

MEDIA MENTION

Wiley Rein's Michael Toner Discusses Leadership PACs in *MSNBC* Interview

MSNBC

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Michael E. Toner, co-chair of Wiley Rein's Election Law & Government Ethics Practice, sat down with *MSNBC*'s Chuck Todd for an August 22 interview on the growing role of leadership political action committees (PACs) in the campaign finance system.

Members of Congress often form leadership PACs to raise funds from supporters, separate and apart from the money that they raise for their campaign accounts. While Federal Election Commission (FEC) rules bar lawmakers from using leadership PAC funds to subsidize their own campaigns, their leadership PACs can make contributions to the reelection campaigns of their colleagues.

"More and more now, if you want to move up in Congress—you want to be a committee chair or you want to be the ranking member—you've got to give money to your colleagues to move up and get those kinds of jobs," said Mr. Toner, a former FEC chairman.

"Leadership PACs are a key vehicle for doing that."

About 450 leadership PACs spent more than \$141 million during the last election cycle, with more than \$46 million going to candidates' campaigns, according to the *MSNBC* report, which cited data from the Center for Responsive Politics. The number of leadership PACs has quadrupled since 1998.

The proliferation of leadership PACs and Super PACs in recent years has reduced candidates' reliance on the major political parties as a fundraising vehicle, according to the *MSNBC* report.

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"I think there's been a lot of assessment over the last few years about the rise of outside interest groups, whether it be Super PACs, 501(c) organizations," Mr. Toner said. "That has been a direct result of the McCain-Feingold campaign finance legislation" enacted in 2002. Commenting on whether the McCain-Feingold law has been a failure, Mr. Toner said, "It's been a struggle. I think a lot of people are really disappointed with the legislation."

"I think as time goes on, there will be an assessment about new ways to approach these issues," Mr. Toner added. "And I think the experience we're going through now—leadership PACs, Super PACs—will be part of that."

To watch Mr. Toner's *MSNBC* interview, please [click here](#).