A hugely cynical Republican Party memo on the care and feeding of big donors disdains them as “ego-driven” check writers who can be bought by access to power and vanity tchotchkes. The memo, obtained by Politico.com, is exceptional for its candor about the crassness of the multibillion-dollar politicking industry.

That industry is on the verge of a great leap forward in this year’s Congressional elections, thanks to the Supreme Court ruling that freed corporate executives and union bosses to spend whatever they want on their own commercials touting candidates who toe their lines or, more likely, attacking those who don’t.

Congress must quickly pass the remedial Schumer-Van Hollen bill to rein in at least some of the damage. It would ban expenditures by government contractors and foreign-controlled companies and require public disclosure of the money and business interests behind corporate and union ads. Congress must also revive public financing as a feasible alternative to big-money federal elections. President Obama reversed his promise and rejected public financing in 2008, arguing that the public subsidy lagged far behind modern campaign budgets. But he also vowed to repair and update the system once he made it to the White House. We’re waiting.

On Capitol Hill, where quid pro quo is the name of the game, the public option is just as needed. Senator Richard Durbin has introduced a measure to extend a federal four-to-one match to qualifying Congressional candidates who pledge to only accept donations of $100 or less and abide by spending limits and transparency rules.

Now, 80 percent of donations in Congressional campaigns come from 1 percent of the population, according to the nonprofit group Americans for Campaign Reform.

Senator Scott Brown, the Republican newly arrived from Massachusetts, promised to study Mr. Durbin’s bill. “There’s a way that we can work to get big money and corporations out of politics and, obviously, adhere to the Constitution as well,” said Senator Brown. This was an extraordinary observation from a politician whose campaign was buoyed by $14 million in last-minute donations, mostly from out of state. We hope he meant it.
Democrats Need a Rally Monkey

A Jewish Knight for a Wartime Pope

Op-Ed: Slug on the Tracks

Mets College of Catchers Convenes

Educated and Hopeless in China

A Room for Debate forum on why China’s best and brightest — its college graduates — are unable to find jobs.

Picture This: A Nose on the Loose