

'New Hampshire Rebellion' Stages Protest Of Big Money In Politics

By [Rick Ganley](#) & [Michael Brindley](#) • Jan 21, 2015

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The NH Rebellion protesters at the Statehouse in Concord 1/21/2015
Credit NHPR Staff

For the second straight year, a group of activists are marching across the Granite State to raise awareness for their goal of getting money out of politics.

Members of the [New Hampshire Rebellion](#) have covered more 300 miles over the past ten days, with marches starting in Portsmouth, Nashua, Keene and Dixville Notch.

Those four marches are set to converge in front of the Statehouse in Concord later today, marking the fifth anniversary of the Citizens United Supreme Court decision.

Daniel Weeks is executive director of New Hampshire-based Open Democracy.

He joins Morning Edition from the march to talk about this issue.



A NH Rebellion protester in front of the Statehouse in Concord 1/21/2015
Credit NHPR Staff

Let's talk about this year's march. How many people are taking part and who are they?

We have over 400 people registered and we anticipate more people joining us today when we rally for democracy at 1 p.m. at the Statehouse. Folks coming from across New Hampshire, many different communities in the state, as well as neighboring states, and even a few people from further afield like Montana, California, and Florida who are awfully concerned about the dominance that big money has in our politics, the way that it subverts the whole policy process on any issue that they care about and they want to see something done about it. They see New Hampshire as a place to start.

So are these people that are primarily on one side of the aisle or another? Or is this all political stripes?

You know, this is maybe the one issue in American politics that really crosses the divide because whatever your concern, whether it's taxes and spending, whether it's the environment, whether it's jobs, our ability to face the big, big challenges that our country faces hinges on whether or not the government represents us. We have conservative leaders like former Senate candidate Jim Rubens, former gubernatorial candidate Andrew Hemingway, we have liberal leaders who've all come together and marched many miles across New Hampshire and will be rallying today to try and send that message to the nation that this one issue, if nothing else, ought to bring us together so we can make government work for the people.

What's the goal of the march itself?

We demand, through this New Hampshire Rebellion, that the candidates address one issue first of all and that is what they will do to end the corrupting influence of money in politics. That's because we're just not going to be able to solve the other problems until we address this. So we'll be taking the question to the candidates wherever they appear in the coming year with hundreds of volunteers from around New Hampshire appearing at their events, bird-dogging them, asking what they will do to address the system of corruption of big money in politics throughout the next year.



A NH Rebellion protester holds a sign in front of the Statehouse in Concord
Credit NHPR Staff

As you're marching, what are hearing from people out there?

A lot of people don't have much faith in our democracy. And a lot of people would like to see something change, but don't know where to begin. So when they see us on the road, the most exciting part of it for me has been the amount of honking we hear, the people who ask a question, trying to understand what we're about,

read our signs, and then as soon as it registers that we are not one side or the other, that we're trying to make government work for all the people, they get pretty encouraged.

We have an incredible skewing of the funding of politics, which affects all of our policies in this country. We're talking just 2 percent of the country who give any money at all. And within that 2 percent, it's one quarter of 1 percent that gives most of the money that funds politics.

Even here in New Hampshire, which I wouldn't describe as corrupt, but which is stuck in this system, this inherent conflict of interest where money is what's needed to run for office. Candidates go to where the money is and then they have to answer, take the calls, take the meetings with those who provide the money. Of course that's how it works, every citizen knows that.

We count just about 2,000 people in New Hampshire who make large donations, which accounts for a majority of the total dollars in New Hampshire. That's 2,000 people out of 1.3 million who have a disproportionate say in public policy. That's wrong.

Many of those running are candidates who've had no problem taking big donations in the past, so how optimistic are you that anything can really change?

It sure isn't going to change within the halls of power, and so the only hope that we can think of – and we welcome other ideas – is to put ourselves out there. And so we are using the one thing we really have, which is our bodies, our time, our determination, to make a statement and we hope that will have ripple effects. We hope people will be encouraged by what they see and join us. Because ultimately, that's our only hope – when the people demand that government really works for us.