How Do Corporations Play Politics? The FedEx Story

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Jill E. Fisch*

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INTRODUCTION

Corporate political activity has been the subject of federal regulation since 1907,\(^1\) and the restrictions on corporate campaign contributions and other political expenditures continue to increase.\(^2\) Most recently, Congress banned soft money donations in the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 ("BCRA"),\(^3\) a ban upheld by the Supreme Court in *McConnell v. FEC*.\(^4\) Significantly, although the omnibus BCRA clearly was not directed exclusively at corporations, the Supreme Court began its lengthy opinion in *McConnell* by referencing and endorsing the efforts of Elihu Root, more than a century ago, to prohibit corporate political contributions.\(^5\) Repeatedly,

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5. Id. at 115.
within the broad context of campaign finance regulation, corporate contributions have been singled out as particularly problematic.\(^6\)

The federal regulatory scheme is based, in part, on the perception that corporations are able to use their substantial economic resources to influence public policy and thus distort the political process.\(^7\) At the same time, political activity is widely viewed as an illegitimate expenditure of corporate funds. Thus, again in the first few lines of the *McConnell* decision, the Court quoted President Theodore Roosevelt’s statement that “directors should not be permitted to use stockholders’ money for political purposes.”\(^8\)

Similarly, the Court had previously characterized general corporate treasury funds spent on politics as being “diverted” from their proper use, indicating that political activity is not a legitimate business expenditure.\(^9\)

Media reports about corporate corruption of the political process have fed these concerns. The press, for example, described Enron as buying legislative favors in exchange for political contributions.\(^10\) Studies claim that corporate donors use campaign contributions to purchase political influence.\(^11\) The media often structures these reports of corporate and other special interest political expenditures to produce heightened impact. For example, the

\(^6\) See, e.g., id. at 205 (identifying “legislative judgment that the special characteristics of the corporate structure require particularly careful regulation”) (citations omitted); id. at 206 (observing that “unusually important interests underlie the regulation of corporations’ campaign-related speech”).


\(^8\) *McConnell*, 540 U.S. at 115 (internal quotations omitted).

\(^9\) See, e.g., *Austin*, 494 U.S. at 670-71 (“We thus adopted the ‘underlying theory’ of FECA ‘that substantial general purpose treasuries should not be diverted to political purposes’”) (quoting 117 Cong. Rec. 43381 (1971) (statement of Rep. Hansen)); see also *Beaumont*, 539 U.S. at 163 (describing the use of corporate funds for political influence as a “temptation . . . quite possibly at odds with the sentiments of some shareholders or members”).


\(^11\) See, e.g., Thomas Stratmann, *What do Campaign Contributions Buy? Deciphering Causal Effects of Money and Votes*, 57 S. ECON. J. 606, 615 (1991) (finding that interest groups in the sugar industry were able to use political contributions to purchase legislative subsidies).
Wall Street Journal reported that 80% of the $314 million raised for the 2000 Bush presidential campaign came from “corporations and individuals employed by them.”\textsuperscript{12} In contrast, John de Figueiredo and Elizabeth Garrett reported that only 22% of the money contributed to the federal political campaigns in 2000 came from corporations, unions, and other interest groups and that the remaining vast majority came from small donations by individuals.\textsuperscript{13}

Despite the widespread reports of corruption, the empirical evidence is inconclusive. Although some studies show a relationship between political contributions and legislative voting records, their findings demonstrate, at best, a correlation between contributions and voting patterns, rather than a causal relationship. Many studies fail to find even a correlation. A recent paper reviewing the results of approximately three dozen such studies reported that “[i]n three out of four instances, campaign contributions had no statistically significant effects on legislation or had the ‘wrong’ sign – suggesting that more contributions lead to less support.”\textsuperscript{14}

Additionally, the existing empirical research is methodologically limited. Virtually all the studies use a large-scale “top down” approach that measures the correlation between corporate campaign contributions and particular policy decisions. As I demonstrate in more detail in another work,\textsuperscript{15} this approach has the effect of excluding major components of corporate political activity, including expenditures that do not take the form of traditional campaign contributions as well as investments in corporate reputation and political relationships. The empirical approach also diminishes the significance of corporate political capital as an intangible asset that provides corporations with long term value extending beyond an isolated policy issue. More generally, the methodology does not allow researchers to look inside the black box to examine both the process by which corporations participate in the political process and the factors

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Tom Hamburger et al., \textit{Influence Market: Industries that Backed Bush Are Now Seeking Return on Investment}, WALL ST. J., March 6, 2001, at A1. The Journal itself acknowledged that this figure may be somewhat misleading in implying a relationship between corporations and corporate employees because the vast majority of individual contributors are employed by corporations. \textit{Id.}
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
that influence whether such participation is effective. Thus, notwithstanding the insights available through large-scale empirical research, the studies offer only a partial view of the corporate role in political decisionmaking.16

This Article addresses these limitations by employing a different approach. Responding to David Hart’s call for increased study of individual firms,17 the Article uses a case study methodology to examine the political activity of a single firm, Federal Express (“FedEx”), over a forty-year period. Focusing primarily on the federal legislative process, the Article considers the business context surrounding FedEx’s political activity, the details of the legislative process, and the significant interest group participants, as well as traditional campaign finance materials. An analysis of FedEx’s involvement in legislative policymaking reveals that corporate participation in politics extends beyond the purchase of political favors in a spot market. The Article also demonstrates the relationship between FedEx’s political activity and its business operations. In particular, it explores the manner in which FedEx has used its political influence to shape legislation and, in turn, the extent to which FedEx’s political successes have shaped its business strategy.18

Despite regulators’ attempts to control corporate participation in politics, corporate political activity continues to increase.19 Corporations appear increasingly aware of the importance of politics, and some corporations have found political naiveté to be commercially costly.20 Moreover, regulatory restrictions on one type of participation

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16. In addition to their other limitations, the studies do not explore differences among individual firms in their quantity or type of political activity. See infra Part III (describing differences among firms).


18. The selection of FedEx represents a conscious choice – FedEx is relatively more active and arguably more successful than many of its peers. See Neil A. Lewis, A Lobby Effort That Delivers the Big Votes; Federal Express Knows its Way Around Capital, N.Y. TIMES, Oct. 12, 1996, at 37 (describing FedEx as “one of the most formidable and successful corporate lobbies in the capital”).


20. For example, some commentators have attributed Microsoft’s antitrust problems, in part, to its lack of political participation. See John Simons & John Harwood, Gates Opening: For the Tech Industry, Market in Washington Is Toughest to Crack, WALL ST. J., Mar. 4, 1998, at A1
simply channel corporate expenditures elsewhere.  

The growth in the use of soft money donations, for example, was a reaction to restrictions on other forms of corporate political expenditures.  

Similarly, commentators predict that corporations will respond to the soft money ban by making greater use of lobbyists and Political Action Committee (“PAC”) donations.  

Early responses appear consistent with this prediction. Indeed, two days after the Supreme Court upheld the BCRA, Fannie Mae established a PAC, explicitly stating that its creation was a response to the soft money ban. 

This Article argues that corporate demand for political activity is a natural response to the effect of legal rules on business operations.  

As a result, regulatory restrictions are more likely to restructure corporate political activity than to eliminate it. Nonetheless, commentators, without a full understanding of how and why corporations participate in politics, continue to propose new regulations.  

This Article takes the initial steps toward developing that understanding.

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22. See id. at 650 (explaining that “[t]he solicitation, transfer, and use of soft money . . . enabled parties and candidates to circumvent FECA’s limitations on the source and amount of contributions in connection with federal elections”).

23. See, e.g., Alexander Bolton, Reform Changes the Balance of Power on K Street, THE HILL, March 20, 2002, at 37 (predicting that corporations will shift their expenditures to PAC donations and lobbying); Lawrence Noble, Looking at New Campaign Finance Landscape, THE HILL, March 20, 2002, at 41 (identifying a hard money alternative and speculating about other possible loopholes to evade new restrictions); Jill E. Fisch, Questioning Philanthropy from a Corporate Governance Perspective, 41 N.Y. L. SCH. L. REV. 1091, 1101-02 (1997) (explaining how corporations may use charitable donations as a substitute for political contributions).


25. See Stephen Ansolabehere & James M. Snyder, Jr., Money and Institutional Power, 77 TEX. L. REV. 1673, 1703 (1999) (observing that regulatory limits create a disequilibrium between the demand and supply for political activity, and lead participants to respond to unmet demand either by evading the law or by packaging political activity in new ways).

26. Hart, supra note 17, at 43-45 (concluding that corporate political participation is poorly understood and proposing an agenda for future research).

27. See, e.g., de Figueiredo & Garrett, supra note 13, at 3-5 (advocating the adoption of an individual tax credit to stimulate individual political contributions as a counter to interest group
In Part I, this Article provides an overview of FedEx and describes how it has developed and applied its political capital. In so doing, it reveals the range of mechanisms through which corporations can participate in the political process. Part II presents a detailed case study of FedEx's political participation in connection with several major regulatory changes, focusing on the business context in which FedEx's activity was situated, the form of FedEx's participation, and the consequences of FedEx's political involvement. Part III moves beyond the FedEx case to consider the broader implications of the case study for regulatory policy. In particular, the Article concludes that political activity is not a dispersion of shareholder funds, but an integral and necessary part of a corporation's operating strategy. As a result, rather than trying to eliminate corporate political activity, reformers should focus on structuring regulation to increase the transparency and efficiency of corporate political expenditures.

Several caveats are appropriate. First, the political process is difficult to study. There is little objective evidence as to the basis on which political actors make their decisions, and there are substantial reasons to question the proffered justifications for political actions. Where possible, this Article uses interviews with participants in the political process to supplement the media accounts and the recorded legislative history and to obtain a more complete understanding of the political process. The information obtained from these interviews, which were conducted on a nonattribution basis, is of course subject to the standard criticisms. Accordingly, any effort to discern causal relationships from the material in this Article is necessarily constrained.

Second, even if it were possible to identify accurately the motives of the relevant political actors, legal change is the product of multiple factors; the impact of any individual factor is difficult to isolate. Economic factors, changes in social norms, shifts in the

28. During my tenure as Sloan Visiting Professor at Georgetown Law Center for the 2001-2002 academic year, I conducted a series of interviews with current and former legislative staffers, lobbyists, and public officials. I have relied on these interviews primarily for background and to provide me with direction in identifying and understanding publicly available documentation. In some cases, specific interviews have included interesting characterizations or conclusions that I have referenced in this Article, employing the following citation form: “Hill Interview x, date.”

29. See, e.g., Terry M. Moe, Control and Feedback in Economic Regulation: The Case of the NLRB, 79 AM. POLIT. SCI. REV. 1094, 1095 (1985) (proposing a broader causal view of regulatory performance that integrates relationships with other political institutions, the economic environment, constituency relationships, and internal organizational factors).
balance of political power, international developments, and prominent current events contribute to regulatory change and affect the ability of a political participant or interest group to achieve its objectives. The magnitude of the problem increases with the length of time involved in securing legal change, because of the resulting increase in the number of factors that may play a role.

Finally, this Article characterizes the corporation as an entity and makes the simplifying assumption that corporations engage in political activity in order to further corporate objectives. Specifically, the Article does not address corporate political activity that results from management self-dealing. As Roberta Romano observed, casual empiricism supports the argument that corporate political activity is primarily directed to profit maximization. Moreover, although corporate decisionmakers may engage in political activity designed to further their personal interests instead of the interests of the corporation, this agency problem is not unique to political activity but rather is common to all corporate decisionmaking.

30. Thus, for example, it is difficult to determine the extent to which the decline in the takeover market in the early 1990s was due to regulatory changes that made takeovers more difficult as opposed to changes in the economic climate. See, e.g., Roberta Romano, A Guide to Takeovers: Theory, Evidence, and Regulation, 9 YALE J. ON REG. 119, 178 (1992) (observing that the "collapse of the junk bond market and the corresponding credit crunch, caused by banking and financial services sector weakness and new government policies restricting financial institutions' holding of high yield debt, surely contributed to the decline in takeovers").

31. See Hart, supra note 17, at 21 (explaining the problems associated with predicting the results of political activity because "[p]olitics is notoriously fickle").

32. Moreover, it is unnecessary, for purposes of this article to address the normative debate between shareholder primacy, which typically accepts profit maximization as the sole legitimate corporate objective, and the competing progressive view which advocates greater emphasis on the interests of nonshareholder constituencies, even if such emphasis sacrifices corporate profits. See, e.g., D. Gordon Smith, The Shareholder Primacy Norm, 23 IOWA J. CORP. L. 277, 280-82 (1998) (describing the shareholder primacy norm and contrasting it with the progressive view).

33. Roberta Romano, Metapolitics and Corporate Law Reform, 36 STAN. L. REV. 923, 995-96 (1984); see also id. at 994-95 (rejecting agency cost justifications for restricting corporate political activity).

34. See generally Victor Bradney, Business Corporations and Stockholders' Rights Under the First Amendment, 91 YALE L.J. 235 (1981) (identifying agency problems in corporate political action and arguing that managers will pursue their political interests at the expense of the shareholders).

35. See, e.g., ADOLF A. BERLE & GARDINER C. MEANS, THE MODERN CORPORATION AND PRIVATE PROPERTY (1932) (describing separation of ownership and control and the resulting agency costs created by the empowerment of management relative to shareholders); Jill E. Fisch, Teaching Corporate Governance Through Shareholder Litigation, 34 GA. L. REV. 745, 747 (2000) (describing corporate governance mechanisms addressed to agency problems caused by the separation between ownership and control). I have argued elsewhere that corporate law should be used to address agency problems associated with corporate political activity. See generally Jill E. Fisch, Frankenstein's Monster Hits the Campaign Trail: An Approach to Regulation of Corporate Political Expenditures, 32 WM. & MARY L. REV. 587 (1991) (arguing that corporate political activity should be addressed through corporate law rather than campaign finance law).
I. FedEx and the Development of Political Capital

FedEx is a well-known corporate success story. Founder Frederick (“Fred”) Smith initially developed the concept of bringing a new methodology to the historically unprofitable air cargo industry as a college project at Yale, for which he reportedly, albeit inaccurately, received a grade of “C”. Formed in 1971, FedEx’s first day of service was April 17, 1973, on which it operated ten planes that carried eighteen packages. Since that time, FedEx has grown to a company with annual revenues of $24.7 billion and 245,000 employees worldwide. Less than ten years after its formation, FedEx was recognized as the dominant player in the overnight delivery business, surpassing larger and more established competitors, such as UPS. Today, FedEx is the largest and most successful global transportation company in the world.

At the same time, FedEx has developed a reputation as an active and successful participant in the political process. This Part provides an overview of some of the ways that FedEx has developed its political capital. The list is illustrative, not exhaustive; the discussion in this Part is intended to demonstrate the range of activities, beyond campaign contributions, that have contributed to FedEx’s reputation as a political player. Although FedEx’s level of political participation is high, its efforts are not unique—corporations commonly use these types of actions to build political capital.

FedEx’s reputation is based, in part, on its political expenditures. In campaign contributions alone, FedEx consistently places near the top of the list of donors. In recent years, FedEx’s soft

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37. *Id.* In a recent interview, Smith explained that the myth surrounding the original project has become exaggerated and that, in fact, he does not remember the precise grade that he received on the paper. See Dean Foust, *No Overnight Success; Frederick Smith’s FedEx Sparked a Revolution in Just-in-time Delivery*, BUS. WK., Sept. 20, 2004 (quoting Smith as explaining that his efforts to correct the story have been unsuccessful).
42. FedEx Chairman Undergoes Successful Bypass Surgery; Prognosis for Frederick W. Smith is Excellent, BUS. WIRE, Nov. 25, 2000.
money, PAC, and lobbying expenditures totaled more than $6 million per election cycle.44

| FedEx 1999-2000 Soft Money                | 1,327,600  |
| FedEx PAC 1999-2000 Disbursements       | 2,065,598  |
| FedEx Corp. Lobbying 2000 Expenditures  | 3,320,000  |

FedEx's investment in political capital extends beyond monetary donations.48 FedEx has carefully developed its reputation in Washington. Founder and CEO Fred Smith has maintained an active presence in Washington politics since founding the company; he travels to Washington once a month to meet with political officials and testifies regularly before Congress.49 As early as 1976, Smith testified before Congress on at least five separate occasions within a six month


44. The dollar amounts indicated in the table understate FedEx's political expenditures for various reasons. For instance, corporations are not required to quantify the costs of lobbying by in-house personnel. FedEx has a Washington office which, in 2000, was staffed by five full-time personnel who engaged primarily in lobbying. Other FedEx personnel, including CEO Fred Smith, devoted substantial time to political participation. Also not included in the figures is the approximately $77,000 of contributions made by individual FedEx officers and employees during the 2000 election cycle. Center for Responsive Politics, http://www.opensecrets.org/bigpicture/topcontribs.asp?Bkdn=Source&Cycle=2000 (last visited Oct. 30, 2005).


48. See generally John M. de Figueiredo & Emerson H. Tiller, The Structure and Conduct of Corporate Lobbying: How Firms Lobby the Federal Communications Commission, 10 J. ECON. & MGMT. STRAT. 91 (2001) (recognizing that PAC contributions are a poor proxy for a firm’s political activity and instead measuring lobbying by identifying the number of contacts made by a firm or trade association with the targeted government agency).

49. Dave Hirschman, Air Express, Two Companies’ Political Donations Zoom, COM. APPEAL, Oct. 30, 1994, at 1C.
period in connection with legislative proposals to deregulate the air cargo industry.\(^{50}\) Washington insiders identify Smith's reputation and interest in politics as a substantial factor in FedEx's political success.\(^{51}\)

FedEx has also cultivated relationships with Washington insiders. Smith's ties to prominent political figures are extensive.\(^{52}\) Smith is reportedly on a first name basis with many members of Congress\(^{53}\) and has enjoyed strong ties with several presidents.\(^{54}\) Smith's relationship with Bill Clinton led Clinton to include Smith in the official delegation on a trade mission to China.\(^{55}\) At the same time, Smith continues to maintain his relationship with fraternity

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\(^{50}\) Regulatory Reform in Air Transportation: Hearings Before the Subcomm. on Aviation of the Senate Comm. on Commerce, 94th Cong. 548 (1976) (Statement of Frederick W. Smith); Aviation Economics: Joint Hearings Before the Subcomm. on Investigations and Review and the Subcomm. on Aviation of the House Comm. on Public Works and Transportation, 94th Cong. 391 (1976) (statement of Frederick W. Smith); Reform of the Economic Regulation of Air Carriers: Hearings Before the Subcomm. on Aviation of the House Comm. on Public Works and Transportation, 94th Cong. 949 (1976) (testimony of Frederick W. Smith); To Broaden the Power of the Civil Aeronautics Board to Grant Relief by Exemption in Certain Cases: Hearings Before the Subcomm. on Aviation of the House Comm. on Public Works and Transportation, 94th Cong. 44 (1976) (Testimony of Frederick W. Smith); see also James W. Brosnan & Anna Davis, FedEx Powers Up for Fight in Congress, Postal Service a Major Target, COM. APPEAL, Dec. 28, 1996, at 1A (noting that Smith usually testifies before Congress at least once per year).

\(^{51}\) See Hill Interview I, Jan. 31, 2002, supra note 28 (describing Fred Smith as a "big piece" of FedEx's success); Hill Interview II, Jan. 31, 2002, supra note 28 (explaining that Fred Smith had credibility in Washington starting from his involvement in air cargo deregulation when he "did what he said he would do"); Hill Interview IV, Apr. 12, 2002, supra note 28 (describing Smith as "the best lobbying tool that FedEx has").

\(^{52}\) The personal involvement of a firm's CEO appears to be a significant factor in conveying the importance of policy issues to political officials. In comparison to Smith, who has testified regularly before Congress, the testimony of UPS Chairman Kent Nelson before a House subcommittee in 1996 marked the first appearance before Congress of a UPS chairman in the company's 89 year history. Postal Service Reform: Hearing of the Postal Service Subcomm. of the House Government Reform and Oversight Comm., 104th Cong. (1996) (Testimony of Ken C. "Oz" Nelson). UPS's chairman also lacked the same public visibility as Fred Smith because Fred Smith had been FedEx's chairman since the company's inception, whereas UPS changed CEOs frequently. Hill Interview IV, Apr. 12, 2002, supra note 28. Similarly, CEO Kenneth Lay's political experience and involvement was likely a major factor in Enron's political effectiveness. Tim Fleck & Brian Wallstin, Enron's End Run, To Make a Mess as Big as the Enron Debacle, You Need Some Friends in High Places—Texas Senator Phil Gramm and His Wife, for Instance, DALLAS OBSERVER, Feb. 7, 2002; see also Hill Interview II, Jan. 31, 2002, supra note 28 (describing Lay as actively engaged in Washington politics).

\(^{53}\) See, e.g., Yankee Haylift 'Not Cost Effective'; UPI, July 24, 1986, AM cycle [hereinafter Yankee Haylift] (describing Smith as a "friend" of then Massachusetts Senator John Kerry); see also Hill Interview IV, Apr. 12, 2002, supra note 28 (explaining that Smith established good relationships with many members of Congress over the years).


\(^{55}\) Id.

Other examples of Smith’s efforts to build relationships with political leaders include his sponsorship of a Congressional Black Caucus Foundation reception to honor Congressman Harold Ford Jr., serving as campaign chairman for Tennessee Senator James Sasser’s, albeit unsuccessful, re-election bid, and his work for former Tennessee Governor Don Sundquist’s 1994 gubernatorial campaign. Most recently, as the BCRA imposed new limits on FedEx’s ability to make soft money contributions, Smith has increased his leadership role to include personally hosting fundraising events. The 2004 Bush-Cheney campaign designated Smith as a “Pioneer” due to his success in raising campaign funds by “bundling” the contributions of individual donors.

The company maintains a six person office in Washington, D.C., expressly dedicated to government affairs. Specifically, FedEx staffs this office with Washington insiders who have experience in key areas of lawmakers interest to the company, thus extending the scope of the company’s relationships.

56. Id.
61. See id. (reporting on Smith’s co-hosting of a $2000 per person fund-raiser for President Bush with Vice President Cheney).
64. In contrast, positions at some corporate government affairs offices are sinecures for senior officials who are nearing retirement.
Pryor Jr., the son of former Senator and FedEx consultant David H. Pryor, D-Ark.  

In 2002, FedEx hired Gina Adams, formerly a nine-year Transportation Department counsel-advisor, to be vice president of the office.  

In addition, FedEx values political expertise outside its Washington office. Political leaders have consistently served on the board of directors, including Howard Baker, former senator; Charles Manatt, Washington lawyer and former Democratic Party national chairman; George Mitchell, former Senate Majority Leader; and Shirley Jackson, RPI President and former member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. It is logical for FedEx to place a premium on political experience in selecting its board members; directors oversee a corporation’s strategic planning, and, for FedEx, the applicable regulatory environment has always been tied closely to the company’s business strategy.

FedEx supplements the efforts of its in-house personnel by making extensive use of outside lobbying firms. For example, FedEx has repeatedly hired the services of outside lobbyist Ann Eppard, longtime chief of staff to former House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bud Shuster. Other FedEx lobbyists have included G. Stewart Hall, former legislative director for Senator Richard C. Shelby, R-Ala. (chairman of the Appropriations Committee’s transportation panel), and Haley Barbour, former

the firm’s first clients was the City of Columbus, to lobby for federal transportation money. Bonna de la Cruz, D.C. lobbying firm taps Sundquist as partner, TENNESSEAN, July 9, 2003, at 2A.

66. Steel & Sia, supra note 54. Pryor’s brother Mark was elected to the Senate from Arkansas in 2002.


68. Hirschman, supra note 49. Baker was also chief of staff for President Reagan. He served on the FedEx board from 1988 through 1997. Id.

69. Id. Manatt served on the FedEx board from 1989 through 1999, at which time he left to serve as U.S. Ambassador to the Dominican Republic; he rejoined the FedEx board in 2004. FedEx Corp. Elects New Director; Annual Election of Directors Also Approved by Shareholders, BUS. WIRE, Sept. 27, 2004.

70. Mitchell has served on the board from 1995 through the present. FedEx Annual Report, supra note 39, at 78.


72. See, e.g., Anup Agrawal & Charles R. Knoeber, Do Some Outside Directors Play a Political Role? 44 J. L. & ECON. 179, 179-80, 190 (2001) (identifying importance of political role of directors and demonstrating that corporations for which politics is more important are more likely to use directors who are adept at politics).

73. See Steel & Sia, supra note 54 (describing K street lobbying firms employed by FedEx).

74. Id.
Republican National Committee Chairman. FedEx regularly sends members of its government affairs office and other employees to meet with political leaders. FedEx's executives and lobbyists have strong reputations in Washington for being “well informed” and “very accessible.”

FedEx engages in a variety of activities to strengthen its relationships with political officials. One important example is FedEx's lawful practice of regularly making its corporate jets available to members of Congress so they can enjoy greater privacy and convenience while traveling, in many cases, to fundraising events. Another example is FedEx's $205 million purchase of the naming rights for FedEx field—the Washington Redskins' football stadium. Although a Memphis-based corporation would seemingly have little reason to identify itself publicly with a football team located in Washington, D.C., the transaction is rational as a massive lobbying expenditure. As Redskins vice president Pepper Rodgers stated, FedEx field is “where the majority of lobbying is done for Federal Express.” For the many politicians and political staffers who attend Redskins games, the FedEx name is regularly and visibly associated with the impressive new stadium, although presumably not with the somewhat erratic Washington Redskins.

FedEx has a reputation for going beyond mere advocacy in its political efforts. FedEx regularly drafts legislation and provides research and other supporting information for government officials. Additionally, FedEx is known for its ability to build coalitions within the industry. FedEx has built “rent chains,” enlisting constituencies

75. Id.
76. See, e.g., id. (quoting Wendell Moore, chief of staff to Tennessee Gov. Don Sundquist, who worked in Washington when Sundquist was a member of Congress); accord Hill Interview I, Jan. 31, 2002, supra note 28.
77. Lewis, supra note 18; see Hill Interview III, Apr. 12, 2002, supra note 28 (describing these trips, in which politicians are accompanied by FedEx officials, as an important way of building relationships and goodwill).
79. Id.
80. Brosnan & Davis, supra note 60.
81. Recently, FedEx also lent its skybox at the field to Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist for a fund-raiser. Brosnan, supra, note 58.
83. See id. (arguing that lobbying and PAC contributions are likely to be of limited effectiveness unless the corporation supports its efforts through coalition and constituency building).
such as customers and employees to demonstrate broader support for its initiatives.\textsuperscript{84}

FedEx is politically active, both as an individual firm and as a member of industry groups.\textsuperscript{85} FedEx has been an active participant in the powerful Air Transport Association (“ATA”),\textsuperscript{86} “the only trade organization for the principal U.S. airlines.”\textsuperscript{87} The ATA has influenced a variety of industry regulatory issues and spends over $1 million a year on lobbying.\textsuperscript{88} Smith was elected to the ATA Board of Governors in 1991\textsuperscript{89} and chaired the ATA’s executive committee.\textsuperscript{90} Smith also spent a number of years on the Board of Governors for the International Air Transport Association,\textsuperscript{91} serving as Chairman of the Board from 1997-98.\textsuperscript{92} By participating in politics through trade groups, FedEx has been able to play a leadership role while reducing the visibility of its participation.\textsuperscript{93}

FedEx further enhances its reputation through a broad program of high profile charitable activities. In 1986, FedEx donated the use of its jets to airlift hay to drought stricken South Carolina, earning the long term loyalty of South Carolina Democratic Senator

\textsuperscript{84} See David P. Baron, Business and Its Environment 223 (3d ed. 2000) (explaining the concept of “rent chains” and applying it to FedEx); see also Thomas P. Lyon & John W. Maxwell, Astroturf: Interest Group Lobbying and Corporate Strategy, 13 J. Econ. & Mgmt. Strat. 561, 563-65 (2004) (describing other nonmarket strategies through which corporations can influence the lobbying behavior of other interest groups, thereby increasing the effectiveness of their own lobbying).

\textsuperscript{85} Campaign finance literature notes that corporations can participate in politics both individually and collectively. See, e.g., de Figueiredo & Tiller, supra note 48 (identifying the failure of existing literature to address decisions by firms as to whether to organize their lobbying through a collective body such as a trade association).

\textsuperscript{86} Air Transport; Shortlines, Aviation Wk. & Space Tech., Nov. 29, 1982, at 33.

\textsuperscript{87} Air Transport Association, What is the ATA?, http://www.airlines.org/about/d.aspx?nid=978 (last visited Oct. 30, 2005). The ATA “represent[s] the industry on major aviation issues before Congress, federal agencies, state legislatures, and other governmental bodies.” Id.


\textsuperscript{90} The International Air Cargo Association, Frederick W. Smith: Founder and Chairman of Federal Express, http://www.tiaca.org/content/inductees/Fred_W_Smith.asp (last visited Oct. 30, 2005).

\textsuperscript{91} The IATA is a trade association that brings together approximately 270 airlines from around the world. IATA, About Us, http://www.iata.org/about/index (last visited Oct. 30, 2005).


\textsuperscript{93} See de Figueiredo & Tiller, supra note 48 (observing that large firms may effectively reduce freeriding by lobbying through trade associations when there are shared interests among association members).
Ernest F. ("Fritz") Hollings. The drought, which stretched across eight southern states, was the worst since the 1930s and threatened the agricultural industry with $2 billion in losses. Although the drought drew a response from volunteers around the country, FedEx's actions gained particular salience when the company was publicly portrayed as solving a serious problem created by political squabbling. Senator Hollings publicly stated that FedEx responded when the White House refused to authorize the use of military planes to transport hay donations arranged by Democratic lawmakers.

In 1987, FedEx delivered sophisticated drilling equipment to Midland, Texas, to help save eighteen-month-old Jessica McClure after she fell down a well. In 1995, FedEx and the American Red Cross created a strategic alliance which, in addition to involving substantial monetary gifts by FedEx to the Red Cross, involved the use of FedEx transport services to assist Red Cross relief efforts in connection with disasters and national emergencies. Although FedEx's activities in connection with this program are too numerous to list, examples include FedEx's donation of its aircraft to transport clothing and supplies to earthquake victims in El Salvador in 2001, and its assistance to flood victims in Florida and tornado survivors in the South in 2000. FedEx also volunteered its jets in December 2000, to fly celebrity panda bears, Tian Tian and Mei Xiang, from China to the National Zoo in Washington.

Beyond philanthropy, FedEx has built a reputation as a good corporate citizen. The company regularly appears in listings such as Fortune's "100 Best Companies to Work For." FedEx provides a
variety of benefits to employees including “free trips on FedEx planes . . . no-layoff[s], promotion-from-within and tuition-assistance policies, a universal profit-sharing plan and an open-door grievance system.” FedEx consistently ranks high in customer satisfaction as well.

II. FedEx and Regulatory Change: The Nature and Role of Political Activity

This Part analyzes FedEx’s political participation in a series of major regulatory reforms. Obviously, large public corporations are affected by many legal issues; this Article focuses on how FedEx participated in the creation of several pieces of federal legislation that were of key importance to its business activities. FedEx has been involved in lawmakers beyond the scope of this case study, including its participation in state regulatory change (in addition to trucking deregulation which is discussed in Section III.B infra) and activities directed at the Executive Department. With respect to the latter, FedEx’s efforts to obtain greater access to foreign routes have been of particular importance. A corporation’s litigation strategy also relates to its role in legislative lawmaking. This Part highlights several such connections but does not evaluate FedEx’s litigation activities independently.

For each issue examined in this case study, the Article considers the nature of the regulatory changes sought by FedEx, the relationship between the applicable legal rules and FedEx’s business operations, the methods employed by FedEx to obtain the change, the result of these efforts, and the significance of the issue for the company. In particular, the Article considers the role of money in the
process, the participation of significant interest groups, and the importance of the other types of political participation described in Part I above.

A. Air Cargo Deregulation

Any analysis of FedEx's political activity must start with air cargo deregulation because this development was critical for FedEx to operate as a viable business. When Smith founded FedEx in 1971, the airline industry was extensively regulated. Most commercial airlines were subject to the restrictive regulations of the Civil Aeronautics Board ("CAB") which made rates and routes subject to CAB approval. New entrants had to undergo burdensome certification procedures, after which they were subject to CAB regulation. Critics charged that the CAB generally kept rates unreasonably low and routinely refused requests by carriers to expand into new markets. Initially, FedEx was able to avoid these regulations by carrying cargo in small Falcon jets under an exemption designed to permit air taxi operations. Using small aircraft to deliver cargo was inefficient, however, and FedEx hovered near bankruptcy for its first few years of operation. Indeed, Smith

107. Id. at 154.
108. See, e.g., Amend the Federal Aviation Act of 1958, Relating to Granting Relief by Exemption: Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Aviation of the Senate Comm. on Commerce, 94th Cong. 57 (1976) (Statement of Leo Seybold, Vice President, Federal Affairs, Air Transport Assoc. of America) [hereinafter Seybold Testimony] (describing burdens associated with the certification process, including the need for the applicant to meet the burden "of showing that the public convenience and necessity require the certification").
109. See Rush Loving, Jr., A Tiger with Air Cargo by the Tail, FORTUNE, June 19, 1978, at 116 (explaining how CAB's restrictions over rates and expansion into new markets crippled growth of the air cargo industry and prevented carriers from operating freight shipping profitably).
110. Alterman, supra note 106, at 154 n.3. Even for this first step, Smith had to persuade the government to increase the permitted payload for air taxis. See Dave Hirschman, Air Express Firms have Opposing Approaches, but Same Political Goal, COM. APPEAL, Oct. 30, 1994 at 4C (describing Smith's success in obtaining this change in 1972).
112. See Good Ideas And Big Money Aren't All You Need, FORBES, Nov. 15, 1975, at 30 (stating that FedEx suffered through $29 million in operating losses and was near bankruptcy twice in its first 3 ½ years of operation).
reported that he flew to Las Vegas in 1973 to play blackjack in an effort to generate the cash to keep the company solvent.\footnote{Foust, supra note 37. Smith was successful; “he wired the $27,000 he won back to FedEx.” Id.}

When the CAB denied FedEx’s request to extend the exemption to bigger planes, Smith went to Washington.\footnote{Rosalind K. Ellingsworth, Two Cargo Carriers Back Deregulation, AVIATION WK. & SPACE TECH., May 3, 1976, at 27.} He lobbied extensively\footnote{See id. (describing Smith’s heavy lobbying in favor of the bill).} and testified before Congress,\footnote{Smith testified on several occasions in connection with air cargo deregulation. See supra note 50 (citing testimony).} seeking modification of the law so as to enable FedEx to operate larger aircraft and to expand into new markets. Some reports describe air cargo deregulation as an easy political battle.\footnote{See Why Airlines Fear the FedEx Bill, supra note 111 (describing “Most of Capitol Hill” as agreeing with Smith regarding the need for air cargo deregulation).} Smith found several strong allies for his cause, including CAB Chair Alfred Kahn, who viewed the Cargo Act as the first step in his effort to deregulate the airline industry, and the National Industrial Traffic League—the most prestigious association of shippers.\footnote{See id. (describing support of CAB and National Industrial Traffic League for deregulation).}

Nonetheless, air cargo deregulation was not without opponents. The natural foes to deregulation were the large combination carriers that transported both cargo and passengers; in 1977, these carriers transported more than 80% of the air cargo. Some of these carriers opposed the legislation, arguing that without CAB regulation freight operations would be unprofitable.\footnote{Deregulation Arrives for Cargo Flights, BUS. WK., Nov. 21, 1977, at 55 [hereinafter Deregulation Arrives]. For most combination carriers, however, air cargo represented a very small portion of their business and was not economically significant. See Martha Derthick & Paul J. Quirk, The Politics of Deregulation 17-18 (1985) (explaining that several major carriers found cargo so unprofitable that they had ceased to carry it by the mid 1970s and that other combination carriers were “indifferent to cargo deregulation”).} In addition, airlines feared that air cargo deregulation might set a dangerous precedent for the entry of new airlines without CAB approval.\footnote{Why Airlines Fear the FedEx Bill, supra note 111.} These concerns were reflected in the position of the ATA, which “strongly oppose[d]” the proposed legislation.\footnote{ATA Director of Cargo Services G. J. Godbout}
warned that the legislation “could tear down the whole air cargo system.”123

A potentially more substantial obstacle was the Flying Tiger Line, Inc., which at the time was the world’s largest all-cargo airline.124 Unlike FedEx, Flying Tiger decided to fly bigger aircraft. As a result, it obtained certification and was subject to CAB rate and route regulation.125 Although Flying Tiger acknowledged that the CAB approval process was often inefficient,126 it opposed FedEx’s efforts to evade the existing regulatory hurdles by pressing for deregulation. As Flying Tiger President Robert W. Prescott testified, “We want them to go through the stresses and strains of certification the same as the rest of us. We do not believe they are privileged characters straight out of Heaven.”127 Smith’s first legislative proposal died in the House Subcommittee on Aviation, which was chaired by Representative Glenn Anderson from Southern California—the location of Flying Tiger’s headquarters.128

FedEx also battled the perception that air cargo deregulation was special interest legislation. Whatever the public interest value of deregulation might have been, participants in the political process recognized that the legislation was promoted by and principally designed to benefit FedEx, so much so that the bill was widely known in Washington as the “Federal Express Act.”129 Robert Prescott described the bill to Congress as “an insurance policy that covered a man only if he were riding a one-eyed buffalo over the Brooklyn Bridge at high noon on the Fourth of July.”130

123. See Why Airlines Fear the FedEx Bill, supra note 111.
124. Shipping Giant Claims Mail Carrier Overstepping Bounds, BUS. WK., Nov. 21, 1977 at 55.
125. Id.
126. See, e.g., To Broaden the Power of the Civil Aeronautics Board to Grant Relief by Exemption in Certain Cases: Hearings Before the Subcomm. on Aviation of the House Comm. on Public Works and Transportation, 94th Cong. 100, 116 (1976) (testimony of Robert W. Prescott) [hereinafter Prescott Testimony] (explaining that Flying Tiger was flying with wasted space from Chicago to Anchorage due to the CAB’s refusal to authorize it to serve Anchorage).
127. Id. at 120; see id. at 103 (“Nor do we believe that a case has been made for an immediate and partial deregulation limited to domestic airfreight”); see also Hill Interview III, Apr. 12, 2002, supra note 28 (describing Flying Tiger’s opposition to deregulation because it already had the authority to fly larger aircraft).
129. See, e.g., William K. Ris, Jr., The ICC and the Transportation Deregulation Statutes, 16 TRANSPI. L. J. 125 (1987) (explaining the appellation as based on both “the speed by which it flew through Capitol Hill and the identity of its principal sponsor”).
130. Prescott Testimony, supra note 126, at 118.
Despite these obstacles, FedEx’s efforts to obtain legal change were successful. In 1977, Congress enacted and President Carter signed the Air Cargo Deregulation Act (“ACDA”). The statute created substantial new opportunities for the development of the air cargo industry through deregulation by broadly facilitating competition within the industry. In particular, the statute granted certified carriers—those recognized by the CAB as “fit, willing and able”—complete freedom to enter domestic markets and to charge any nonpredatory rates.

The legislation also provided specific benefits tailored to FedEx. As an existing air cargo company, FedEx immediately received nationwide cargo operating authority, including freedom from CAB regulation. Moreover, the statute gave existing air cargo companies advantages over new entrants, including a one-year window during which they could enter new markets without competition.

FedEx quickly used its new ability to fly larger aircraft to expand its operations. By 1980, the regulatory changes had enabled FedEx to grow to a company with gross revenues of $415.4 million and net income of $38.7 million. At the same time, the ACDA spawned the growth of an entire industry. The success of the overnight express industry led one commentator to describe the Act as “an example of deregulation at its best.” In the twenty years after deregulation, the industry grew from essentially nothing “to the point where annual industry revenues exceed $30 billion, over 500,000 full-time equivalent workers are employed worldwide and over 800 large jet aircraft operate daily.”

How did FedEx accomplish this regulatory change? FedEx’s sustained lobbying efforts were clearly a factor. Smith personally testified before congressional committees on more than a dozen occasions before the legislation was enacted. Commentators noted the speed with which Smith pushed the legislation through Congress. See Deregulation Arrives, supra note 120 (observing that “the cargo bill sailed through both houses of Congress by voice vote”).

131. Commentators noted the speed with which Smith pushed the legislation through Congress. See Deregulation Arrives, supra note 120 (observing that “the cargo bill sailed through both houses of Congress by voice vote”).
133. Id.
137. Id. (observing, further, that the industry’s safety record has been excellent).
138. See Why Airlines Fear the FedEx Bill, supra note 111 (describing heavy lobbying by FedEx).
occasions, and a variety of FedEx officials participated in the deregulation efforts. FedEx also recognized the importance of professional lobbyists and enlisted their efforts in its campaign. Congressional staff members observed that FedEx did “an outstanding job” presenting its case to Congress. These efforts were supported by the relationships that FedEx already had begun to build with members of the congressional subcommittees on Aviation, whom FedEx recognized would continue to play an important role in evaluating regulatory changes that would affect its future.

Flying Tiger’s change in position also helped the success of the legislation. Although Flying Tiger initially opposed deregulation, shortly before Congress enacted the legislation, Flying Tiger officials testified in favor of the proposed statute, stating that “air cargo cannot be effectively regulated.” There are at least three possible explanations for this change in position. First, Flying Tiger may have recognized that it was facing increasing competitive pressure from noncertificated carriers, such as FedEx, that were not subject to CAB restrictions. Second, Flying Tiger experienced a shift in leadership during this time period, as Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer Joseph Healy increasingly assumed responsibilities...

139. See FedEx Challenges Postal Service Role; Shipping Giant Claims Mail Carrier Overstepping Bounds, KNOXVILLE NEWS-SENTINEL, Jan. 4, 1997 (stating that since its beginning FedEx has employed a substantial staff of lobbyists).


141. For example, Smith hosted members of the House Aviation Subcommittee and their staff for an evening at FedEx company headquarters, introducing the legislators to the company’s operations, and, presumably, enlisting their support. See Aviation Regulatory Reform: Hearings Before the Subcomm. on Aviation of the House Comm. on Public Works and Transportation, 95th Cong. 1254 (1977) (statement of Rep. Milford, Member, House Subcomm. on Aviation) [hereinafter Aviation Regulatory Reform] (describing the committee’s visit to FedEx headquarters in Memphis). Congressman Milford further indicated his interest in encouraging FedEx to expand its operations to Forth Worth, Texas.

142. Significantly, when Flying Tiger changed its position, it further enlisted the support of its shipping customers. See id. at 1255, 1257 (Testimony of Joseph J. Healy, CEO, Flying Tiger Line, Inc.) (“[W]e have talked about deregulation to our customers, we have talked to our employees, we have talked to the unions that represent those employees, we have talked to our investors, and they all agree that deregulation will have a very positive impact on Flying Tigers Line, and totally support our efforts before Congress in this regard.”); Regulatory Reform in Air Transportation, Hearings Before the Subcomm. on Aviation of the Senate Comm. on Commerce, Science and Transportation, 95th Cong. 499 (1977) (statement of J.W. Rosenthal, Counsel for Flying Tiger Line, Inc.) [hereinafter Regulatory Reform in Air Transportation] (describing Flying Tiger’s submission of over 240 letters from its customers, including air freight forwarders, supporting deregulation).

143. Aviation Regulatory Reform, supra note 141, at 1255 (testimony of Joseph J. Healy).

144. See id. at 1256 (describing Flying Tiger as “taking exception to . . . our inability to compete with [less regulated] service”).
Healy’s research suggested that Prescott’s view of Flying Tiger’s ability to prosper under continued CAB regulation may have been misguided. Third, and perhaps most important, prior to the summer of 1977, FedEx and Flying Tiger decided to work together to draft proposed legislation that would be acceptable to both companies. The product was subsequently submitted to the relevant congressional committees and provided the basic structure for the eventual legislation. In particular, the joint proposal was the source of the special protection provided to existing carriers against competition from new entrants.

In addition, FedEx seemingly was able to overcome the legislation’s characterization as special interest by enlisting the support of Flying Tiger and others. In particular, FedEx demonstrated a public interest need for the regulation that extended beyond its own frustration with CAB regulation by building a broad coalition in support of deregulation. The support of other interest groups lent credibility and political clout to FedEx’s proposal.

What about the role of campaign contributions? FedEx recognized the importance of political expenditures early in its history. In 1977, it established a PAC that, for the year 1977-78 made expenditures of $8,985. Because FedEx was initially unsuccessful in

145. See Underachiever, FORBES, Sept. 1, 1977, at 48 (describing leadership and gradual assumption of management by Healy); Regulatory Reform in Air Transportation, supra note 142, at 499 (statement of Joseph J. Healy) (noting that it was Healy’s first appearance before the committee).

146. Regulatory Reform in Air Transportation, supra note 142, at 497-98 (testimony of Joseph J. Healy).

147. Aviation Regulatory Reform, supra note 141, at 724, 727 (testimony of Joseph J. Healy); Regulatory Reform in Air Transportation, supra note 142, at 493 (statement of Frederick W. Smith).

148. Aviation Regulatory Reform, supra note 141, at 724, 727 (testimony of Joseph J. Healy); Regulatory Reform in Air Transportation, supra note 142, at 493 (statement of Frederick W. Smith).

149. See Aviation Regulatory Reform, supra note 141, at 734 (testimony of Joseph J. Healy) (defending an initial form of the provision that would have granted a three year head start to existing carriers Seaboard, Air Lift, FedEx and Flying Tiger). The provision was reduced to one year in the final statute. It appears that FedEx also agreed to support Flying Tiger’s efforts to extend deregulation to surface transport of air cargo as part of the joint proposal. Regulatory Reform in Air Transportation, supra note 142, at 493 (statement of Frederick W. Smith).

150. By gaining the support of Flying Tiger, FedEx was able to obtain Flying Tiger’s assistance with enlisting the support of its shippers. See supra note 142.

151. EDWARD ZUCKERMAN, THE ALMANAC OF FEDERAL PACS (1992). FedEx seems to have been one of the first industry participants to recognize the value of PAC expenditures. Flying Tiger made no PAC expenditures in 1977-78; of the passenger airlines, only United and Delta made PAC expenditures. Id. By 1979-80, following general airline deregulation, industry PAC expenditures had increased dramatically. Id.
obtaining relief from the regulatory restrictions of the CAB in 1975 and 1976 but then, after establishing its PAC, was immediately successful in 1977, an empirical analysis of the role of money in the lawmaking process might conclude that FedEx’s decision to make political contributions was an important factor in its success. As indicated above, it is precisely this type of analysis—focusing solely on monetary contributions and omitting the factors described above—that leads to the conclusion that corporations are able to purchase favorable legislation. Indeed, it is difficult to believe that FedEx’s contribution of less than $9,000 was a critical factor in the process.

One might argue that FedEx’s contributions enabled it to obtain access. The record, including Smith’s testimony, his role in drafting proposed legislation, and so forth, clearly reflects FedEx’s extensive access to the relevant congressional subcommittees. On the other hand, the record reveals similar access for Flying Tiger which did not make any PAC expenditures during 1977-78, or anytime thereafter. Consequently it seems simplistic to view FedEx’s monetary donations as a key factor in deregulation.

B. Trucking Deregulation

In latter stages of air cargo deregulation, FedEx and Flying Tiger raised the issue of trucking deregulation. As with air transportation, trucking was extensively regulated in the 1970s. This regulation affected FedEx’s ability to transport packages to and from its aircraft. Consequently, after air cargo deregulation, FedEx turned its attention to trucking deregulation. Trucking deregulation occurred in two separate steps. Initial deregulation of interstate trucking, step one, followed closely upon the heels of airline deregulation. Two years after the Federal Express Act was signed into law, Congress passed, and President Carter signed, the Motor Carrier Act of 1980 (“MCA”). The MCA did not eliminate state authority to regulate intrastate trucking. Full deregulation of intrastate trucking, step two, did not occur until 1995.

152. Id. Flying Tiger officials testified on numerous occasions before the same subcommittees and worked together with FedEx in drafting proposed legislation. There are indications that Flying Tiger’s support for deregulation was a key factor in enabling the bill to move forward.


1. The Motor Carrier Act of 1980

Trucking deregulation was a major issue for FedEx and Flying Tiger.\footnote{See, e.g., Oversight of Freight Rate Competition in the Motor Carrier Industry: Hearings Before the Subcomm. on Antitrust and Monopoly of the Senate Comm. on the Judiciary, 95th Cong. 1467 (statement of Wayne M. Hoffman, CEO, the Flying Tiger Line, Inc.) (advocating trucking deregulation); Examining Current Conditions in the Trucking Industry and the Possible Necessity for Change in the Manner and Scope of Its Regulations: Hearings Before the Subcomm. on Surface Transportation of the House Comm. on Public Works and Transportation, 96th Cong. 1009 (1980) (testimony of Frederick W. Smith) [hereinafter Examining Current Conditions] (describing existing trucking regulations as “absurd”).} Although pickup and delivery services incidental to air cargo transportation were supposedly exempt from the regulatory jurisdiction of the Interstate Commerce Commission (“ICC”) under the Interstate Commerce Act, the ICC claimed the authority to determine the scope of that exemption.\footnote{See, e.g., Examining Current Conditions, supra note 155, at 960 (statement of S. Tucker Taylor, Senior VP, Federal Express Corp.) (arguing that the ICC was improperly regulating air transportation by claiming the authority to adopt rules specifying the scope of the exempt zone).} For many years, the ICC interpreted the exemption according to a twenty-five mile rule—jointly developed by the CAB and the ICC—which exempted pickup and delivery service within twenty-five miles of the airport or the city served by the airport.\footnote{Motor Transportation of Property Incidental to Transportation by Aircraft, 112 M.C.C. 1, 16 (1970) (stating that any departure from the 25 mile rule “must be supported by compelling reasons”).} In June 1979, the ICC adopted new rules extending the exempt region to a thirty-five mile plus thirty-five mile formula, which essentially created seventy mile service zones.\footnote{See Examining Current Conditions, supra note 155, at 960 (statement of S. Tucker Taylor) (describing expanded exempt zone).} The air terminal exemption zones provided air cargo carriers with some operational freedom, but their limitations severely obstructed service to a substantial part of the country.\footnote{See id. at 961 (explaining how FedEx could not provide service to Allentown, PA from Harrisburg, PA because the two cities are 72 miles apart).}

Significantly, if FedEx wanted to provide service to a town or city outside the exempt zone, it could only do so at substantial additional cost by hiring an ICC certificated carrier.\footnote{See Regulation of Air Cargo Freight Transportation: Hearing Before the Senate Comm. on Commerce, Science and Transportation, 96th Cong. 80 (1979) (statement of Frederick W. Smith) (explaining that, for “countless examples of shippers who are a few hundred yards, in some cases, or a mile or two outside the limit” that FedEx could legally serve, the use of a certificated carrier was required); see also Examining Current Conditions, supra note 155, at 972-73 (statement of S. Tucker Taylor) (explaining the costs associated with using certificated carriers to provide trucking service).} Perhaps more importantly, by preventing FedEx from using ground shippers or trucks that were within the company’s control, the requirement led to...
a lack of predictability in operations that was inconsistent with the
time sensitive nature of FedEx's product. As S. Tucker Taylor, FedEx
senior vice president, stated, local truckers were not structured to
provide service within FedEx's normal time frames and the need to
use a certificated carrier would add two or three days to the delivery
time for a shipment. The alternative was for FedEx and other
carriers to adopt inefficient mechanisms for transporting packages,
such as using smaller aircraft and multiple flights instead of serving a
number of localities out of key cities.

FedEx again sought legislative relief. FedEx's regulatory
problem did not require full scale trucking deregulation; it was
sufficient, for FedEx's immediate purpose, to obtain a legislative
extension of the ICC terminal exemption that would essentially
eliminate ICC jurisdiction and provide a complete regulatory
exemption for all ground transportation shipments that were
incidental to air transportation. Full deregulation, however, would
give FedEx increased flexibility in that FedEx would no longer be
required to transport all shipments by air.

Several other groups joined FedEx in its efforts. Leading
business groups, including the National Association of Manufacturers
and the National Federation of Independent Businesses, supported
trucking deregulation, arguing that increased competition would
reduce shipping costs. Sears, Roebuck & Company, which relied
heavily on shipping by truck, pushed for deregulation. Small
trucking firms supported the increased entry that deregulation would
provide. Indeed, the Independent Truckers Association strongly
supported deregulation.

161. See Examining Current Conditions, supra note 155, at 972-76 (statement of S. Tucker
Taylor) (comparing the time and cost of delivering diagnostic equipment to two hospitals located
five miles apart and observing that, for the hospital outside the exempt zone, “the incremental
cost for these last 5 miles is another $12 and another 2 days”).

162. See id. at 976-77 (explaining that, but for ICC restrictions, FedEx could reduce the
number of flights to Pennsylvania while maintaining the same level of service).

163. See, e.g., Loving, supra note 109 (describing increased flexibility that trucking
deregulation would provide to air cargo carriers).

164. See Truck Deregulation Bill May be in for a Long Haul in Congress, CHEM. WK., Jan. 31,
1979, at 20 [hereinafter Long Haul] (describing the support of these “leading business groups”).

165. Trucking Deregulation is Moving Fast, BUS. WK., Nov. 27, 1978 at 62 [hereinafter
Trucking Deregulation is Moving Fast].

166. Id.

167. Id. The Independent Truckers Association represented independent owner-operators.
See also Carole Shifrin, Backers of Reform Hope Trucking Influence Melting, ATA, Teamsters
Unhappy, WASH. POST, Mar. 4, 1980, at D6 (describing support of Sears, independent truckers
and minority truckers for deregulation).
Trucking deregulation was also part of President Carter’s economic agenda in the late 1970s. Carter first proposed substantial deregulation at a town meeting in the spring of 1977.\textsuperscript{168} In late 1977, the White House produced an options paper developing a strategy for deregulation, but that strategy was never implemented. Instead, trucking deregulation was pushed to the back burner in favor of airline deregulation. In late 1978, a White House task force on trucking deregulation prepared a new strategy paper.\textsuperscript{169} This paper too failed to command substantial attention. Indeed, by May 1979, commentators questioned whether legislation was likely, suggesting that “the Administration may have missed its chance on trucking deregulation.”\textsuperscript{170}

One reason for the delay was that trucking deregulation was a political hot potato.\textsuperscript{171} Two powerful interest groups opposed trucking deregulation: the American Trucking Association and the Teamsters. The American Trucking Association was an active opponent of deregulation and spent over $1 million, directly and through its PAC—the Truck Operator's Non-Partisan Committee—on political activity.\textsuperscript{172} In addition to spending money, the American Trucking Association effectively mobilized its constituency to convey opposition to deregulation.\textsuperscript{173} While the Senate Commerce Committee considered the deregulation act, its staff received three hundred calls per day from truckers who, in the opinion of one staffer, seemed to be “reading from a prepared script.”\textsuperscript{174} As a committee aide observed, “the ATA is an extremely efficient lobbying organization in terms of mail and phone calls.”\textsuperscript{175} The American Trucking Association hired top-level...
Washington lobbyists. It also reached out to the public, buying newspaper and magazine ads in which it warned that trucking deregulation would increase the cost of everything from Halloween candy to Christmas toys. Despite the huge profits enjoyed by the industry due to regulation, the American Trucking Association was able to refocus the debate over continued regulation, arguing that deregulation would reduce services to small communities, create unemployment and industry chaos, and produce safety problems.

The Teamsters, one of the most powerful and politically effective interest groups in Washington, also opposed deregulation, primarily out of a concern for jobs and wages. The Teamsters were concerned that deregulation would facilitate the operations of nonunion companies, impeding union efforts to organize and bargain. In response, the Teamsters organized active and bitter opposition to trucking deregulation. Indeed, the Carter Administration was so concerned about the Teamsters that it attempted to use the issue as a bargaining chip in negotiations with the union over its national freight contract. The Teamsters' efforts to block deregulation extended beyond lobbying and advertising. Former Teamsters president Roy L. Williams was convicted, along with four other men, of attempting to bribe Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Howard W. Cannon in an effort to stall or block trucking deregulation legislation.

176. See Trucking Deregulation Gets Caught in a Jam, BUS. WK., Mar. 5, 1979, at 25 (describing the American Trucking Association's decision to hire lobbyist Hill & Knowlton, Inc.).


178. Id. (describing "handsome profits" enjoyed by the trucking industry).

179. See Trucking Deregulation is Moving Fast, supra note 165, at 62 (summarizing the American Trucking Association's arguments against deregulation).

180. This opposition appears to have been well founded. The union reportedly "lost more than 100,000 trucking-related jobs since the Motor Carrier Act of 1980." John D. Schulz, Deregulation Interests Plan Big Push in Clinton Presidency's First 100 days, TRAFFIC WORLD, Nov. 23, 1992, at 8.


182. Mosher, supra note 168 (describing Administration official Alfred E. Kahn's effort to trade deregulation concessions for reductions in wage and benefit increases in the Teamsters' contract).

Trucking deregulation had limited support on Capitol Hill. Many politicians seemed to fear the visible opposition of the American Trucking Association and the Teamsters. This opposition, coupled with the absence of an identifiable constituency favoring deregulation, resulted in scant legislative support. As James Cook explained in Forbes magazine, the general public favored airline deregulation, but had little interest in trucking.

Despite the “controversial” nature of the legislation, in July 1980, Congress enacted and President Carter signed MCA. The MCA took the initial steps toward deregulation of the trucking industry. The Act “significantly reduced regulatory restrictions on entry, gave motor carriers greater pricing flexibility and set limitations on collective ratemaking activities.” Importantly, the MCA reflected a compromise on the scope of deregulation. Although the Act substantially reduced regulation of interstate trucking, it left economic regulation of intrastate trucking to individual states, which retained the right to impose entry restrictions and regulate rates. In addition, the MCA empowered the ICC to control the implementation of deregulation. Although proposals to eliminate the remaining

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184. A notable exception was Senator Kennedy, who sought to organize opposition to the truckers and Teamsters by building a coalition of farmers, businesses, and consumers. Mosher, supra note 168.

185. Id. (stating that “few politicians on Capitol Hill are clamoring to deregulate the trucking industry right now”); Long Haul, supra note 164 (describing limited support for deregulation, despite Senator Kennedy’s claims).


187. See Carole Shifrin, Carter, Kennedy Send Trucking Bill to Congress; Legislation to Deregulate Trucking Industry Sent to Hill, WASH. POST, June 22, 1979, at C8 (quoting Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Howard D. Cannon’s description of bill); Kathryn L. Moore, State and Local Taxation: When Will Congress Intervene?, 23 J. LEGIS. 171, 190 n.162 (1997) (observing that “[t]he hearings on the Motor Carrier Act of 1980 numbered more than 3,600 pages and filled three separate volumes”).


190. See Paul Stephen Dempsey, The Interstate Commerce Commission – Disintegration of an American Legal Institution, 34 AM. U. L. REV. 1, 6 (1984) (describing the Motor Carrier Act as “the culmination of a process of legislative compromise”). Dempsey also observes that the Act reflected the adoption of the more conservative House proposal rather than the Senate’s more liberal deregulatory effort). Id.

191. This result became significant when, after President Reagan succeeded President Carter, he replaced the chair of the agency with Reese Taylor, who, according to a report issued by the Joint Economic Committee, adopted a policy of reversing the progress toward deregulation. Carole Shifrin, Panel Charges ICC Isn’t Deregulating Trucking Industry, WASH. POST, Feb. 4, 1982, at D10.
federal oversight of interstate trucking were repeatedly considered on the Hill.\textsuperscript{192} complete deregulation of trucking did not occur until 1995.\textsuperscript{193}

What factors enabled FedEx and other supporters of deregulation to prevail over the opposition of formidable interest groups and obtain the adoption of the Motor Carrier Act? One substantial factor may have been that the initial steps to deregulate the industry were taken administratively, through actions of the ICC under Carter appointee A. Daniel O’Neal.\textsuperscript{194} The ICC reduced entry requirements, expanded unregulated zones, and increased competition for return trips.\textsuperscript{195} The ICC also imposed economic pressure on the industry by shifting to a more burdensome standard in its review of rate increase requests.\textsuperscript{196} These actions prompted two influential members of the House of Representatives, Harold T. Johnson, chair of the House Public Works and Transportation Committee and James J. Howard, head of its Surface Transportation Subcommittee, to request that the ICC stop its efforts to deregulate in the absence of legislation.\textsuperscript{197}

The ICC’s efforts appear to have played a key part in spurring legislative deregulation. Opponents of deregulation saw a legislative compromise as the best way to curtail the ICC’s aggressive administrative deregulation.\textsuperscript{198} The trucking industry believed the

\textsuperscript{192} See, e.g., Douglas B. Feaver, \textit{Hill Gets Trucking Deregulation Bill; ICC’s Role Would End; Consumer Protection Would Be FTC’s Job}, WASH POST., Sept. 13, 1985, at A14 (describing as “long-delayed” the proposal to end federal oversight of interstate trucking and eliminate the ICC delivered to Capitol Hill in Sept. 1985).


\textsuperscript{194} John and Rui de Figueiredo have argued that interest groups may allocate resources and coordinate strategies between legislatures, courts and administrative agencies in pursuing regulatory change and have modeled the potential interaction between different lawmaking institutions. The effect of agency efforts to deregulate on Congress’ decision to adopt deregulatory legislation supports their hypothesis and is consistent with their model. See John M.P. de Figueiredo & Rui J. de Figueiredo, Jr., \textit{The Allocation of Resources by Interest Groups: Lobbying, Litigation and Administrative Regulation}, 4 BUS. & POLITICS 161 (2002).

\textsuperscript{195} See Trucking Deregulation is Moving Fast, supra note 165, at 62; Mosher, supra note 168 (describing the ICC’s deregulatory approach under O’Neal).

\textsuperscript{196} See Mosher, supra note 168 (describing the ICC’s decision to shift to a more restrictive methodology for evaluating rate increase requests).

\textsuperscript{197} Long Haul, supra note 164.

MCA would achieve this objective.\textsuperscript{199} Indeed, the American Trucking Association itself was responsible for introducing into Congress the Motor Carrier Regulatory Improvement Act of 1979, the predecessor of the 1980 legislation.\textsuperscript{200}

These hopes proved to be unfounded. As a practical matter, despite paper limits on its scope, the MCA largely deregulated the industry.\textsuperscript{201} Entry and competition increased dramatically,\textsuperscript{202} substantially reducing profits for truckers.\textsuperscript{203} For the Teamsters, the MCA resulted in a loss in membership and a reduction in its power due to increased competition by nonunion operations.\textsuperscript{204}

From FedEx’s perspective, the effects of the MCA were more favorable. The statute contained a provision that provided FedEx with precisely the regulatory relief that it had sought initially: a specific exemption to federal regulation for motor carrier transportation incidental to air transportation.\textsuperscript{205} Ironically, although the MCA, as adopted, reflected the more conservative House approach to regulation, the incidental to air exemption was based on the more liberal legislation that was proposed in the Senate.\textsuperscript{206} The provision eliminated the geographic limitations imposed by the ICC as well as the distinction between exempt pickup and delivery services and line haul transportation. These provisions, which allowed FedEx to use its own trucks and eliminated the need to contract with certificated carriers, substantially increased FedEx’s ability to expand pickup and


\textsuperscript{200} Railroad Deregulation Act of 1979: Hearings Before the Subcomm. on Surface Transportation of the Senate Comm. on Commerce, Science and Transportation, 96th Cong. 1005 (1979) [hereinafter Railroad Deregulation Hearings] (Statement of Jerry Wheeler, South Dakota Trucking Assn.).

\textsuperscript{201} Feldman, supra note 199.

\textsuperscript{202} David A. Vise, Truckers Find Deregulation a Rough Road, WASH. POST, July 6, 1982, at D7.

\textsuperscript{203} Id.

\textsuperscript{204} Id. (explaining how, with the elimination of collective rate setting, nonunion carriers with lower labor costs were able to undercut union truckers).

\textsuperscript{205} See Motor Carrier Act of 1980, § 7(b), Pub. L. No. 96-296, 1980 Stat. 2245 (1980) (codified at 49 U.S.C. § 10526(a)(8) of title 49, United States Code [providing exemptions from ICC regulation], is amended to read as follows: ‘... (B) transportation of property (including baggage) by motor vehicle as part of a continuous movement which, prior or subsequent to such part of the continuous movement, has been or will be transported by an air carrier . . . ’).

\textsuperscript{206} See Examining Current Conditions, supra note 155, at 1000-01 (statement of Peter E. Hubbard, VP, Flying Tiger Line, Inc.) (advocating adoption of incidental to air exemption as reflected in Stat. 2245 and proposing specific amendment to House bill).
delivery services. Thus, despite the mixed results of the process for many of the participants, FedEx was largely successful in achieving its objectives.

The history of the Motor Carrier Act of 1980 reveals a controversial political issue that generated strong interest group activity on both sides and that resulted in legislation reflecting a political compromise. It therefore offers an interesting opportunity to examine the political process. Indeed, two scholars, John Frendreis and Richard Waterman, have studied the adoption of the MCA, using empirical analysis to evaluate the effect of PAC contributions on the voting decisions of Senate members by measuring the relationship between dollar contributions by the American Trucking Association to individual senators and the voting scores of those senators on deregulation. Frendreis and Waterman found a strong correlation between PAC contributions and voting decisions, particularly with respect to those senators who were up for re-election in 1980. They concluded these results demonstrated that “legislative votes are subject to the influence of campaign contributions,” at least for particular kinds of issues, such as trucking deregulation, both because of its limited salience and the fact that it was not strongly associated with partisanship or ideology.

The analysis in this Article suggests several reasons to question both Frendreis and Waterman’s methodology and their conclusions. First, Frendreis and Waterman considered only the PAC contributions of the American Trucking Association. Their rationale was that the American Trucking Association was the only organization which “[(a)] had a strong interest in the bill; (b) donated appreciable amounts of money to many legislators, and (c) did not possess a large and diverse legislative agenda.” As this Article has demonstrated, however, the legislation was highly controversial and generated both strong support and opposition by a variety of interest groups. Indeed, the Teamsters thought the issue was sufficiently important to attempt to bribe a senator.  Accordingly, it seems

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207. See Federal Express Rides the Small-Package Boom, BUS. Wk., Mar. 31, 1980 (describing how Smith anticipated that deregulation would enable FedEx to double its productivity by introducing specially designed delivery trucks).
208. Frendreis & Waterman, supra note 172.
209. Id. at 410.
210. Id. at 405-06.
211. Frendreis and Waterman explain their decision to exclude the Teamsters because of the organization’s “extensive legislative agenda.” Id. at 406 n.6. The breadth of the Teamsters’ agenda did not, however, reduce their focus on trucking deregulation. Moreover, the magnitude of political contributions by the Teamsters dwarfed the American Trucking Association’s PAC contributions. See, e.g., Morton Mintz, Election ’80 was Record Year for PACs, Especially Those
necessary, at a minimum, to consider the extent of political contributions made by other interest groups. Even if senators’ votes are correlated with PAC contributions, it is hard to see why the contributions of a single interest group should be decisive.

In addition, contrary to the study’s stated conclusion, its findings seem to refute the conclusion that money buys votes. Apart from the American Trucking Association and the Teamsters, few big money donors appear to have focused on deregulation. In particular, there was a striking absence of powerful, big-money support for deregulation. FedEx was one of the few donors who supported deregulation, and its PAC contributions in the 1979-1980 election cycle totaled approximately $42,000. Despite the fact that big-money opposed deregulation, Congress adopted the Motor Carrier Act. This outcome is difficult to explain in terms of the vote-buying model.

Part of the problem may stem from the fact that the Frendreis and Waterman study imperfectly captured the position of the American Trucking Association (and other interest groups that opposed deregulation) with respect to the MCA. Although the American Trucking Association opposed deregulation, as indicated above, it viewed the MCA as a political compromise. At the time, opponents of deregulation considered some type of legislation necessary in order to halt the ICC’s progress in implementing deregulation administratively. Indeed, as mentioned above, the American Trucking Association itself was responsible for introducing the Motor Carrier Regulatory Improvement Act of 1979, the predecessor of the 1980 legislation, into Congress. Moreover, the 1980 legislation, as adopted, reflected the approach of the conservative House bill, rather than the more liberal Senate bill that had generated most of the American Trucking Association’s opposition. Accordingly, adoption of the MCA cannot fairly be characterized as a ratification of the free market position. In light of the American Trucking Association’s support for the predecessor legislation, it is

on Right, WASH. POST, Jan. 27, 1981, at A4 (describing 1980 PAC expenditures by the Ohio branch of the Teamsters alone as totaling $245,368 and listing the AFL-CIO as among the top 10 PACs in terms of direct contributions to political candidates, with $718,052 in such contributions).

212. See Mintz, supra note 211 (listing substantial PAC donors in the 1980 election).

213. See Gordon, supra note 174, at 668 (explaining that the ATA took “the position that compared to the proposed ICC reforms, some sort of limited legislation is the lesser of two evils”).

214. Railroad Deregulation Hearings, supra note 200, at 1005 (statement of Jerry Wheeler, South Dakota Trucking Assn.).

215. See, e.g., Gordon, supra note 174, at 668 (explaining that ATA’s opposition was focused on the liberal Senate bill which proposed “substantial deregulation”).
unclear why American Trucking Association contributions should have led to negative votes.216

Analysis of the Frendreis and Waterman study demonstrates that it may be difficult to characterize an interest group’s position on a proposed regulatory change for the purposes of empirical analysis, particularly when that regulatory change results from a lawmaking process that extends over a long period of time. The difficulty may be exacerbated in the case of corporations and other business entities because the political objectives of businesses shift over time in response to a variety of nonpolitical factors.217

Additionally, Frendreis and Waterman’s study highlights a further, and seemingly unexplored, problem with using empirical analysis to assess the impact of political contributions—the weight that should be given to a legislator’s dissenting vote on a bill. Since the MCA reflected a legislative compromise that at the time of its adoption faced little opposition, it may not be appropriate to characterize negative votes as reflecting the political influence of interest groups that opposed the legislation. Seemingly, a legislator who predicts that his or her vote will have no effect on the outcome could use the voting process as a low cost way to signal receptiveness to a targeted interest group, even if the legislator approves of the legislation.218 In such a case, a negative vote would provide little evidence of the effectiveness of the interest group’s political expenditures.

2. Intrastate Trucking Deregulation

After the adoption of the MCA, federal regulation of trucking was reduced, increasing rate competition and entry.219 The Motor Carrier Act, however, explicitly preserved state authority to regulate

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216. Indeed, although it was unlikely, a vote against the compromise proposal might have indicated a senator’s rejection of the watered down form of deregulation reflected in the ATA sponsored compromise rather than opposition to deregulation.

217. See Hart, supra note 17, at 14 (arguing that, consequently, corporations cannot be evaluated according to standard interest group analysis).

218. In a similar vein, the House of Representatives recently voted on a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage, despite the fact that a previous defeat of the measure by the Senate precluded the amendment from being sent to the states for ratification. Nations Briefs, NEWSDAY, Oct. 1, 2004, at A32. Accordingly, members were able to make a political gesture without policy consequences by voting in favor of the proposal.

intrastate trucking. As a result, state regulation of intrastate trucking remained extensive. As of 1986, approximately forty states continued to regulate intrastate trucking. The regulations varied, but most included entry controls, tariff filing and rate regulation, restrictions on operations, and grants of antitrust immunity for carriers to set rates collectively.

These numerous and diverse state regulations significantly burdened national carriers. For example, it took UPS almost twenty years to obtain authority to operate in Texas. Powerful state incumbents often impeded the operation of new entrants. Many states required state approval of rate changes for ground deliveries; as a result, rate changes by a national company could be blocked by individual states. In some cases, regulatory approvals could be held up by a single customer.

In addition to purely economic regulations, states often imposed registration and reporting requirements under the guise of regulating safety. The U.S. Department of Transportation estimated


225. See Lowry, supra note 224 (explaining that UPS’s efforts to obtain intrastate operating authority in Texas had been opposed by Texas freight and bus companies that feared competition). As DOT Assistant Transportation Secretary Frank E. Kruesi testified: “In many States, such as Michigan, entry into any meaningful trucking operation is difficult because incumbent carriers are in the powerful position to argue before State regulators that new carriers are not needed and should not be permitted.” Legislation to Increase the Efficiency Hearings, supra note 219 (statement of Frank E. Kruesi).

226. See Lowry, supra note 224 (explaining the burden imposed by state tariff regulations on “carriers such as UPS and FedEx, which conduct interstate operations at the national level and have a uniform pricing scheme”).

227. Daniel Pearl & Robert Frank, Trucking Firms Face a Problem With Congress, WALL ST. J., April 8, 1994, (describing how a single objection from one of UPS’s 19,000 customers in Colorado was sufficient to block UPS’s nationwide rate increase).

the cost of paperwork associated with complying with state regulations was somewhere between $1 billion and $3.2 billion per year over and above the underlying fees and taxes imposed by the states.\(^{229}\) A study commissioned by FedEx estimated that preemption of intrastate regulation would have saved the air express industry almost $100 million in 1987 alone.\(^{230}\) Carriers typically responded to the regulations through interstate routing, which allowed them to avoid state regulation, but created unnecessary expense and inefficiency. For example, FedEx could avoid local regulations by flying shipments through its air hub in Memphis rather than delivering them locally by truck.\(^{231}\)

FedEx appeared to have little interest in intrastate trucking deregulation until it became the focus of enforcement efforts by state regulators. Ironically, the first such efforts were made by regulators in FedEx’s home state of Tennessee.\(^{232}\) In July 1986, the Tennessee Public Service Commission entered a Show Cause Order against FedEx, seeking to require FedEx to obtain authorization to operate within the state, and, in 1987, the Commission ordered FedEx to apply for a Certificate of Convenience and Necessity for its Tennessee trucking operations.\(^{233}\) FedEx challenged the decision in federal court, arguing that, as an air courier, it was exempt from state regulation under the Federal Aviation Act.\(^{234}\) The district court thwarted FedEx’s efforts to obtain a favorable forum in which to litigate its claim of preemption, concluding that it should abstain and allow the issue to be litigated in state court.\(^{235}\) The Sixth Circuit affirmed.\(^{236}\)

\(^{229}\) Id.


\(^{231}\) Id. at 96-97 (explaining the inefficiency of routing shipments through the Memphis hub in order to avoid state trucking regulations).

\(^{232}\) The dispute appears to have been the result of a complaint by competitor Purolator Courier Corp. which had obtained authority to operate within the state and sought to have the same rules applied to FedEx. Phil Serafino, Federal Express Sues to Avoid State Regulation, UPI, Aug. 7, 1987. Notably, FedEx’s intrastate shipping within Tennessee amounted to approximately .01% of the company’s national volume. Economic Regulation of the Motor Carrier Industry: Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Surface Transportation of the House Comm. on Public Works and Transportation, 100th Cong. 232 (1988) [hereinafter Economic Regulation Hearings] (testimony of Frederick W. Smith).

\(^{233}\) Serafino, supra note 232.

\(^{234}\) Id.

\(^{235}\) Fed. Express Corp. v. Tennessee Pub. Serv. Comm’n, 693 F. Supp. 598 (M.D. Tenn. 1988). In addition, the district court permitted Purolator Courier to intervene as a defendant to defend the Tennessee legislation. Id. at 601.
Facts revealed in the Tennessee litigation led to an investigation by the California Public Utilities Commission ("CPUC"). Upon learning that FedEx was not complying with certain California state licensing requirements, reporting obligations, and tariffs, the CPUC imposed fines and threatened penalties. FedEx then filed suit in federal district court in California, claiming that the California regulations were preempted by federal law. FedEx challenged the requirement that it pay fees to the state for packages transmitted by ground. It also claimed that state regulations concerning rates, rate changes, refunds, and claims procedures imposed an unreasonable burden on its operations. Several aspects of the California regulation directly conflicted with FedEx's national policies. For example, FedEx required customers to pay their bills within fifteen days, whereas California law prohibited extending credit to customers for more than one week. California regulations also had the effect of making FedEx's money-back guarantee an illegal rebate.

Although the California district court rejected FedEx's preemption argument, the Ninth Circuit proved receptive. In 1991, FedEx successfully persuaded the court of appeals that the Airline Deregulation Act preempted state trucking regulation, even with respect to packages shipped solely in intrastate commerce. The court concluded that the trucking operations of FedEx were integrally related to its operation as an air carrier and that the Airline Deregulation Act preempted state regulation of rates and terms of service by an air carrier. In particular, although California defended its regulations on the basis that the regulations focused on highway safety, the court found that the state regulations were

238. Id.
240. Id.
242. See Consumer Cost Hearings, supra note 230, at 107 (statement of Doyle Cloud) (outlining areas in which California law conflicted with FedEx national policies and interfered with the company's operations).
243. Id.
244. Economic Regulation Hearings, supra note 232, at 229 (testimony of Frederick W. Smith).
246. Id.
primarily economic in nature: “The PUC’s regulation of rates, of discounts and promotional pricing, of claims, of overcharges, of bills of lading and freight bills, and its imposition of fees enters the zone that Congress has forbidden the states to enter.”

As a result of the Ninth Circuit decision, California deregulated “integrated intermodal carriers” such as FedEx. Armed with the California decision, FedEx went to Texas, which regulated intrastate trucking very restrictively. There, FedEx negotiated with the executive branch in an effort to avoid the protracted litigation that it underwent in California. As a carrot to enlist the support of Governor Ann Richards, FedEx offered to open a major hub in Fort Worth. FedEx explicitly linked the hub to receiving a ruling from Texas Attorney General Dan Morales that FedEx was exempt from Texas trucking regulations. FedEx also obtained the help of Texas Congressman David Cain in seeking the Attorney General’s opinion. Smith had an established relationship with Cain due to Cain’s position as chairman of the House Transportation Committee. FedEx’s approach was successful, and in a letter opinion issued on December 14, 1993, the Attorney General ruled that FedEx engaged in integrated air-ground delivery services and that these services were exempt from the trucking regulations of the Texas Railroad Commission. Three days after the decision, FedEx announced that it would open a new hub in Fort Worth.

247. Id.
249. See Cal. Pub. Util. Code § 4120 (repealed 1996) (defining “integrated intermodal carriers” as those carriers which provide “air-ground transportation service for the packages or articles in both interstate and intrastate commerce”).
251. Mary Hull, For Morales, FedEx Opinion was Great PR, TEX. L. W., Jan. 10, 1994, at 16.
253. Id. (quoting CEO Smith as stating that, if FedEx had not received a favorable opinion from Morales, it would have located the new hub in Louisiana or Kansas).
255. See Weekly Case Summaries; Texas Attorney General’s Opinions; Statutory Interpretation, TEX. L. W., Jan. 10, 1994, at 34 (summarizing Attorney General Letter Opinion No. 93-112, 12/14/93).
256. Oppel & Castaneda, supra note 252.
FedEx obtained similar decisions in other states, but the process of addressing the state regulations on a piecemeal basis was burdensome. Consequently, FedEx, simultaneously, sought congressional action. Its early efforts, despite extensive lobbying, were unsuccessful. FedEx also attempted to broaden support for deregulation. Smith obtained the support of other air express companies in 1987 and sought the aid of shippers by appealing to the 1,300 member National Industrial Transportation League.

One possible reason for FedEx’s lack of success was the opposition of UPS, which indicated to Congress that it was able to operate successfully under the existing state regulations. UPS argued that the states had an important interest in regulating intrastate trucking activity, but it was also clear that UPS’s possession of the necessary certifications for intrastate trucking provided it with a competitive advantage over FedEx, which in the absence of deregulation, had to go through the burdensome regulatory processes to obtain similar certifications.

The situation for UPS changed, however, once FedEx obtained the favorable Ninth Circuit ruling. Because UPS had to continue conforming to state economic regulations within the Ninth Circuit but FedEx did not, it was now UPS that faced a disadvantage. Unlike FedEx, UPS conducted the majority of its operations by ground, and therefore was not classified as an integrated air carrier. Although UPS

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257. See, e.g., Legislation to Increase the Efficiency Hearings, supra note 219 (statement of Frank Kruesi) (describing the Kentucky legislature’s adoption of legislation “in May 1994 exempting from its regulation the carriage of packages weighing less than 150 pounds, by motor carriers affiliated with either direct or indirect air carriers”).

258. See Economic Regulation Hearings, supra note 232, at 227 (testimony of Frederick W. Smith) (stating that FedEx had been advocating deregulation for two years); Id. at 307 (testimony of Robert E. Smith, Senior VP, UPS) (describing proposed amendment to FAA that would have preempted state regulation of ground operations by an air cargo carrier, that Senator Sasser unsuccessfully attempted to offer in 1987); Gregory Johnson, Managing Traffic, J. COM., June 9, 1988, at 2B (describing Reagan Administration bill, The Trucking Productivity Improvement Act of 1987, H.R. 2591, which would have totally preempted state economic regulation of the trucking, that died in committee).


261. Id. at 306.

262. Id. at 303-05. Robert Smith explained: “I don’t know whether it will be very difficult for Federal Express today to be able to go to the various States and to get the rights that we already have there.” Id. at 305.

263. See Legislation to Increase the Efficiency Hearings, supra note 219 (testimony of James A. Rogers, VP Government Affairs, UPS) (conceding that “at its most basic, I am here because of the [Ninth Circuit] decision”).
followed FedEx’s lead by challenging California’s regulations in state and federal court, it was unsuccessful. 264

As a result, UPS faced pressure, not just to favor deregulation, but to join forces with FedEx. At the same time, several members of Congress suggested that UPS and FedEx get together to resolve their differences over the deregulation legislation. 265 As a result, after several years of disagreement, UPS shifted its position on intrastate trucking. Suddenly, UPS began to describe intrastate trucking regulations as burdensome. 266 Working together, UPS and FedEx developed a jointly acceptable proposal for deregulation, H.R. 3221. 267

Opposition to H.R. 3221 included the Teamsters and the American Trucking Association. The American Trucking Association took a somewhat limited role due to conflicts within its membership regarding the desirability of deregulation. 268 Nonetheless, its official policy was to “oppose[] further deregulation of interstate commerce.” 269 Many small and local truckers feared deregulation because it would eliminate states’ ability to protect local business from more efficient national competition. The National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissions also expressed this concern, arguing that codification of the Ninth Circuit decision would “confer private benefits on the intrastate trucking operations of a very few express delivery companies” while thousands of smaller trucking companies would still have to meet state regulations. 270 The Teamsters argued that

264. See United Parcel Serv, Inc. v. CPUC, 839 F. Supp. 702, 703 (N.D. Cal. 1993) (describing UPS’s unsuccessful challenges in state court); id. at 706-708 (denying federal court claim based on preclusive effect of state proceeding).


266. Legislation to Increase the Efficiency Hearings, supra note 219 (testimony of James A. Rogers).

267. Regulatory Issues Hearings, supra note 265, at 746 (testimony of James A. Rogers); see Robert P. James, High Court Move Seen as Giving FedEx Major Boost in Intrastate Trucking, TRAFFIC WORLD, June 15, 1992, at 9 (describing H.R. 3221 as “a UPS/Fedex-backed bill”). H.R. 3221, sponsored by Rep. Bob Clement, D-Tenn. would have preempted state regulation for express carriers like Federal Express and United Parcel Service. Along with H.R. 3221, several competing proposals were introduced. See John D. Schulz, Bush Administration Weighs in on Latest Push for Truck Deregulation, TRAFFIC WORLD, Apr. 6, 1992, at 21 (noting that at least six bills concerning trucking deregulation were pending in Congress). Rep. J. Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., introduced legislation supported by the administration to lift state economic regulation of all trucking services. At the same time, Rep. Peter A. DeFazio, D-Ore., offered legislation to overturn the Ninth Circuit decision and preserve state authority to regulate intrastate transport.

268. Schulz, supra note 267, at 21.

269. Id. (quoting ATA President Thomas J. Donohue).

270. Williams, supra note 220, at 326-27.
deregulation would eliminate union jobs. Finally, the states themselves opposed deregulation as an unwarranted congressional intrusion into a matter of local concern.

Although the congressional climate appeared to support some form of deregulation, it was unclear whether deregulation should be narrowly tailored to the express carriers or addressed to all state economic trucking regulations. In addition, the political controversy was too much of an obstacle for passage in an election year. H.R. 3221 died at the end of the 102nd Congress.

UPS then obtained the support of Senator Wendell Ford of Kentucky, who headed the Senate Aviation Subcommittee. In 1994, Ford added a provision to the Aviation Authorization Bill, a FAA funding statute, that explicitly preempted state regulation. Originally, the bill was limited to express carriers, but, when trucking operators objected, Ford expanded the bill. Eventually, the bill was extended to exempt virtually all trucking operations from state economic regulation. On August 23, 1994, after approximately fifteen years, trucking deregulation was finally achieved, through a provision inserted into the Federal Aviation Administration Act of 1994, an airport funding law, and passed by Congress by voice vote without dissent or public hearings. The legislation broadly preempted state regulation of intrastate trucking through two separate provisions: 49 U.S.C. 41713(b), which barred states from regulating prices, routes, or service of air carriers “when such carrier is transporting property by aircraft or by motor vehicle”; and 49 U.S.C.

271. See James W. Brosnan, Shift is on to Lift Trucking Rules, COM. APPEAL, July 21, 1994, at 4B (describing the “staunchest opposition” to deregulation as coming from the Teamsters).

272. See, e.g., Legislation to Increase the Efficiency Hearings, supra note 219 (testimony of Keith Bissell, Tennessee Public Service Comm’n on behalf of the National Ass’n of Regulatory Utility Comm’rs).


274. See Legislation to Increase the Efficiency Hearings, supra note 219 (testimony of James A. Rogers, VP Government Affairs, UPS) (explaining that, although HR 3221 had 190 co-sponsors, it had died at the end of the prior Congress); Senate Panel Pushes Higher FAA Funding, Some Denver Funding, 297 AV. DAILY 463 (1989) (recounting the adoption of an amendment sponsored by John Sasser “to require DOT to study the effect on consumers of state regulation of the rates, routes and services of the express package industry” and describing amendment as favoring FedEx “which seeks federal regulation of intrastate trucking”).

275. UPS maintained a large hub in Lousville, Kentucky. Brosnan, supra note 271.

276. Id.


11501(h), which barred states from imposing such regulations on any motor carrier other than an air carrier.279

As the foregoing discussion reveals, several factors contributed to FedEx’s eventual success. By simultaneously pursuing litigation and legislation, FedEx was able to obtain a favorable judicial ruling that enabled it to exert pressure both on Congress to act and on UPS to support deregulation.280 FedEx’s coalition-building was also a factor. FedEx started with the air carriers, then enlisted the support of the shippers, and eventually persuaded UPS to add its support.281 Finally, even the American Trucking Association dropped its opposition.282 FedEx built these coalitions by supporting the broadest possible deregulation rather than attempting to maintain the narrow competitive advantage that it obtained by virtue of the Ninth Circuit ruling.283

It is important to note that trucking deregulation, even at the very end, occurred as a byproduct of a concerted legislative effort to provide relief from state trucking regulation for air carriers. Ultimately, FedEx’s efforts were central, and its influence is reflected in the legislative history. In addition to extensive testimony by FedEx officials, FedEx repeatedly supplied detailed information supporting its claims that state trucking regulation was inefficient.284 Thus, FedEx armed members of Congress with the necessary information to justify deregulation as serving the interests of consumers and shippers.285 FedEx also traded on its professional reputation to generate legislative support. In a key hearing, Smith used the

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279. Notably, even at this point, the states and the Teamsters did not concede defeat. Five states and the Teamsters challenged the constitutionality of the legislation in federal court. The Tenth Circuit upheld the legislation in Kelley v. United States, 69 F.3d 1503 (10th Cir. 1995), and the Supreme Court denied certiorari. 517 U.S. 1166 (1996).

280. See de Figueiredo & de Figueiredo, supra note 194 (using game theory to model litigation and lobbying as independent activities in multi-stage interest group strategy).

281. Significantly, when UPS joined the deregulatory effort, it brought some union representatives on board, significantly weakening the effectiveness of the continued Teamsters opposition. Hill Interview V, Apr. 15, 2002, supra note 28.


283. See, e.g., Rip Watson, Carrier Interests Spar as Hearings Approach, J. COM., July 12, 1994, at 3B (quoting FedEx VP Doyle Cloud as stating “We support the broadest possible removal of state regulation”).

284. See, e.g., Regulatory Issues Hearings, supra note 265, at 1136 (statement of Frederick W. Smith) (detailing the cost savings expected to be achieved through deregulation as demonstrated by five different studies). FedEx itself commissioned one such study. Id.

285. See Hirschman, supra note 49, at 1C (quoting David Traynham, a staff member on the House Aviation Subcommittee, as explaining that the ability of FedEx and UPS to convey information to Congress about the effect of trucking deregulation was a key issue in the success of the legislation).
example of FedEx’s actions in arranging a special flight to deliver drilling equipment to help save Baby Jessica to explain to members of the committee the importance of express freight.286

FedEx also made use of its extensive political relationships. Tennessee Congressman Bob Clement sponsored H.R. 3321—the bill that seemingly generated the greatest momentum for deregulation. In the Senate, Tennessee Senator Jim Sasser, whose re-election campaign was run by Smith, 287 co-sponsored the legislation that eventually passed.288 Moreover, by the early 1990s, FedEx had built a reputation for itself in Congress. Members of the House Committee were well acquainted with Smith; during the hearings, several made reference to his earlier appearances in connection with such issues as air cargo deregulation.289

Was money a factor in FedEx’s success? FedEx’s political donations were substantial and well publicized by the mid 1990s.290 Moreover, FedEx donated money to many of the key players in trucking deregulation,291 including Rep. Bob Clement292 and House subcommittee chairman Norman Mineta,293 who reportedly played an instrumental role in securing passage of the legislation at the conference committee stage.294 Nonetheless, FedEx’s contributions do not appear to have been out of line for the industry.295 As one commentator noted, in analyzing the role of FedEx’s political expenditures in connection with trucking deregulation, “despite the

286. Regulatory Issues Hearings, supra note 265, at 738 (testimony of Frederick W. Smith). See also supra note 97 and accompanying text (describing Baby Jessica incident).
287. See supra note 59 and accompanying text.
288. Dave Hirschman, FedEx, UPS Push for End to Intrastate Regulations, COM. APPEAL, May 8, 1994, at 1C.
289. See, e.g., Regulatory Issues Hearings, supra note 265, at 739 (statement of Rep. Hammerschmidt, Member Subcomm. on Surface Transportation).
290. Hirschman, supra note 49 (observing that FedEx and UPS together donated more money to politicians in the 1991-92 election cycle than all the passenger airlines combined but explaining that “political spending at FedEx has remained relatively constant in the last four years”).
291. Half the members of the House Subcommittee on Surface Transportation received political donations from FedEx. Roland Klose, Fed Ex Visits PAC Friends in Congress, COM. APPEAL, Apr. 1, 1992, at B3.
292. Id.
293. Mineta sponsored H.R. 3321. Id.
294. See MacDonald, supra note 282 (describing the importance of Mineta’s efforts in obtaining the Senate’s agreement to broad deregulatory legislation).
295. See Klose, supra note 291 (observing that “the air express company appears to have only managed to keep pace with other transportation interests seeking to influence federal policy”). In analyzing competing interest groups with respect to trucking deregulation, Klose noted that although FedEx was the tenth largest contributor to members of the House Public Works Committee in 1987-1988, the Airline Pilots Association and the Teamsters together contributed more than seven times as much. Competitor UPS was the third largest contributor.
size of Federal Express’s contributions to the key transportation policymakers in the House, its giving has been substantially less than other special interests, including two large labor groups and air express competitor United Parcel Service.” 296 In particular, the Teamsters—the interest group that remained most strongly opposed to trucking deregulation—contributed more than $5 million to political candidates in 1993 and the first nine months of 1994. 297 Accordingly, the story of trucking deregulation does not appear to be strongly consistent with the vote buying hypothesis. More generally, trucking deregulation suggests that the traditional story of interest group competition in politics offers an incomplete explanation as to why one interest group is successful in prevailing over a competing group. 298

C. Unionization and the FAA Rider

FedEx entered the cargo transportation industry as an air carrier rather than a ground carrier. As a result, it was covered by airline regulations, including the Railway Labor Act (“RLA”). 299 FedEx took advantage of its status as an air carrier for purposes of labor regulations. Early on in its history, FedEx successfully established that because it was subject to the RLA, it was exempt from the National Labor Relations Act 300—which covers employees at most other shipping companies, including UPS. 301

The significance of FedEx’s air carrier status is threefold. First, FedEx labor disputes are subject to the jurisdiction of the National Mediation Board (“NMB”) rather than the National Labor Relations Board (“NLRB”). Second, the rules governing strikes and work stoppages under the RLA are much less favorable to labor. 302

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296. Id.
297. Hirschman, supra note 49.
298. Indeed, it is worthy of note that, in the midst of the battle to deregulate trucking, Teamsters’ lobbyists were reportedly successful in persuading House and Senate Democratic congressional campaign committees to stop using the services of Federal Express. Roland Klose, Lawmaker Supports Exemption for FedEx, COM. APPEAL, July 31, 1991, at B4.
301. See, e.g., Adams v. Fed. Express Corp., 547 F.2d 319, 320 (6th Cir. 1976) (holding that Federal Express is subject to the RLA); id. at 324 (appending In re Representation of Employees of Fed. Express Corp., National Mediation Board Case No. R-4564, Jan. 13, 1976 (finding that FedEx and its mechanics constitute an air carrier and employees within the meaning of the RLA)); Fed. Express Corp., 6 N.M.B. No. 1032 (1978) (holding that FedEx truck drivers were subject to NMB jurisdiction under FLA).
302. As one commentator explained:
Third, and most important, under the RLA, unions must organize a company’s employees nationally rather than locally; this requirement makes it substantially more difficult to unionize. As a result, despite continued union attempts to organize FedEx employees, only the pilots succeeded in unionizing. The ability to avoid union constraints in dealing with its workers was a cost-saving measure for FedEx and “a key element of Federal Express’ market strategy.”

FedEx secured its coverage under the RLA through a series of judicial and administrative agency decisions. Again, a key component of FedEx’s success was demonstrating that its nonairline employees were engaged in work that was an integral part of its air carrier operations. Importantly, FedEx faced repeated opposition from the Teamsters and other unions, which challenged FedEx’s status under the RLA. Indeed, the Teamsters sought to use trucking deregulation as a tool to eliminate FedEx’s favored status under the

Under the RLA, unions may strike only over “major” issues, and must follow an arduous course of mediation before they legally can do so. They may not strike at all over minor issues, which must be arbitrated. Under the NLRA, a company can be struck at one terminal, but not others. Strictly local disputes can escalate into work stoppages, and there is no legal distinction between major and minor disputes. Thus, they’re all major.


303. See, e.g., Chicago Truck Drivers v. National Mediation Bd., 670 F.2d 665, 665-66 (7th Cir. 1981) (explaining that, pursuant to the RLA, the union must seek certification as to entire craft or class of FedEx employees); Chris Isidore, FedEx Pilots Accept Collective Bargaining, J.Com., Feb. 8, 1999, at 14A (explaining that, because FedEx is covered by the RLA, “organizing must be done on a company-wide basis within each job classification, rather than location by location as at other companies”).


307. See, supra note 301 (citing cases); see also Chicago Truck Drivers, 670 F.2d at 665 (holding that FedEx truck drivers were not subject to the NLRA); Fed. Express Corp., 23 N.M.B. 32 (1995) (holding that all FedEx employees, not just pilots, etc., are subject to RLA and therefore not subject to NLRB jurisdiction).

308. See, e.g., Chicago Truck Drivers, 670 F.2d at 666 (concluding that FedEx trucking operations were “an integral part of the Employer’s air carrier operations”).
Litigation offered FedEx a mechanism by which to secure its status that was partially shielded from labor’s substantial political strength.

In the early 1990s, the differential treatment for FedEx and UPS was challenged. The United Auto Workers sought to organize FedEx ground employees under the NLRA, arguing that changes in FedEx’s intermodal transportation increased the importance of its trucking services, an area that traditionally was not covered by the RLA. At the same time, UPS attempted to free itself from NLRB regulation, arguing that it too should be governed by the RLA and the NMB. The NLRB heard oral arguments in both cases together and concluded that different regulatory treatment continued to be warranted. With respect to FedEx, the NLRB concluded that it had “never asserted jurisdiction over Federal Express” and that FedEx “has been a carrier under the RLA since at least the mid 1970s.” In contrast, the NLRB observed that it had exercised jurisdiction over UPS for at least forty-seven years, that UPS continued to transport over 90% of its shipments by ground, and that UPS’s ground transportation was not sufficiently related to its air operations to remove it from NLRA coverage. The D.C. Circuit affirmed NLRB’s decision, explaining that a key distinction between UPS and FedEx was the complete dependence of FedEx’s trucking operations on its air-freight services.

UPS vowed to take the issue to Congress in order to obtain equal treatment. Before it could do so, however, in 1995, as part of the enactment of the Interstate Commerce Commission Termination Act, Congress removed the “express company” classification from the

313. See United Parcel Serv. Inc., 92 F.3d at 1222 (summarizing the NLRB’s findings); United Parcel Serv. Inc., 218 N.L.R.B. 778, 1995 NLRB LEXIS 878, *21-26 (Aug. 25, 1995) (rejecting UPS’s argument that it is an “express company” under the RLA and therefore not an employer under section 2(2) of the NLRA).
314. United Parcel Serv. Inc., 92 F.3d at 1228 (DC Cir. 1996) (finding it “abundantly clear that FedEx’s trucking services, unlike UPS, Inc., do principally serve FedEx’s air-delivery services”).
315. Chris Isidore, UPS, FedEx may be Subject to Different Labor Laws, J. COM., Sept. 11, 1995, at 2B.
FedEx had relied on this language to argue that all of its operations, not just its airline operations, were subject to the RLA. By most accounts, the removal of the language appears to have been a technical error; there is no legislative history offering any affirmative reason for eliminating the classification. Nonetheless, the change created a potential ambiguity in FedEx’s status. Importantly, the change gave the unions new ammunition in their attempt to subject FedEx to the NLRA.

FedEx sought corrective legislation. Powerful opposition from unions and UPS as well as charges of special interest legislation made direct efforts to overturn the change unlikely to succeed. Democrats sympathetic to labor vowed to fight the provision and warned of a possible White House veto. Nonetheless, FedEx’s political allies persevered in their efforts to reinstate RLA coverage for express companies. Indeed, legislators tried to attach riders to some six separate bills without getting the provision adopted. In each case,
supporters of the amendment characterized it as a technical correction, while opponents challenged the measure as special interest legislation.\textsuperscript{322}

Eventually, Senator Hollings reintroduced the provision as a rider to the FAA authorization bill in conference committee.\textsuperscript{323} The FAA authorization bill, which enjoyed extensive support apart from the FedEx provision, was to reauthorize the FAA and to approve various airport security measures.\textsuperscript{324} Despite the fact that neither the Senate nor the House versions of the bill contained the provision, the conference committee approved it--House Republicans joining with a unanimous group of five Senate conferees, Democrat and Republican--by an 8-2 vote.\textsuperscript{325} The media quoted Rep. Bud Shuster, R-Pa., chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, as saying, “I have been instructed by my leadership to accept this.”\textsuperscript{326}

The conference bill then went back to the House, where it was passed, substantially along party lines. Significantly, when the House Parliamentarian ruled that the FedEx rider constituted a substantive amendment that was arguably beyond the scope of the Conference Committee’s authority, the House waived any such objections to the bill.\textsuperscript{327}

When the measure went to the Senate floor for final passage, Senator Kennedy led an effort to block the legislation through a filibuster.\textsuperscript{328} Although the filibuster threatened to prevent Congress from adjourning,\textsuperscript{329} after four days of debate, FedEx was able to obtain enough votes to invoke cloture by an ample 66 to 31 margin.\textsuperscript{330} House Democrats raised yet another objection, arguing that the Conference

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\textsuperscript{322}. It is not clear that either characterization is wholly incorrect.
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\textsuperscript{323}. Roberts, supra note 320, at 1A
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\textsuperscript{324}. Editorial, \textit{Irony in the Political Skies}, OMAHA WORLD HERALD, Oct. 7, 1996, at 6 [hereinafter \textit{Irony in the Political Skies}].
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\textsuperscript{325}. Roberts, supra note 320.
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\textsuperscript{326}. Id.
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\textsuperscript{327}. Thirty Republicans voted in opposition to the measure; fifteen Democrats voted in favor. 142 CONG. REC. S12, 179 (daily ed. Oct. 2, 1996) (statement of Senator Kennedy).
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\textsuperscript{328}. \textit{FAA Reauthorization, Facts on File}, WORLD NEWS DIGEST, Oct. 10, 1996, at 740 [hereinafter \textit{FAA Reauthorization}]. Kennedy termed the provision an “anti-union” measure and unsuccessfully attempted to block its adoption through several other procedural measures \textit{Irony in the Political Skies}, supra note 324, at 6.
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\textsuperscript{329}. See Cohen, supra note 317 (summarizing the political battle over adoption of the provision).
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Report exceeded the scope of the committee’s authority. When the Chair upheld this position, the Senate voted to overturn the Chair’s ruling.\textsuperscript{331} The bill then passed by the overwhelming margin of 92 to 2, definitively establishing the status of FedEx workers as aviation employees.\textsuperscript{332}

FedEx pulled out all the stops in its effort to obtain the legislative change. The company’s effort to generate political support included substantial political expenditures.

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Metric</th>
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<tr>
<td>1995-96</td>
<td>Soft Money Contributions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>PAC Expenditures</td>
<td>943,000</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lobbying Expenditures - 1/1/96-6/30/96</td>
<td>1,149,150</td>
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FedEx hired nine Washington lobbying firms in the first six months of 1996, and its PAC made donations totaling over $800,000 to more than 224 candidates for the House and Senate in the 1993-94 election cycle,\textsuperscript{336} in addition to the company’s soft money donations and other attempts to obtain congressional allies.\textsuperscript{337} Yet this strategy entailed a certain amount of risk. Unlike most of its other political initiatives, the FAA rider was impossible to defend as anything other than special interest legislation. Further, FedEx’s substantial political contributions allowed opponents of the legislation to argue that support for the rider was motivated by the contributions, rather than the merits.\textsuperscript{338}

There are reasons, however, to question the causal relationship between these expenditures and FedEx’s success. First, it is important to note the process that was employed to restore the

\textsuperscript{335} Lewis, supra note 18, at 37.
\textsuperscript{336} See id. (explaining that a corporation typically hires a lobbying firm because of its relationship with specific lawmakers).
\textsuperscript{337} Id. (describing various FedEx efforts to gain influence with lawmakers).
“express company” designation. FedEx’s allies did not seek to make the change through stand-alone legislation, which would have entailed a traditional vote on the measure. Instead, from the beginning, they chose to attach the change as a rider to another bill that was uncontroversial and likely to pass. The eventual attachment of the rider to the FAA reauthorization bill occurred during the Conference Committee. Accordingly, one key issue was obtaining a legislative committee that was willing to approve the rider. The Conference Committee was comprised of legislators who had previously established relationships with FedEx, including: Tennessee Congressman John Duncan, the head of the Aviation Subcommittee; Congressman Bud Shuster; Senator Wendall Ford; and Senator Fritz Hollings.  

Both Shuster and Ford had worked closely with FedEx on trucking deregulation.

Significantly, at least in the first instance, the procedure employed required substantial efforts by a few key legislators to introduce the FedEx rider and to accept the resulting political fallout. It seems unlikely that a corporation could obtain this type of support for a $5,000 political contribution. Rather, FedEx’s relationships with the dominant legislators appear to have been far more important. In particular, FedEx had the support of Senator Hollings, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, and chief sponsor and proponent of the amendment. Senator Holling’s support was not purchased through campaign contributions; Hollings received no substantial political contributions from FedEx or Smith prior to 1996. Rather, FedEx

339. See Rogers, supra note 332, at A3 (describing Hollings’ and Ford’s support for FedEx).

340. See Hill Interview III, Apr. 12, 2002, supra note 28 (observing “how much trouble a lot of senators were willing to go through” to support FedEx’s position).

341. The maximum permissible contribution by a PAC to an individual congressional candidate is $5,000. 2 U.S.C. § 441a(2)(A) (2005).

342. Significantly, these relationships were not exclusively tailored to the FAA rider. Instead, FedEx had, over a period of time, cultivated relationships with legislators that served on the congressional committees with jurisdiction over FedEx’s operations. See, e.g., Frank N. Wilner, Up Close and Ugly, TRAFFIC WORLD, Oct. 16, 2000, at 12 (describing FedEx’s attempts to build a relationship with Bud Shuster while “FedEx was lobbying Congress on bilateral aviation relations with Japan.”). See also Rogers, supra note 332, at A3 (describing FedEx’s relationships with several key Senate Democrats who supported the legislation, including Senator Bennett Johnston, who was described as Fred Smith’s tennis partner).


344. FedEx Become Big Hollings Contributor, THE BULLETIN’S FRONTRUNNER, July 8, 1998 (reporting that, prior to battle over the 1996 rider, Hollings had received no substantial contributions from Fedex). Subsequently, however, FedEx and its executives became the top donors to Hollings’s 1998 reelection campaign. Id.
earned the loyalty of Senator Hollings a decade earlier by donating its aircraft to fly hay to his state during the 1986 droughts. Senator Hollings openly acknowledged that his introduction of the FAA rider was based on his gratitude to FedEx for the haylifts as well as the company’s track record as a good corporate citizen.

Similarly, FedEx had cultivated the loyalty and support of Bud Shuster, author of the Conference Committee Report, prior to the FAA rider. FedEx employed the services of Shuster’s former chief of staff, lobbyist Ann Eppard, in connection with the rider. FedEx also regularly provided Shuster with a private aircraft for his exclusive use. In addition to his effort on FedEx’s behalf in the House and on the Conference Committee, Shuster wrote a letter to the Senate, justifying the FedEx rider as necessary to correct a technical error.

As indicated above, FedEx’s reputation was a key factor in its success. For example, when Senator Kennedy attempted to degrade FedEx in an effort to block the rider, other legislators were able to respond by pointing to FedEx’s recognition as one of the “100 Best Companies to Work for in America.” Senator Hollings explicitly referenced the fact that former senators from both parties, Senators Baker and Mitchell, were currently FedEx Board members.

Moreover, focusing on the closeness of the vote to end the Senate filibuster overlooks the significance of the strategy employed by FedEx’s allies. After the House approved the FAA Reauthorization bill, with the FedEx rider attached, it adjourned. At this point, the

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346. Lewis, supra note 18, at 37; see also Dave Williams, Hollings Wins Provision to Help Federal Express, STATE NEWS SERVICE, Oct. 3, 1996.


349. See Wilner, supra note 342, at 12 (stating that FedEx provided aircraft for Shuster on six separate occasions in 1995, and quoting a FedEx official as stating “[w]e generally tried to do any trip that Mr. Shuster wanted to do”).


353. 142 CONG. REC H11, 460 (daily ed. Sept. 27, 1996) (statement of Rep. Tanner). Congressman Tanner also observed that Fred Smith was a Vietnam veteran who “crawled through the rice paddies.” Id.

354. See Baron, supra note 306, at 50 (highlighting FedEx’s need to obtain 60 votes to invoke closure as “the focus of its nonmarket strategy”).
fate of the FedEx rider was largely predetermined. The Senate was faced with the choice between voting down the bill, which would have had the effect of allowing the FAA’s funding to expire and greatly jeopardizing air travel, or approving the bill in its existing form. If the Senate had attempted to approve a modified version of the bill without the FAA rider, the bill would have had to go back to the House for approval, requiring the House either to return to Washington or to approve the bill by unanimous consent – neither of which were realistic options. As a result, the filibuster debate and vote were more a matter of political posturing than a meaningful indication of the legislators’ substantive positions on the rider.

Indeed, understanding the political context of the cloture vote is important. Although the votes supporting FedEx may not have been purchased through political donations, the Teamsters’ donations, in contrast, may have purchased favorable, though ineffective, votes. Notably, the FedEx rider was most strongly opposed by the pro-labor Democrats. Unlike FedEx, which at the time donated substantial amounts of money to both political parties, the Teamsters’ more substantial donations were targeted at Democrat allies—precisely those allies who voted against cloture. According to the Federal Election Commission, the Teamsters’ PAC, known as the Democratic Republican Independent Voter Education Fund, was the top contributor to congressional campaigns in the 1995-96 election cycle. Perhaps more significantly, the Teamsters were not reticent about the expectations that they attached to their political contributions. After they failed to prevail on the FedEx rider,

356. See Ruth Marcus, Labor Spent $119 Million For ’96 Politics, Study Says; Almost All Contributions Went to Democrats, WASH. POST, Sept. 10, 1997, at A19 (reporting that “[t]he top union PAC giver [in the 1996 election cycle] was the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, which made $ 2.6 million in PAC contributions, all but $ 106,000 to Democrats”). Labor contributions had also become an increasingly important component of the Democrats’ political funding. See William Schneider, Big Labor’s Crushing Embrace, NAT. J., Nov. 29, 1997 (reporting that by 1996, labor PACs accounted for almost half of the PAC contributions to Democratic congressional candidates).
357. David Barnes, Will White House Intervene in Teamsters UPS Strike?, J. COM., Aug. 11, 1997, at 12. See also James W. Brosnan & Anna Davis, Lott Grieves Despite Party’s Slice of Business PAC Pie, GOP gets Two-Thirds of Funds from Memphis Firms, COM. APPEAL, Dec. 27, 1996, 1A.

The FedEx PAC dwarfs all others in Tennessee and it was the fourth-largest corporate PAC in the U.S. in terms of receipts as of June 30, with $ 1.2 million. But chief rival United Parcel Service is No. 2 with $ 1.9 million, and both shrink in size compared with the Teamsters PAC’s $ 6.2 million in receipts.
Teamster President Ron Carey cut off Teamster funding to the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee.\textsuperscript{358} Moreover, if the cloture vote was not critical—that is, if the Democrats voting against cloture knew their votes would be of little use—and if the Democrats realized their symbolic votes against cloture would signal their support to organized labor, how should those votes be analyzed? The cloture vote, like the vote on trucking deregulation considered in Subsection II.B.1 above, demonstrates that votes cast may differ dramatically in their significance. Even if empirical studies could demonstrate a causal relationship between campaign contributions and votes, that relationship would not necessarily prove that the contributions had a meaningful impact on legislative policy. Rather, the analysis highlights the fact that empirical studies need to incorporate an analysis of significance when counting votes.

\textbf{D. Noise Regulation}

Airplanes are noisy, and the aviation industry has continually dealt with efforts to regulate the noise produced by take-offs and landings. As aircraft grew in size and an increasing percentage of aircraft were commercial jets, the problems of aircraft noise intensified.\textsuperscript{359} Local communities responded by imposing noise regulations. Even as FedEx was beginning its operations in the mid-1970s, the battle between airlines and local communities was heating up. Anti-noise groups successfully challenged aircraft noise through litigation.\textsuperscript{360} Individual communities and airports began to restrict aircraft noise through zoning, noise limits, and curfews.\textsuperscript{361}

\textsuperscript{358} Novak, \textit{supra} note 355, at A6.

\textsuperscript{359} The aircraft noise externality has been described as a classic market failure justifying government regulation. Steven A. Morrison, et al., \textit{Fundamental Flaws of Social Regulation: The Case of Airplane Noise}, 42 J. L. & ECON., 723, 723 (1999). The decision of airlines to move from point to point flying to the hub and spoke system also increased the problem of aircraft noise by overburdening primary hub airports. See Luis G. Zambrano, \textit{Balancing the Rights of Landowners with the Needs of Airports: The Continuing Battle over Noise}, 66 J. AIR L. & COM. 445, 450 (2000) (explaining that noise problems are exacerbated as flights are added and runway capacity is increased).


\textsuperscript{361} An additional method of controlling aircraft noise was with noise-related fees. See, e.g., John Davies, \textit{Washington State Legislators Propose Fees on Noisy Jets}, J. COM., Feb. 2, 1990, at 5B (describing state proposal to impose extra landing charges for noisy aircraft).
Noise regulation was a particular problem for the air carrier industry. Unlike passenger airlines, most air carriers flew at night, when noise regulations were most restrictive. A 1972 survey found that only 25% of passengers arrived or departed between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m., but 90% of all cargo and mail moved in and out of airports during those hours. In addition, many carriers, especially new entrants, were flying older and noisier aircraft that they were able to purchase more cheaply than newer models.

In 1968, Congress amended the Federal Aviation Act to grant the FAA specific power to address aircraft noise and to include noise considerations in the exercise of its regulatory authority. The FAA responded to this directive by issuing Federal Aviation Rule (“FAR”) 36, which established procedures for measuring and limiting aircraft noise. Anti-noise groups, however, generally viewed the FAA’s actions as unsatisfactory.

Congress subsequently adopted the Noise Control Act of 1972. The most significant aspect of the Act was its impact on state and local regulation of aircraft noise. In City of Burbank v. Lockheed


364. See Government Policies on Aircraft Noise Hearings, supra note 362, at 590 (testimony of Kevin Flynn, Assistant General Counsel, People Express) (explaining that noise regulations imposed a disproportionate impact on new entrants who flew the relatively less expensive stage 2 aircraft).


Air Terminal, Inc., the Supreme Court concluded that the Noise Control Act preempted local regulation of aircraft noise. In addition, the Court found that the nationwide imposition of curfews and other restrictions would undermine the congressional objectives underlying the Federal Aviation Act, including efficient and uniform use of navigable airspace. In a footnote, however, the Court created a limited right for local airport operators to regulate aircraft noise. This right became known as the proprietor’s exemption.

The post-Burbank state of regulation was problematic for both sides. In response to continued pressure from anti-noise groups, the FAA enacted FAR Part 91 in 1976, which applied stricter standards of noise regulation. The new FAA rules implemented a phase-out of the stage one aircraft, the noisiest type, over an eight-year period. This move was broadly viewed as insufficient, however, and both the FAA and Congress faced mounting pressure in the early 1980s to implement a phase-out of stage two aircraft.

The implementation of stricter noise standards raised several concerns. First, the cost of a stage two phase-out was substantial. Although the stage one aircraft were of sufficient vintage that they were largely being phased out anyway, a majority of U.S. commercial aircraft were stage two aircraft; replacing them quickly would have been extremely expensive. Cargo carriers in particular warned Congress that forcing them to convert quickly to quieter
aircraft would pose “devastating consequences” for the industry.\textsuperscript{379} Second, the FAA had retained the power to exempt airlines from the requirements of Part 91.\textsuperscript{380} Airlines were concerned about making substantial capital expenditures to comply with the new standards and then being disadvantaged if the FAA selectively exempted their competitors from the stage two phase-out.\textsuperscript{381} Third, and perhaps most important, cargo carriers were concerned that, despite the FAA’s increasingly strict noise regulations, local airports and municipalities would continue to impose curfews and other operating restrictions. They argued that these restrictions particularly burdened cargo carriers\textsuperscript{382} and that they should explicitly be preempted by a uniform national noise policy.\textsuperscript{383}

In 1986, Smith explained to Congress that “there is no other issue that has any more crucial significance for us and our very able competitors than this issue of noise.”\textsuperscript{384} Smith testified that the only workable solution was federal noise standards coupled with federal preemption of local restrictions such as airport curfews.\textsuperscript{385} In particular, Smith argued that it was unreasonable to require airlines to phase out stage two aircraft if they could not be assured of airport access, including nighttime access, for compliant stage three planes.\textsuperscript{386}

Congress responded. In November 1990, Congress passed the Aircraft Noise and Capacity Act of 1990 (“ANCA”).\textsuperscript{387} In adopting the legislation, Congress stressed the importance of formulating a national noise policy. ANCA’s key components included the establishment of a national noise policy and a schedule for the phasing

\textsuperscript{379} Leo Abruzzese, \textit{Cargo Carriers State Access and Noise Case}, J. COM., May 10, 1989, at 5B.

\textsuperscript{380} See Franklin, \textit{supra} note 377 (quoting FAA statement describing a “large volume of last minute petitions for exemptions from the standards”).

\textsuperscript{381} See \textit{Air Cargo and Passenger Deregulation: Hearings Before the Subcomm. on Aviation of the House Comm. on Public Works and Transportation}, 96th Cong. 250 (1979) (testimony of Frederick Smith) (explaining that FedEx did not want to make the investment of buying aircraft that complied with the standards of FAR 36 only to find that the FAA was going to exempt its competitors, such as Evergreen or Emery, from compliance).

\textsuperscript{382} See Abruzzese, \textit{supra} note 379, at 5B (describing concerns of cargo carriers regarding restrictions on nighttime takeoffs and landings).

\textsuperscript{383} See Comments of Federal Express Corporation before the Dept. of Transport., FAA, Wash., DC, Dec. 10, 1985 at 3 \textit{reprinted in Government Policies on Aircraft Noise Hearings, supra} note 362, at 534 (describing serious concern over “the failure, to date, of the federal government to preempt local regulations relating to aircraft and airport noise”).

\textsuperscript{384} \textit{Government Policies on Aircraft Noise Hearings, supra} note 362, at 508 (testimony of Frederick W. Smith).

\textsuperscript{385} Id. at 510.

\textsuperscript{386} Id. at 512.

out of all stage two aircraft by the year 2000. ANCA explicitly prohibited the adoption of local restrictions on the operation of aircraft that met stage three standards of compliance, unless such local restrictions were first approved by the FAA. Even with respect to noisier stage two aircraft, ANCA required airport operators to go through a formal notice-and-comment procedure in order to impose restrictions.

Although proponents of ANCA argued that it would substantially reduce aircraft noise, ANCA was widely viewed as a victory for air carriers. Critics observed that airline industry sponsors were able to “sneak” the legislation through Congress in the final days of the 1990 session. As one commentator explained, “No public hearings were held, and although committee staffers consulted industry lobbyists during the bill’s markup, representatives of airport operators were not consulted.”

It is important to recognize, however, that ANCA did not have the same effect on all carriers. First, by requiring airlines to achieve stage three compliance, ANCA favored larger and more established airlines over small and upstart carriers. Thus, ANCA enhanced FedEx’s competitive position relative to newer and less financially

388. See Jenkins, supra note 367, at 1036-1053 (describing details of ANCA provisions).
389. Id. at 1038. ANCA also largely eliminated the role of the EPA in airport noise abatement. See Sidney A. Shapiro, Lessons From A Public Policy Failure: EPA and Noise Abatement, 19 ECOLOGY L.Q. 1, 58-60 (1992) (describing ANCA’s effect in shifting greater control to the FAA).
390. Jenkins, supra note 367, at 1041; see also Zambrano, supra note 359, at 460.
391. See Jenkins, supra note 367, at 1037 (describing claims that ANCA would reduce aircraft noise).
393. Shapiro, supra note 389, at 59, n.350. See also Jenkins, supra note 367, at 1036-37 (describing how ANCA was passed “in the waning hours of the 1990 Congressional session”).
394. Shapiro, supra note 389, at 59, n.350. This characterization is not entirely accurate. As indicated above, Congress had previously held hearings to consider legislation to establish a national aircraft noise policy. See supra notes 362-368 and accompanying text. In addition, prior to ANCA’s adoption, the House Subcommittee on Aviation held four days of hearings on Federal Aviation Noise. Federal Aviation Noise Policy: Hearings Before the Subcomm. on Aviation of the House Comm. on Public Works and Transportation, 101st Cong. (1990) [hereinafter Federal Aviation Noise Policy Hearings].
395. See, e.g., Federal Aviation Noise Policy Hearings, at 394 (testimony of Brian Cole, General Counsel, Burlington Air Express) (describing the burden imposed by a requirement of conversion to stage three aircraft and proposing a “de minimis” exemption for “all-cargo operations with two or three flights a day at a particular airport).
stable entrants. FedEx’s dominant position in the industry enabled it to bear these costs more easily than its many smaller competitors. Indeed, ANCA was enacted precisely when a significant number of smaller carriers were making efforts to expand their aircraft operations in order to compete in the market with FedEx. Noise regulation raised the cost of doing so. Second, federal preemption of local noise restrictions provided a disproportionate benefit to cargo carriers, which were most affected by the imposition of airport curfews.

An additional component of ANCA’s implementation was of particular value to FedEx. In developing regulations for noise abatement under ANCA, the FAA adopted a performance-based measure of compliance rather than a design-based measure of compliance. Under the performance approach, airlines were able to meet stage three standards either by purchasing the newer and quieter stage three engines or by installing hush kits which enabled stage two engines to meet the stage three noise requirements. Although it was not clear that retrofitting stage two aircraft with hush kits was comparable to purchasing stage three engines in terms of reducing aircraft noise, a position subsequently taken by the European Union, the hush kits substantially reduced the financial burden associated with meeting ANCA’s requirements. FedEx, which flew a large number of stage two Boeing 727 aircraft, chose to address the regulatory issue by retrofitting its planes with hush kits. Thus the performance-based standard enabled FedEx to

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396. See id., at 359-90 (statement of Rep. Duncan, Member, House Subcomm. on Aviation) (noting risk that only big companies would be able to comply with proposed rules and small companies would be driven out of business).

397. Hill Interview V, Apr. 15, 2002, supra note 28 (observing that ANCA was a good strategic decision for large companies such as FedEx and UPS that could pay the costs associated with regulatory compliance, because it would have the effect of “keep[ing] out the little guys”).


401. See Jenkins, supra note 367, at 1052 (describing hush kits).

402. See Ira Breskin, Freighter “Hushkits’ Feasible, Engine Manufacturer Says, J. COM., Nov. 24, 1989, at 5B (describing FedEx as “one of the largest operators” of later generation 727s).

403. Zarocostas, supra note 400, at 27.
continue its preferred approach to noise compliance. In contrast, UPS phased-out its use of stage two engines by purchasing new engines for all its planes. Accordingly, a design-based standard would have benefited UPS relative to FedEx.

FedEx also benefited from the FAA’s acceptance of the hush kit approach because FedEx manufactured and sold hush kits for Boeing 727 aircraft through its subsidiary, Federal Express Aviation Services, Inc. FedEx, jointly with Pratt and Whitney, developed a 727 hush kit and received approval for several types of hush kits even before the adoption of ANCA. The FAA’s certification of hush kits as an acceptable way for carriers to meet stage three requirements, coupled with the adoption of ANCA, dramatically increased the market for hush kits. As a result, FedEx was able to sell the kits, which bore million dollar price tags, to other carriers.

In sum, ANCA offered FedEx relief from curfews and other local noise restrictions at the cost of compliance with federal noise regulations. The federal noise regulations were specifically structured in a way that favored FedEx relative to its competitors and created a commercial market for FedEx’s hush kits. Moreover, although ANCA appeared on its face to be a statute of general application, it was widely understood as being tailored to favor FedEx’s interests. As one “enraged housewife” described it, ANCA was “a bad bill, made specifically for Federal Express, which operates an older fleet mostly at night.”

404. Id.

405. See Debra Sykes, Carriers Turn down the Volume of Aircraft Noise, 114 GLOBAL TRADE & TRANSP. 30 (July 1994) (describing FedEx as a “leader” in marketing and assembling the hush kit for 727s).


407. See, e.g., Jenkins, supra note 367, at 1052 (explaining that hush kits offered carriers a cheaper alternative to buying new planes or engines to meet stage 3 requirements); Kandebo, supra note 406, at 56 (describing airlines’ increased interest in hush kits as a result of ANCA).

408. See, e.g., Kandebo, supra note 406, at 56 (describing hush kit prices as ranging from $1.6 - $1.85 million each, installed); Hirschman, supra note 406, at B4 (reporting that FedEx had received firm orders for over 100 hush kits at prices from $ 1.65 million to $2.45 million installed).

E. Other Lawmaking Initiatives

Although a complete analysis of the major lawmaking initiatives in which FedEx has been involved is beyond the scope of this Article, the issues described in Sections A through D above are typical of FedEx’s efforts in several ways. First, these were lawmaking issues in which FedEx sought legal changes that were of substantial financial significance to its operations. For FedEx, political activity was not a diversion of operating funds but rather an integrated part of its business strategy. Second, with the exception of the FAA “express company” rider, the issues were of general application, extending beyond FedEx and its operations. Third, as the case study demonstrates, FedEx’s political involvement was far more extensive and complex than the making of campaign contributions to targeted legislators. Fourth, FedEx ultimately was successful in obtaining the desired regulatory changes although, in many cases, the effort extended over a prolonged period of time. Finally, although the resulting legal changes applied broadly, in each case they provided particularized benefits to FedEx.

This pattern extends to other issues as well. An important example is FedEx’s effort to compete with the United States Postal Service (“USPS”). At its inception, FedEx faced the problem of the Private Express Statutes, which prohibit private firms from delivering mail and thus precluded FedEx from expanding its operations to deliver letters. FedEx was constrained in its ability to challenge the Post Office’s monopoly, not only because the USPS was a powerful political adversary, but also because FedEx relied heavily on

410. Importantly, the balance of political forces is dynamic and, as they say, past performance is no guarantee of future success. Although FedEx continues to use similar political tools, a recent instance in which FedEx has, to date, failed to prevail is its dispute with the Department of Transportation over its claim for compensation in connection with the Sept. 11th attacks. See, e.g., Angela Greiling Keane, DOT Wins FedEx Court Bout, Traffic World, July 12, 2004, at 31 (describing FedEx’s unsuccessful attempt to challenge DOT compensation procedures in federal court); Angela Greiling Keane, Van Tine Advances; FedEx Continues to Oppose Nominee for No. 2 Spot at DOT; Full Senate to Vote, TRAFFIC WORLD, Nov. 24, 2003, at 13 (describing unsuccessful efforts by FedEx to block the nomination of Kirk Van Tine as deputy secretary of transportation).


413. As one commentator reports: The Postal Service, perhaps more than any other agency, is composed of politically powerful interest groups hostile to change. The agency’s 800,000 workers and 25,000
FedEx resolved the issue by securing a limited exception to the Private Express Statutes for courier services—the transport of items on a time-sensitive basis for which cost considerations were less important. Smith argued to Congress that these courier services did not compete with the USPS's delivery of the mail and thus did not threaten its monopoly. Ultimately in 1979, faced with the threat of congressional action, the USPS created an exemption from the Private Express Statutes for “extremely urgent letters.” The exemption was specifically tailored to the needs of FedEx, enabling the company to carry letters for overnight delivery. In response to this regulatory change, FedEx significantly transformed its operations, shifting its focus from parcels to urgent business letters—a change that allowed FedEx to grow dramatically.

As with air cargo deregulation, this initiative occurred at an early stage of FedEx’s operations. FedEx was not, in the late 1970s, the type of large public company envisioned by the Supreme Court in its campaign finance decisions that could influence the political process through massive corporate donations. Rather, the story leading to the urgent letter exemption is similar to that of the Federal Express Act—a fledgling company identified a regulatory issue that postal managers exert enormous influence on Capitol Hill. Legislators are very hesitant to upset the postal unions, whose members live in every congressional district in the country.


414. See Dave Hirschman, UPS Slams FedEx, Postal Plans, ATLANTA J. & CONST., Sept. 8, 2000, at 1F (explaining that revenue from the USPS kept FedEx going during the mid 1970s).

415. See Postal Oversight: Hearings Before the Senate Comm. on Post Office and Civil Service, 93rd Cong. 291 (1973) (testimony of William Gelfand, VP, Flying Tiger Line, Inc.) (explaining that “the U.S. Postal Service reserves its own right to give mail to whom it desires without any established policies”).

416. The Private Express Statutes: Hearings Before the Subcomm. on Postal Service of the House Comm on Post Office and Civil Service, 93rd Cong. 34-35 (1973) (statement of Frederick W. Smith); see also id. at 43 (testimony of Frederick W. Smith) (proposing either time sensitive or rate sensitive test for exception to statutory monopoly).

417. See id. at 25-36 (statement of Frederick W. Smith) (explaining why the provision of special services did not compete with the USPS).

418. 39 C.F.R. § 320.6 (2005). The Postal Service defined such letters as those that met either a time of delivery test or a price test. 39 C.F.R. § 320.6(b)(1) (2005).

419. In June 1981, FedEx introduced the FedEx Overnight letter and within two months the new service was generating $100,000 in revenues per night. See Airline Observer, AVIATION WK. & SPACE TECH., Aug. 17, 1981, at 35 (explaining how declining package size was responsible for increasing FedEx revenues). By 1982, following its expansion into the overnight letter industry, FedEx's net profits had reached $78m and reflected an amazing 16% of revenues. Federal Express; First Past the Parcel Post, THE ECONOMIST, Sept. 18, 1982, at 78.
was of key importance to its business strategy and educated government policymakers about the issue through testimony, coalition building, and developing relationships with political officials.

FedEx's competition with the USPS did not end with the urgent letter exemption to the Private Express Statutes. Indeed, as FedEx's size and political influence grew, FedEx's challenges became bolder. In 1995, FedEx asked Congress to eliminate the USPS monopoly.\textsuperscript{420} In 1997, FedEx sued the USPS for violating the Lanham Act\textsuperscript{421} through advertisements that falsely claimed that the USPS's Priority Mail offered comparable service to that of FedEx.\textsuperscript{422} Although legislative relief remained elusive, FedEx's political power eventually led to a market-based resolution.\textsuperscript{423} In 2001, FedEx and the USPS publicly announced the creation of a $6 billion, seven-year joint venture. The deal gave FedEx the right to haul USPS Express Mail, Priority Mail, and some first-class mail as well as the right to place FedEx drop boxes outside, and in some cases inside, government post offices.\textsuperscript{424}

FedEx's experience with respect to international air shipping rights has been similar. Traditionally, gaining the right to fly international routes has been a complex political issue. Routes are the subject of bilateral agreements between countries that, in most cases,:

\begin{quote}
420. See Oversight Hearings on the United States Postal Service: Hearings Before the Subcomm. on Postal Service of the House Comm. on Government Reform and Oversight, 104th Cong. (1995) (testimony of James Campbell, Jr., Counsel, Federal Express) (testifying that the USPS should “give up the monopoly and other special rights”).

421. Section 43 of the Lanham Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1125(a) (2005), prohibits “any person” from making false or misleading representations of fact that would cause confusion as to the source, sponsorship, approval, association or origin of goods or services in the marketplace.

422. Although the USPS argued that, as a federal agency, it was immune from suit, the courts sided with FedEx. Fed. Express Corp. v. U.S. Postal Service, 959 F. Supp. 832, 840 (W.D. Tenn. 1997), aff’d, Fed. Express Corp. v. U. S. Postal Serv., 151 F.3d 536, 546 (6th Cir. 1998). The USPS then settled the suit by agreeing to drop the advertising campaign. See Ira Teinowitz & Sean Callahan, Post Office Axes Ads Rapping its Rivals, ADVERTISING AGE, Dec. 7, 1998, at 1 (attributing USPS decision to drop the controversial ads to the negotiations to end the FedEx lawsuit); Bill McAllister, FedEx Delivers Blow to Ad Campaign by Postal Service, WASH. POST., Dec. 9, 1998, at C11 (stating agency officials had confirmed the Advertising Age report).

423. That FedEx's political power was a significant factor in the deal is strongly suggested by the fact that FedEx was awarded the contract on a sole source basis rather than through a competitive bidding process. Emery Worldwide Airlines, Inc. v. United States, 264 F.3d 1071, 1075 (Fed. Cir. 2001).

424. Eileen Kennedy, Federal Express Forms Alliance with U.S. Postal Service, THE TELEGRAPH (Nashua, N.H.), Jan. 11, 2001. Notably, FedEx replaced Emery, which previously had a contract to deliver a portion of the Priority and Express mail. Id. Emery challenged the procedure by which FedEx was awarded the contract, and lost. Emery Worldwide Airlines, Inc. v. United States, 264 F.3d at 1089.
\end{quote}
sharply restrict the number of permitted flights and carriers.\footnote{See, e.g., Gabriel S. Meyer, Note, U.S. - China Aviation Relations: Flight Path Toward Open Skies?, 35 CORNELL INT’L L. J. 427, 428-30 (2002) (describing bilateral agreements and resulting restrictions).} Routes to Asia have been particularly restricted.\footnote{See id. at 429 (describing restrictions imposed by existing treaty between U.S. and China); see generally Derek Lick, Note, More Turbulence Ahead: A Bumpy Ride During U.S.- Japanese Aviation Talks Exemplifies the Need for A Pragmatic Course in Future Aviation Negotiations, 31 VAND. J. TRANSNAT’L L. 1207 (1998) (describing hostilities between U.S. and Japan over proposals to expand air rights).} At the same time, routes to Asia constitute an increasingly important component of the air cargo business, making increased service to Asia particularly desirable for FedEx.\footnote{See, e.g., Lick, supra note 426, at 1222-24 (describing the importance of the Japanese cargo market).}

FedEx did not rely exclusively on political activity to obtain access to Asian routes. Indeed, its primary source of access was commercial: FedEx purchased the right to fly to China from Evergreen in 1995 and obtained the right to fly to Japan by acquiring Flying Tiger in 1988.\footnote{Rick Brooks, UPS Seems to Chip Away at FedEx’s Big Lead in China-Company Works Hard to Get Its Own Direct Flights Into Growing Market, WALL ST. J., May 16, 2000, at B4; see also Douglas A. Blackmon & Diane Brady, Orient Express: Just How Hard Should A U.S. Company Woo A Big Foreign Market?, WALL ST. J., Apr. 6, 1998, at A1 (describing FedEx’s acquisition of the routes).} Nonetheless, FedEx deployed its political capital aggressively to secure and improve its position.\footnote{Asra Q. Nomani & Douglas A. Blackmon, Reoriented: How Maneuvering By Airlines Shaped U.S.-Japan Accord, WALL ST. J., Feb. 2, 1998, at A1 (detailing FedEx’s political activity leading to a favored position under the new aviation treaty with Japan).} Importantly, with respect to international air routes, these efforts frequently provided FedEx with specific advantages relative to its competitors.\footnote{For example, FedEx’s operations in China are significantly more developed than those of rival UPS. See Brooks, supra note 428, at 134 (reporting that “UPS is having trouble chipping away at FedEx’s big lead in China”). See also Lick, supra note 426, at 1209 (stating that “most of the revenues” generated by air cargo operating in the Japanese market have gone to one carrier, FedEx).}

For example, in the mid 1990s, FedEx sought increased air rights to Japan, in part to facilitate FedEx’s use of its new hub in the Philippines.\footnote{Nomani & Blackmon, supra note 429, at A1.} Japan resisted, leading FedEx to complain to the Department of Transportation and to Congress.\footnote{See, e.g., International Aviation: Hearing Before the Senate Comm. on Commerce, Science and Transportation, 104th Cong. (1995) (testimony of Frederick Smith) (detailing FedEx’s complaints about Japan’s refusal to approve FedEx’s route applications).} When Japan resisted, FedEx used its influence in the Senate to have a resolution introduced threatening sanctions against Japanese airlines.\footnote{Nomani & Blackmon, supra note 429, at A1.}
responded by approving additional FedEx flights. In August 1996, Smith obtained a private forty-five minute meeting with President Clinton regarding FedEx’s need for increased routes to Japan. The Administration made protection of FedEx’s rights a key component of subsequent negotiations and, ultimately, in 1998, the United States and Japan reached agreement on a new treaty. As the Wall Street Journal reported, the “biggest winner” under the treaty was FedEx.

III. IMPLICATIONS OF THE CASE STUDY

A. Political Activity and Corporate Operations

The FedEx case study demonstrates that the characterization of corporate political activity as a diversion of operating funds is, at best, naive. U.S. corporations operate within a complex legal infrastructure, and the regulatory environment is an integral part of market decisions for corporations as well as a key factor in their growth and strategic planning. FedEx, and indeed the entire air cargo industry, could not have gotten off the ground without air cargo deregulation. FedEx’s ability to develop and serve its customer base was critically enhanced by the urgent letter exemption, which enabled it to deliver letters as well as freight. Noise standards, labor rules, and trucking regulation directly affected FedEx’s operating costs, influencing the manner in which FedEx developed its business plan, affecting its pricing structure, and defining its key industry competitors.

Campaign finance scholars and the Supreme Court have isolated corporate political activity without considering the relationship of politics to the firm’s business strategy. Corporate scholars may emphasize marketplace competition at the cost of overlooking nonmarket strategies. Yet, as the FedEx story shows, firm competition takes place both in the marketplace and in the political arena; the dynamics of one environment affect the other.

434. Id.
435. Id.
436. Id.
437. See Lick, supra note 426, at 1254-59 (analyzing the new agreement).
439. Although this Article has focused upon the effect of political activity on business operations, a firm’s business operations also affect its political environment and may arguably be viewed as part of its political strategy. See, e.g., Sara F. Ellison & Catherine Wolfram, Pharmaceutical Prices and Political Activity 1 (Working Paper 2001) (explaining how pharmaceutical firms voluntarily reduced prices in the face of public pressure in a successful
Importantly, the connection between politics and business is not unique to FedEx. In attempting to implement its market strategy, MCI, for example, faced similar regulatory barriers to entry. MCI could not engage in marketplace competition with AT&T over the provision of long distance telephone service unless regulatory change eliminated AT&T's monopoly. MCI invested in political capital and, despite AT&T's substantial political clout, successfully obtained regulatory change—deregulation of the long distance industry. Following this success, MCI continued to be a dominant political player and successfully used its political capital on a range of other issues. Indeed, MCI’s view of the importance of Washington politics seems to rival that of FedEx, as reflected in its purchase of the naming rights to the MCI Center.

Another example is Enron. Deregulation of the energy industry was a key component of Enron's business plan. Enron developed its political capital—making large political contributions and building relationships with state and federal government officials—in order to obtain regulatory changes that would enable it to build its energy trading market. Having established this political capital, Enron continued to use it. Thus, Senator Phil Gramm was instrumental in ensuring that the Commodity Futures Modernization Act of 2000 avoided price regulation and arguing that the most politically vulnerable firms were most responsive to the threat of regulation.

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400. See Hart, supra note 17, at 58-59 (explaining that "MCI's success would have been impossible without deregulation of the telecommunications industry").

401. Id. at 59.

442. See Mike Mills, Telecom's Lavish Spending on Lobbying, WASH. POST, Dec. 6, 1998, at H01 (describing MCI's extensive political activity and suggesting that this activity was related to MCI's receipt of regulatory approval for its merger with WorldCom).


444. See, e.g., William W. Bratton, Enron and the Dark Side of Shareholder Value, 76 TUL. L. REV. 1275, 1278 (2002) (explaining that Enron's "primary business, energy trading, only came into existence in the wake of deregulation of electricity and natural gas production and supply").

445. Like FedEx, Enron's political strategy consisted of a combination of large political expenditures and the cultivation of relationships with public officials and policymakers. See Timothy F. Duane, Regulation's Rationale: Learning from the California Energy Crisis, 19 YALE J. ON REG. 471, 474 n.10 (2002) (describing relationships including Enron's selection of Wendy Gramm, wife of Senator Phil Gramm, to serve on its board of directors and Enron's payment of $50,000 to President Bush's senior economic advisor, Lawrence B. Lindsey to have Lindsey serve on Enron's advisory board).

446. See Bratton, supra note 444, at 1278-79 (describing Enron's extensive political activity aimed at eliminating protected energy monopolies, and its success in this effort); Kurt Eichenwald, Enron's Collapse: Audacious Climb to Success Ended in a Dizzying Plunge, N.Y. TIMES, Jan. 13, 2002, at 1 (explaining how deregulation enabled Enron to create and dominate the nation's energy trading markets).
Act\textsuperscript{447} included the “Enron Point,” which excluded energy trading companies from federal financial oversight.\textsuperscript{448}

Of course, firms play politics in different ways. Even the easily measured empirical benchmarks of political activity reveal different strategies. The following table provides an illustration:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAC Expenditures 1995-96\textsuperscript{449}</th>
<th>FedEx</th>
<th>UPS</th>
<th>American Airlines</th>
<th>United Airlines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>943,000</td>
<td>1,788,147</td>
<td>320,817</td>
<td>181,550</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Soft Money Contributions 1997-98\textsuperscript{450} | 927,750 | 300,181 | 497,804 | 290,927 |

| Lobbying Expenditures 1997\textsuperscript{451} | 3,300,000 | 880,000 | 5,560,000 | 1,200,000 |

Despite the importance of legislative policies to large public companies, 40% of Fortune 500 companies do not even have a political action committee.\textsuperscript{452} Nine of the Fortune 100 firms, including IBM, have neither established a PAC nor contributed soft money.\textsuperscript{453} IBM does, however, make extensive lobbying expenditures and has a highly respected Washington government affairs office.\textsuperscript{454}

Firms also modify the form of their political participation. British Petroleum (“BP”), for example, contributed almost $1.7 million to U.S. candidates and political parties from 1999 to 2002.\textsuperscript{455} In 2002, however, Chief Executive Officer Sir John Brown announced that BP would cease making political contributions worldwide.\textsuperscript{456} BP did not forswear all political activism; it merely shifted its tactic from

\begin{itemize}
  \item Bratton, \textit{ supra} note 444, at 1279-80.
  \item Ansolabehere, et al., \textit{ supra} note 18, at 108. The explanation for the failure of more firms to establish PACs cannot solely be freeriding. Roughly one-third of industries have no firms at all with PACs. \textit{Id}.
  \item Hart, \textit{ supra} note 17, at 40-41.
  \item \textit{Id.} (reporting Sir Browne’s announcement).
\end{itemize}
campaign contributions to lobbying. Indeed, at the same time that BP ceased its political donations, the company hired Anji Hunter, one of Tony Blair’s closest aides, as director of communications.

Empirical studies that focus on a single type of activity, therefore, may overlook or distort the extent of a corporation’s political involvement. Similarly, empirical studies virtually never consider more subtle forms of political influence, including lobbying and testimony by in-house employees, participation in the “revolving door” of hiring former government officials and staffers, development and exploitation of relationships between corporate and political leaders, and corporate philanthropy. One of the advantages of the case study methodology is that it identifies factors that may be omitted from broader based empirical studies. These factors are important not just in designing campaign finance regulation but also in understanding the process by which interest group competition is resolved. Many of FedEx’s actions are far less transparent forms of political influence than PAC expenditures. At the same time, there are reasons to believe that they are more effective in influencing policy—in part because they transmit information that enables a political official to understand and to rationalize his support for the

457. Some current research supports BP’s decision, finding that lobbying expenditures are more effective at influencing government policy than political contributions. See Micky Tripathi, et. al., Are PAC Contributions and Lobbying Linked? New Evidence from the 1995 Lobby Disclosure Act, 4 BUS. & POL. 131 (2002) (identifying correlation between PAC contributions and lobbying and emphasizing importance of lobbying); J.R. Wright, Contributions, Lobbying and Committee Voting in the U.S. House of Representatives, 84 AM. POLI. SCI. REV. 417 (1990) (finding that the number of lobbying contacts was a better predictor of legislators’ votes than campaign contributions).


459. See, e.g., Moe, supra note 29, at 1095 (observing that empirical studies “focus only on very small parts of the whole” and therefore “omit factors whose causal effects may overwhelm or distort the ‘special’ relationships on which they singularly focus”).

460. See also Witold Henisz & Bennet Zelner, The Strategic Organization of Political Risks and Opportunities, 1 STRATEGIC ORG. 451, 451 (2003) (identifying the importance of bringing the insights of strategic organization to political activity and urging scholars to focus greater attention on the process by which corporations identify and exploit political opportunities).

461. See, e.g., id., at 456 (finding that interest group concentration and power do not guarantee success in obtaining policy objectives and finding heterogeneity in interest group effectiveness depending on their capabilities to manage political risks and opportunities). Among the factors that Henisz and Zelner identify as important are firms’ skills in understanding their policymaking environment, “cultivating relationships, building and maintaining coalitions, framing debates in a manner that resonates with powerful external or internal constituencies, and enhancing the perceived legitimacy of their behavior.” Id.

462. See also Fisch, supra note 15, at 1101-02 (observing that politically vulnerable companies make generous charitable contributions and publicize those contributions and arguing that such contributions may be motivated by an effort to generate goodwill from policymakers).
corporation’s policy objectives and in part because they look less like vote-buying.

Is playing politics a good business strategy? It is hard to know. In addition to the challenges of quantifying a firm’s investment in political capital, it is difficult to separate the effect of the firm’s political activity from other components of its business strategy. The bankruptcies of MCI/WorldCom and Enron make it clear that even extraordinary political effectiveness cannot save a firm from the effects of bad business decisions or fraud. Moreover, inter-firm comparisons of profitability or shareholder value are likely to be misleading as industry competitors may have very different company histories, ownership structures, and so forth. For example, FedEx experienced the dramatic growth of a successful start-up company from the late 1970s, when UPS was already well established, at least with respect to ground shipping. Nonetheless, a back of the envelope comparison between FedEx and UPS from 1999 to 2004, a period during which the two were industry leaders and each others’ primary competitors, reveals that a comparable investment in the common stock of each company would have produced a cumulative return of 107.65% for FedEx and 15.37% for UPS.

The importance of the legal environment in business operations and the role of politics in shaping that environment make it clear that corporations cannot and will not abstain from political activity. Indeed, these factors explain why regulation of corporate political activity has been and will continue to be characterized by corporations responding to regulatory limits by developing alternative ways to participate in the political process. Moreover, the range of activities by which corporations can and do influence policymaking, despite

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463. See Henisz & Zelner, supra note 460, at 454-55 (explaining that interest groups are influential because they provide information to politicians, particularly information that legitimizes their desired policy).

464. See, e.g., Hart, supra note 454, at 1242-43 (explaining IBM’s decision not to form a PAC as based on concerns about the firm’s involvement in campaign finance scandals in the 1970s).


increasing statutory efforts to restrict such influence, should give pause to regulators. This analysis suggests a need to rethink the existing regulatory structure, a subject to which this Article turns in the next Section.\footnote{The analysis also suggests limits in the extent to which broad-based empirical research accurately captures the nature and effectiveness of political activity, an issue that I explore in more detail elsewhere. Fisch, \textit{supra} note 15.}

\textbf{B. The FedEx Story and Campaign Finance Regulation}

Does the FedEx story suggest that attempts to regulate corporate political participation are misguided? In a sense, yes. Existing regulatory policy is largely, if not entirely, driven by the perception that corporate political activity is illegitimate and should be limited. The preceding discussion argues instead that such activity is an important component of corporate business strategy and that political efforts are related to and supplement marketplace competition. In addition, the more expansive and textured conception of political activity described in this Article explains how corporations have developed alternatives to evade existing attempts at regulation and why they will continue to do so. Because corporate political activity is inevitable, campaign finance regulation should focus less on the issue of whether corporations should participate in politics and instead consider the question of how corporations should participate.

This Article does not argue that existing restrictions on corporate political activity should be eliminated, nor does it propose a specific regulatory structure. Such conclusions are beyond the scope of this Article and would require both a more extended analysis of the existing regulatory framework and, more importantly, a broader inquiry into the nature and extent of political activity across a range of companies, industries, and time periods. It would be presumptuous to premise a reform agenda on the experience of a single corporation. Nonetheless, the FedEx case study identifies several approaches that should guide an agenda for regulatory reform.

First, as the FedEx experience reveals, a substantial amount of political activity occurs off the radar screen. There is no systematic mechanism by which corporate involvement with respect to specific policy issues is recorded, reported, or disclosed. The visibility of corporate political activity, on an issue specific basis, is happenstance and sporadic, depending largely on individual press reports.\footnote{Although media research has been remarkably effective in uncovering the role of corporations in the political process, as indicated by the references in this Article, the nature and extent of press coverage is subject to potential biases. See, e.g., Riccardo Puglisi, \textit{Being the New}}
Concededly, recent regulations have increased disclosure requirements. Existing campaign finance laws require the disclosure of PAC expenditures and soft money donations, and recent federal legislation also requires public disclosure of lobbying expenditures. In practice, however, these disclosures are incomplete. Individual firms may mask their activity by acting through a trade association, and that association's members, objectives, and financial structure may be only partially transparent. Although firms must disclose funds paid to outside lobbyists, they need not quantify the in-house dollars expended on lobbying, nor are the disclosure requirements sufficiently detailed as to subject matter. Firms also need not disclose their efforts to generate grassroots lobbying support, a process former Senator Lloyd Bentsen has termed "astroturf lobbying." Perhaps most importantly, there is no single source in which the range of political activity is collected and organized, either by policy initiative or by corporation.

At least two mechanisms could provide more informative disclosure. One approach would involve Congress providing, as part of a bill's legislative history, information on persons and groups that participated in the legislative process. Congress might, for example, disclose the identities of those who drafted, testified, and commented on proposed legislation, as well as a summary of their testimony or position, in the Conference Report or as part of the final statute. This type of disclosure, although foreign to the campaign finance literature, is not unprecedented. Administrative agencies routinely publish the formal comments of participants in the rulemaking process and include a summary of participant positions as part of the rulemaking process. For example, the Securities and Exchange Commission publishes comment letters on its website and, in its adopting releases, briefly describes the responses that it received to its requests.


472. See Lyon & Maxwell, supra note 84, at 563 (describing astroturf lobbying).

for comments. This disclosure greatly increases the transparency of interest group involvement in the rulemaking process.

It may also be desirable to incorporate political activity into the disclosure requirements applicable to publicly-traded companies under the federal securities laws. In addition to enabling shareholders to monitor the activities of a corporation’s officers and directors, and thereby to police against possible waste or self-dealing, such disclosure would integrate information on political activity with a firm’s reporting on the business operations to which the firm’s political participation relates. Although reporting political activity would require corporations to make some judgments about the cost and purpose of particular expenditures, the requirement would be consistent with the growing recognition of the importance of including intangibles in financial reporting.

Moreover, management could provide an overview of activities and substantive issues in a narrative form as part of the Management’s Discussion and Analysis disclosure.

The FedEx story also highlights the information component of corporate political activity. Many regulatory issues are highly complex, and political officials are poorly positioned to evaluate the costs and benefits of policy choices under consideration. In contrast, corporations are typically knowledgeable about the costs and benefits of proposed regulatory changes; indeed, they are likely to be the lowest cost providers of information about the effects of regulatory choices upon business operations. The result has long been recognized as an information asymmetry that constrains efficient policymaking.


476. See Item 303 of Regulation S-K, Management’s Discussion and Analysis of Financial Conditions and Results of Operations (“MD&A”), 17 C.F.R. § 229.303 (requiring management to supplement financial disclosure with information about trends, commitments, and other transactions that may materially affect issuer’s financial condition).


Corporate political activity has the potential to overcome the information asymmetry if corporations, through their participation in policymaking, can obtain beneficial regulatory changes. Indeed, one of the reasons that lobbying may be one of the more effective forms of political participation is its role in conveying information to policymakers.479 Moreover, corporate political activity is privately funded—the corporation that benefits from efficiently structured legal rules pays the cost of informing the policymaker about how best to structure those rules. Accordingly, campaign finance rules that encourage information production may be socially valuable. At the same time, campaign finance regulation may be able to limit wasteful expenditures.480

This analysis offers a justification for existing limitations on naked corporate money expenditures such as direct contributions or soft money donations that have little information content. Such limitations may have the effect of channeling expenditures toward high information content activities such as lobbying, testimony, and other direct contacts. Regulation might further increase the information content of political activity by providing a formal structure for the provision of information, such as a written position statement in the form of a comment letter (akin to the administrative comment process) or as part of the required lobbying disclosure. Some of this information is already provided through written statements when corporate officials give formal testimony; the availability of this information could be enhanced by including a list of such statements in the legislative history.

Finally, the FedEx story should cause us to think more carefully about the nature of special interest legislation. Policy reforms that provide particularized benefits to corporations that have actively participated in the regulatory process are typically characterized as special interest legislation with the derogatory connotation of rentseeking. As the case study shows, however, effective political influence depends on intangibles such as relationships and political expertise, rather than mere monetary expenditures. Accordingly, firms face barriers to entering the political arena, and those firms that have invested in political capital can

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479. See, e.g., Scott Ainsworth, Regulating Lobbyists and Interest Group Influence, 55 J. Pol. 41, 44-45, 52 (1993) (describing lobbyist role in the provision of information and emphasizing quality as well as quantity of lobbyist contacts as a factor in lobbying effectiveness).

480. In particular, David Hart distinguishes political efforts that seek industry-wide benefits from so-called “arms races.” Hart, supra note 454, at 1231.
exploit economies of scale to participate more efficiently. Thus, the structure of the political process causes levels of corporate political activity to vary dramatically among firms, even within a given industry. As the following tables demonstrate, FedEx’s political expenditures, in addition to its less visible activities, have consistently outdistanced those of its industry competitors.

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<td>756,950</td>
<td>943,000</td>
<td>1,175,180</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emery/CNF Transport</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evergreen</td>
<td>24,000</td>
<td>140,000</td>
<td>86,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal Express</td>
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<td>1,327,600</td>
<td>582,469</td>
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<td>Evergreen</td>
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<td>$40,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal Express</td>
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<td>3,320,000</td>
<td>3,320,000</td>
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</tr>
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FedEx’s regulatory initiatives—including air cargo deregulation, trucking deregulation, aircraft noise regulation, and the urgent letter exemption to the Private Express Statutes—benefited its peers, and the statistics suggest that other firms may have been


freeriding on FedEx’s political activities. Although the specialization and the resulting segmentation within an industry between politically active firms and freeriders may prevent wasteful duplication of effort, this suggests a puzzle as to why FedEx would be willing to incur a disproportionate share of the costs of representing its industry in the political process.

The case study offers some insight into this question. It reveals that, although FedEx has generally sought broad-based reforms that benefit the entire express carrier industry, each piece of legislation provided particularized benefits to FedEx. For example, only FedEx and Flying Tiger benefited from the provision of the 1977 Air Cargo Deregulation Act that granted existing carriers a one-year competition free head start for entry into new markets. As one commentator explained, this window of opportunity gave FedEx a sufficient head start to enable it to dominate the new industry. Trucking deregulation began with the ICC increasing the scope of the exemption for services incidental to air cargo transportation and included FedEx obtaining a favorable Ninth Circuit decision that exempted it from intrastate trucking restrictions. The final version of the statute deregulating intrastate trucking contained a separate provision applicable to air carriers, providing a measure of insulation in the event that the broader provisions of the statute were successfully challenged as unconstitutional. In seeking relief from the Postal Service monopoly, FedEx obtained an exemption—the express letter exemption—specifically crafted to enable it to introduce the FedEx Overnight Letter. FedEx was the first air cargo company to introduce overnight letter delivery service and was able to use this service to distinguish itself at a time when the air cargo industry was becoming increasingly competitive.

485. See Dempsey, supra note 134, at 148 (describing this component of the Act as “a rather clever provision, allowing established air cargo companies a one year moratorium (from November 1977 to November 1978) during which they were free to enter any domestic markets of their choice; new entrants would be free to enter only after that period”).
486. Id.
488. Indeed, the legislation was challenged as unconstitutional, although the Tenth Circuit rejected the challenge. Kelley v. United States, 69 F.3d 1503, 1511 (10th Cir. 1995), cert. denied, 517 U.S. 1166 (1996).
489. The exemption was of limited benefit to other cargo carriers that did not rely on air transport to the same extent and that were less interested in expanding from cargo to letters, such as UPS.
490. See Susan Castledine, Competition Grows in Air Freight Package Service, AVIATION. WK. & SPACE TECH., Nov. 30, 1981, at 36 (describing competition in the air cargo industry and range of services offered by different companies).
Similarly, FedEx was successful in the broad effort to establish national regulation of aircraft noise, but the structure of ANCA was particularly beneficial to FedEx. First, national regulation virtually eliminated local restrictions on flights such as curfews, which were burdensome for the air cargo industry and particularly for FedEx due to the nature of its business model. Second, the price for national regulation was a national policy that required the airline industry to reduce aircraft noise through the use of quieter planes and engines. These reductions were expensive. As one of the largest air cargo carriers subject to the regulation, FedEx could more easily bear the costs of the regulation than its smaller competitors; indeed, the regulation effectively increased the barriers to new entry into the air cargo industry. Third, FedEx successfully persuaded regulators to adopt a performance-based approach to regulation. Performance standards both allowed FedEx to continue to use its older airplanes and offered FedEx the opportunity to profit by selling hush kits to other carriers.

One might characterize these particularized benefits for FedEx as special interest legislation. Alternatively, they may be understood as a subsidy for FedEx’s political activity. By providing FedEx with specific benefits, the statutes allowed FedEx to overcome the freerider problem presented by allocating firm specific political capital to broad-based regulatory initiatives. Although this analysis clearly does not extend to all legislation that provides particularized benefits to a limited number of firms, it suggests that statutory benefits must be evaluated within the cost structure of political activity and the relationship between that activity and marketplace competition.

CONCLUSION

Academics are a long way from understanding the political process and the role of corporations within that process. The mixed, complex, and often opaque motives of political actors create substantial obstacles to studying the effects of corporate political activity. At the same time, it is difficult to get a handle on the scope of corporate political activity and to identify the range of corporate activities that are designed to influence the political process. Nonetheless, increasing levels of political participation by corporations, which in turn lead to ever-increasing campaign finance regulations, demand a better understanding of corporate political activity.

This Article offers a modest starting point for developing a broader framework of analysis. The Article uses a case study
methodology to look inside the black box and to explore the nature of corporate participation in the political process. The case study provides the first detailed analysis of the manner in which a corporation develops and deploys its political capital across a range of policy initiatives. The analysis provides valuable insights as to the breadth of activities that influence legislative policymaking, the interrelationship of those activities, and their potential effectiveness, both in achieving the corporation’s desired policy objectives and in enhancing its market position. In particular, the FedEx story provides powerful evidence that political participation is an important component of corporate business strategy.

There are several key implications of the FedEx story. First, the case study predicts that existing regulatory efforts to limit corporate political participation are unlikely to succeed, both because they use an artificially narrow conception of political participation and because of the relationship between a corporation’s market and nonmarket activities. Second, it suggests that such efforts may be misguided in that advocates of such restrictions overstate the social costs of corporate political participation and overlook the ways in which such participation may enhance the legislative process. Finally, the study reveals several factors that policymakers should consider in their efforts to regulate corporate political activity, including transparency, provision of information, and firm specialization with respect to political capital.

Regulation has become an important factor for U.S. businesses. As a result, corporate political activity must be integrated within a corporation’s overall business strategy, and corporations need to develop and manage their political capital in the same way that they manage other business assets. The FedEx story demonstrates the importance of politics to business and explains the growing investment by corporations in political capital. It further explains how the business world has responded, and will continue to respond, to regulatory restrictions by developing alternative mechanisms for exerting political influence. By understanding how and why corporations participate in politics, policymakers can better address concerns about the effect of corporate political influence.