Top Ten Things to Know about Campaign Finance

1. Federal Election Campaign Act 1971 – created Political Actions Committees or PAC's, separate presidential fund committees, limited campaign donations PAC's – political action committees – labor unions and corporations must create to donate
2. Presidential Election Campaign Fund Act – public financing – voluntary – irrelevant
3. FECA 1974 - created Federal Election Commission, agency to enforce campaign finance laws – set spending limits.
4. Federal candidates required to report donations received quarterly to the FEC.
5. Federal Election Commission – evenly divided along partisan lines, rarely uses serious enforcement authority
6. *Buckley v. Vale*o (1976) – struck down campaign spending limits because money = speech, donation limits to candidates upheld
7. Hard money = direct donations to candidates/campaigns. Limited, must be reported. Soft money = donations to parties for party building, GOTV
8. Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 (McCain Feingold) – re-established ban on donations to parties or soft money. Banned political issue ads close to elections, later struck down by Supreme Court in *Wisconsin Right to Life v. FEC* (2007).
9. *Citizens United v. FEC* (2010) - Supreme Court ruled corporations could spend unlimited money for political reasons or political issue advertising because corporations are people with free speech rights. Donation limits directly to candidates still legal. Caused a surge in outside spending groups.
10. Outside spending groups:
    - 527's: created through tax code as tax exempt for political activity, donors not disclosed
    - 501(c)4's: "social welfare organizations," tax exempt, do not need to disclose donors
    - Super PAC's: created by FEC regulation after Citizens United ruling, unlimited donations accepted, must not "coordinate" with campaigns