimed at contributions rather than spending and the Supreme Court has weighed whether specific limits abridge free speech, Progressive Era ideas about money and politics continue to guide campaign finance reform. *Curbing Campaign Cash* provides a compelling account of a key chapter in the history of this issue.

Scandals over money in politics are nothing new. *Curbing Campaign Cash* provides keen historical insight into the earliest efforts to set limits on campaign financing, and how that affected one of the most controversial campaigns for the United States Senate. Donald A. Ritchie, author of *Electing FDR: The New Deal Campaign of 1932* a fascinating account of one of the more sensational Senate elections of the twentieth century and a crucial episode in the history of campaign finance. Lewis L. Gould, author of *Four Hats in the Ring: The 1912 Election and the Birth of Modern American Politics* About the Author Paula Baker is an associate professor of history at Ohio State University, author of *The Moral Frameworks of Public Life: Gender and Politics in Rural New York, 1870-1930*, and editor of *Campaign Finance in Historical Perspective*.