

# **A Look into the Myths and Facts of Political Corruption**

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According to the United Nations (2020), "Each year \$1 trillion is paid in bribes worldwide." There are also many myths about corruption and more importantly political corruption. A myth is a widely held but false belief or idea. The myths that many individuals believe include, since political corruption is so widespread its unavoidable, corruption helps overcome government inefficiency, taxpayer money is used for the betterment of everybody, politicians only serve the people who elect them, corruption has an insignificant impact on human development, and finally the last myth is that the U.S. is far less corrupt than most other places. All these myths originate from the corrupt politicians themselves; they start them to calm the rising spread of facts around their deceitful corruption. And learning the differences between myth and fact is crucial. The fact of the matter is that political corruption with time and the right measure can be fixed and avoided, corruption undermines the law and deteriorates public opinion of the legitimacy of the political system. Taxpayer money is often used for personal gain by politicians, they do not solely serve the people like they should, and the U.S. is not less corrupt than other countries. Corruption affects the amount of money needed to progress society forward.

For many, political corruption seems unavoidable and very widespread, but the fact is that it used to be worse and is slowly getting better. According to Matthew Stephenson, "Reform takes time, it's a long process, and we shouldn't assume that countries beset with systemic corruption can never escape, or that corruption is somehow an immutable part of the national culture or psyche." (qtd. in Perkins, 2020) It is important for the world population to understand that corruption can slowly go away, and you do not have to live with it. We can still change but it will take hard work and time, but it is worth it. And if your country needs help, be the change

you want to see and stand up for what you believe in. Show your government that you want change, and you can do that by voting for politicians who want to fight corruption that is on the rise in your region.

Except the few, many believe corruption helps overcome government inefficiency, when in actuality it undermines the law and creates distrust in the political system. As the writer states in “Five Corruption Myths that Block Progress” by *Transparency International (2014)*, “Corruption also undermines the rule of law and corrodes public confidence in the state and the legitimacy of the political system.” This simply tells the truth that is behind this myth, as undermining the law is what we elect the politicians to stop. Also, when corruption undermines the integrity of the political system, it creates a lack of confidence in the politicians we elect. Lack of trust in the political system can lead to events like the January 6<sup>th</sup> insurrection, where undermining the law was rewarded by the president, ruining his integrity.

Another myth is that taxpayer money is used for the betterment of everybody, when sometimes it goes to those same politicians who voted against the use of it. According to Andy Nguyen a writer from the *Austin American Statesman's* in the article “Businesses associated with GOP politicians had pandemic government loans forgiven,” “Before taking office in January 2021, Marjorie Taylor Greene and her husband, Perry Greene, bought Taylor Commercial Inc., a construction business owned by her family in Alpharetta, Georgia. The company took out a \$182,300 loan from the program.” This is just a perfect way to explain what corrupt people do with your tax money. And what makes this better is that the same people getting these loans forgiven are the people who are fighting against the student loan relief bill. It is not only hypocritical, but also corruption in plain sight.

Many individuals believe that politicians serve the people who vote for them, when it seems to be the opposite nowadays. According to Michael Sozan and Will Ragland (2019), in “Recent Political Scandals the ‘For the People Act’ Would Prevent from Recurring” by the *Central of American Progression*, “As both a candidate and president, President Trump has refused to publicly release copies of his tax returns. This refusal, which breaks a long-standing norm, makes it impossible to know whether Trump is beholden to a corporate interest and/or another nation, raising major questions about whether he is serving the public interest as he makes important policy decisions.” This completely disproves this myth when the refusal to show the tax return implies that he has suspicious dealing with organizations. This is truly relevant today with the excessive amounts of lawsuits out for trump. Although nothing is for sure when trying to understand why he did not show it. But one way to ensure that politicians are serving the people and only the people is to make this “long-standing norm” a law.

Although many people are unaware of the impact of corruption on human development, it seems to slow down or even be completely inadequate. As the writer states in “Five Corruption Myths that Block Progress” by Transparency International (2014), “Our research shows that in countries where bribery is common, progress in meeting the Millennium Development Goals is slower and more people lack basic services.” This shows that corruption plays a significant role in human development. Also, corruption can slow and even reduce basic human services. Bribery is one of the many forms of corruption but until we have more data this trend may be even more accurate. Millennium Development Goals are eight goals to help improve the condition of humans in the poorest regions, this includes fighting extreme poverty, hunger, disease, etc... and, working to achieve environmental stability.

Finally, the myth that the only type of corruption is the kind that is illegal. I, until researching also believed this myth but it turns out many other forms of legal corruption plague this country. As Matthew Stephenson states, “After all, certain practices related to lobbying and campaign finance that other countries would consider corrupt are, in the U.S., not only permitted but constitutionally protected.” (qtd. in Perkins, 2020). This shows that the same constitutional rights we have, are the same rights giving lobbyists the protection they need to corrupt the government. This is a problem that politicians to this day are still trying to figure out. Another form of corruption comes in the form of political action committees or PACs and super PACs which are legal ways for businesses to support candidates politically without limit. Other countries which outlaw these types of corruption have less corrupt governments. And we as citizens must do our part in influencing what is perceived as corruption, and we can do that by voting.

The facts are corruption is slowly getting better, but it still needs to be addressed and fought against. Corruption also undermines the law and creates a distrust in certain politicians. Corrupt politicians use taxpayer money as a tool for financial gain, and many politicians may serve organizations instead of the people who have elected them. And corruption slows down or reduces basic human services. Finally, not all forms of corruption are illegal, and many types still plague this world. So, it goes without saying that I have learned many things throughout the research on this topic but, one of the most crucial takeaways from this essay is that corruption is present in today's political system and some forms of it are legal. Another important lesson is that if you want political corruption to someday stop, you need to vote for the candidates that are fighting for reform. Make sure to vote in general, it is the most powerful right you have as an individual. And do not believe everything you see as many preserved facts and myths. I believe

voting is important for my generation because it is our chance to voice our opinion on corruption. There are many myths about corruption, but these problems are slowly being addressed and talked about more, leading us to a cleaner government and world.

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