

Real World Graduation: Question 99: PAC Workers

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Question 99

Many members of Congress hire their spouses or other relatives to work on their permanent campaign staff or political action committees [1]. These people are paid by either the campaign funds or from contributions made to the political action committees. It is not necessary that the relatives, as employees, perform any particular task as part of their employment. It is legal for members of Congress to put relatives on their payroll for these jobs, but in what ways might it be considered unethical or immoral?

- a) If it's legal, then it cannot be unethical or immoral, so this question is irrelevant.
- b) It constitutes nepotism, in which family members get special treatment (good paying jobs) simply for being relatives.
- c) It is possible that the relatives are no-shows, simply being paid as a means to enhance the family income without actual work being performed.
- d) It is possible that the family member is less qualified than other people to perform these tasks, so the organization is not getting the best talent for the money.
- e) Some combination of b), c), and d).

[1] Dick Morris and Eileen McGann, *Outrage*, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007, pp. 111-115

Answer to Question 99

This is a trick question. The correct answer is "none of the above".

Answer a) is obviously wrong because there are many things that are not illegal (spending one's entire paycheck on gambling and not paying their other bills), but are certainly immoral.

Answers b), c), and d) are wrong because the relatives are being paid from contributions to the office-holder's campaign or contributors to the political action committee (PAC). In other words, the only people who are being ripped off are the ones dumb enough to contribute to a Congressman's campaign or PAC.

But what about the case where the campaign is funded is partly through the federal matching funds, which is taxpayer money? Isn't the taxpayer being ripped off? Of course, but that's why taxpayers exist (or so they believe in Congress). Besides, money spent on relative's salaries is that much less available for political ads, in which the Congressman tells us what a great job he's doing preserving our liberties and other assorted lies. We the taxpayer would be better off if all the campaign funds were simply diverted to the relatives, so long as we could be spared the political ads.