

## *Sweeney For Sale: Top 10 Times John Sweeney Has Sold New Yorkers Out for Special Interest Money*

### Congressman Sweeney: Bought by the Special Interests

**FOR SALE!**



- #1. Big Pharmaceuticals
- #2. Insurance Industry
- #3. Polluters
- #4. Banking and Finance
- #5. Outsourcers
- #6. Big Tobacco
- #7. Big Oil
- #8. Clear Cutters
- #9. Energy Industry
- #10. Retail Giants

Selling Out New Yorkers



A report by Citizen Action of New York  
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**CITIZEN  
ACTION**  
OF NEW YORK

# 1. **Bought by Big Pharma: \$139 billion windfall to the prescription drug companies.**



**\$42,900 in drug industry contributions to John Sweeney since he's been in office.**  
(Center for Responsive Politics; [www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org)).

**Sweeney voted for the Medicare Part D prescription drug plan (HR 1; 11/22/03)** that prohibits Medicare from negotiating prescription drug prices with drug companies.

Two researchers at Boston University School of Public Health estimated that this amounted to a \$139 billion windfall to drug manufacturers over eight years. The report finds that this is a 38% increase in profits for an industry that is already the most profitable in the world. (*61 Percent of Medicare's New Prescription Drug Subsidy Is Windfall Profit To Drug Maker*; Sagner and Socolar, Boston University School of Public Health, October 2003).

# 2. **Bought by the Insurance Industry: Plans bring confusion and gaps in coverage to Medicare part D.**



**\$123,954 in campaign contributions from insurance companies** (Center for Responsive Politics; [www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org)).

**Sweeney's vote for the Medicare Part D prescription drug plan (HR 1; 11/22/03)** also forces the 44 million Americans who rely on Medicare to get drug coverage from insurance companies, instead of directly from Medicare.

The Medicare Part D plan requires seniors and people with disabilities on Medicare to choose from a bewildering number of complicated insurance plans, each of which covers a different number of drugs, has different premiums and co-payments and other rules. Most of the plans push seniors into the "donut" hole, when seniors still pay premiums but the insurance plan stops paying for prescriptions.

While the 44 million people who rely on Medicare are losers, insurance companies are coming out ahead. The *New York Times* (7/20/06) reported that the leader in Medicare Part D, United Health, saw higher than expected profits due to its new Medicare Part D business. Major insurers including Wellpoint, CIGNA, and Health Net plan major expansions of Part D coverage in 2007.

### 3. **Bought by Polluters:** Sweeney voted to slow down clean up of PCBs in Hudson.

**FOR SALE!**

**GE is Sweeney's #1 campaign contributor - \$52,500**  
(Center for Responsive Politics; [www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org)).

Sweeney voted against an amendment by New York Congressman Maurice Hinchey to remove language in the bill that prohibits the Environmental Protection Agency from using “dredging or other invasive sediment remediation technologies.” (Amendment 858 to HR 4635, 6/21/00.) The Hinchey amendment was aimed at making it easier for the EPA to force GE to clean up the Hudson.

In December 2001, the EPA ordered GE to spend \$460 million to dredge PCBs it had dumped into the Hudson River (Washington Post, 1/1/02). It has been estimated that between 1947 and 1977 GE discharged 1.3 million pounds of PCBs into the river. (Environmental Media Services).

Sweeney pushed EPA to take a “fresh look” at the dredging proposal and listen to “every single point” the anti-dredging forces make even though, according to the *Journal News* of 7/15/01.

#### 4. **Bought By Banks:** Sweeney voted to strip consumers of basic financial protections.



**\$124,800 in campaign contributions from banks and personal finance companies** (Center for Responsive Politics; [www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org)).

**Sweeney voted for the bankruptcy bill (S 256, 4/14/05)** that rewrites the consumer bankruptcy laws to make it much more difficult for individuals to declare either Chapter 7 or Chapter 13 bankruptcy.

According to the Consumer Federation of America (statement of 4/20/05), “The big winners under the new law will be the special interests that literally wrote it, particularly the credit card industry. This is particularly ironic because reckless and abusive lending practices by credit card companies have driven many Americans to the brink of bankruptcy.... Bankruptcy judges, trustees and scholars have pointed out, this 500-page overhaul of the bankruptcy code erects dozens of barriers that will make it more difficult for all individuals - including moderate income debtors declaring bankruptcy because of the loss of a job, high medical bills or divorce - to receive a fresh financial start.”

The Consumers Union’s statement said that the bill does not contain a single restriction on reckless or predatory lending by creditors.

## 5. **Bought by Outsourcers:** Vote for CAFTA endangers American jobs, environment.

**FOR SALE!**

**Sweeney and wife go on \$8,162 trip to Caribbean paid for by CAFTA backers.**

**Sweeney voted for CAFTA, the Central American Free Trade Agreement (HR 3045, 7/28/05),** legislation that lifted trade protections with Central American countries but did not include any worker or environmental protections.

From January 12-16, 2005, John Sweeney and his wife, Gaia, attended conferences in the Dominican Republic and Antigua & Barbuda sponsored by the Inter-American Economic Council (IAEC). The roughly 5-day trip cost \$8,161.97 in transportation, lodging and meal expenses. (US House of Representatives Member/Office Travel Disclosure Form, Filed with the Legislative Resource Center February 9, 2005.)

According to a communiqué the IAEC issued on January 18, 2005 discussing the just-finished congressional delegation trip, “[Dominican Republic] President Fernandez ... used the opportunity to make the case for the approval of the CAFTA/Dominican Republic Trade Agreement by the United States Congress.”

At the time that Sweeney voted for CAFTA, there was already strong evidence that the predecessor treaty, NAFTA, had cost American jobs and would not help American farmers. According to a report published by the Economic Policy Institute (7/20/05), NAFTA had caused the loss of more than one million US jobs, mostly in manufacturing. EPI stated that “ The proposed Dominican Republic-Central American Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA) duplicates the most important elements of NAFTA, and it will only worsen conditions for workers in the United States and throughout the hemisphere.” Another EPI report (6/2/05) concluded that “... NAFTA has failed to provide overall trade benefits or to fulfill many of the individual promises made to

commodity producers. The exaggerated claims of expected benefits that are now being made for CAFTA are equally as likely to go unmet.”

## 6. **Bought by Big Tobacco:** Sweeney introduced big tobacco bill on selling cigarettes to kids.

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**Four days later, Philip Morris contributes \$2,000 to Sweeney. Philip Morris has contributed a total of \$26,500 to Sweeney including \$8,000 for the 2006 election.**  
(Federal Election Commission at FEC.gov).

**Sweeney sponsored HR 2180, legislation that would restrict the ability of the FDA to regulate tobacco advertising to children.** Sweeney signed on to the bill the day it was introduced, June 14, 2001. Four days later Philip Morris contributed \$2,000 to Sweeney’s election campaign.

The legislation Sweeney sponsored would make it much harder for the FDA to regulate the marketing of cigarettes and other tobacco products to children. According to Russell Sciandra, of the Committee for a Tobacco Free New York, HR 2180 is a “sweetheart” bill for the tobacco industry (*Albany Times Union*, 9/6/01). The CEOs of the American Heart, Cancer and Lung Associations stated that: “Not only is the Davis FDA bill [HR 2180] bad for public health, it is further confirmation of the close ties between the tobacco industry and Congress. There are now two proposals for FDA regulation of tobacco products, H.R. 2180 and S. 190, that have been opposed by every major public health organization and supported behind the scenes by Philip Morris. These proposals would do more to protect the tobacco industry than to protect the public health.” (Public Health Groups Express United Opposition to Davis FDA Bill; Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids; 6/14/01)

## 7. **Bought by Big Oil:** Sweeney votes to give \$4 billion in tax breaks to big oil.

**FOR SALE!**

**\$41,500 in campaign cash to Sweeney oil and gas companies** (Center for Responsive Politics; [www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org)).

**Sweeney voted for HR 6 (7/28/05), the energy bill that provided \$4 billion in tax breaks to big oil** and a total of \$14.6 billion in tax breaks to the energy industry.

At the same that Sweeney voted for more tax breaks for Big Oil, the oil companies were receiving record profits, a total of \$111 billion in 2005. Exxon Mobil awarded its chairman a \$400 million retirement package, after earning \$36 billion in profits.

As MSNBC reported on July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2005, “By just about any measure, the past three years have produced one of the biggest cash gushers in the oil industry’s history. Since January of 2002, the price of crude has tripled, leaving oil producers awash in profits. During that period, the top 10 major public oil companies have sold some \$1.5 trillion worth of crude, pocketing profits of more than \$125 billion.”

“This is the mother of all booms,” said Oppenheimer & Co. oil analyst Fadel Gheit.

“They have so much profit, it’s almost an embarrassment of riches. They don’t know what to do with it.”

## 8. **Bought by Clear Cutters:** Sweeney voted for the Bush plan to promote logging of old growth forests.

**FOR SALE!**

**International Paper gave Sweeney \$20,087 in campaign cash .** (Federal Election Commission at FEC.gov).

**Sweeney voted for the so-called “Healthy Forests” legislation, HR. 1904 on November 21, 2003,** legislation that virtually eliminates public input into logging decisions on public land.

The Sierra Club said that the legislation Sweeney backed would “cut the public out of the public lands management decision-making process and to give logging companies virtually free access to our National Forests.” The initiative creates incentives to cut old growth trees while drastically reducing public participation in forest management decisions. ([http://www.sierraclub.org/forests/fires/healthyforests\\_initiative.asp](http://www.sierraclub.org/forests/fires/healthyforests_initiative.asp)).

## 9. **Bought by the Energy Industry:** Walsh votes to strip consumer regulation of utility prices.

**FOR SALE!**

**\$99,255 Sweeney contributions from electric utilities** (Center for Responsive Politics; [www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org)).

**Sweeney voted on 4/10/03 against an amendment to HR 6, the 2003 energy bill,** aimed at halting energy deregulation.

The amendment that Sweeney opposed would have removed the bill's electricity deregulation provisions and replaced them with measures to increase consumer and investor protections. The amendment would have given the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) anti-fraud authority for electricity and natural gas markets and required reports on sales and transmissions of electricity and natural gas. The

amendment would have blocked repeal of the New Deal legislation that established the framework for regulation utility rates.

Sweeney's vote to dismantle the federal authority for electricity rate regulation comes two years after the Enron debacle in which Enron used California's utility deregulation to drive up prices. California has since delayed or suspended further deregulation. The *New York Times* reported on October 15, 2006, under the headline "Competitive Era Fails to Shrink Electric Bills," that electric utility deregulation had not saved consumers money while it had increased the risk of market manipulation.

## 10. **Bought by Wal-Mart:** Sweeney voted to strip consumers of strong legal protections.

**FOR SALE!**

**\$13,000 from Wal-Mart, including \$7,000 in 1996.** (Federal Election Commission at [FEC.gov](http://FEC.gov)).

**Sweeney voted for S.5 on 2/17/05, legislation that weakened the ability of consumers to enter class action law suits related to dangerous products, wages and discrimination.** Class action lawsuits have been one of the most powerful tools that consumers have had to stop the sale of dangerous products, including cars with faulty gas tanks, drugs that kill and maim and cigarettes. The legislation Sweeney voted for makes it much harder for consumers to file class action suits by moving jurisdiction to federal courts that are already overburdened and have more corporate-friendly rules.

The *New York Times* (2/18/05) called the passage of the class action bill, "a significant victory for businesses ranging from auto, drug and gun makers to home builders and tobacco companies. "

Class action suits have also been used to protect workers rights such as when employers do not pay workers for overtime wages. And class action suits are key to protecting civil rights in cases of discrimination against people with disabilities, women and people of color.

On October 15th the *New York Times* reported: “A jury in Philadelphia said yesterday that Wal-Mart Stores must pay \$78 million to its current and former Pennsylvania employees for not paying them when they worked through rest breaks and worked off the clock. Lawyers who brought the class action on behalf of 187,000 workers applauded the verdict and said they expected the judge to soon order Wal-Mart to pay \$62 million more in damages because the jury had also found that Wal-Mart acted in bad faith.”