



Capitol Punishment: The Hard Truth about Washington Corruption from America's Most Notorious Lobbyist

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The name Jack Abramoff is synonymous with Washington scandal, but the fascinating facts of his case are either largely unknown or wildly misunderstood. His memoir will serve as a corrective - an engrossing, informative work of political nonfiction that is also a gripping real-life thriller. The biggest surprise twist comes in the form of Abramoff himself, a smart, funny, charming, clear-eyed narrator who confounds every expectation of the media's villainous portrait. He's a perfect bundle of contradictions: an Orthodox Jew and upstanding family man with a staunch moral streak, caught in multiple scandals of bribery and corruption with an undercurrent of murder. Abramoff represented Indian tribes whose lucrative casinos were constantly under threat from proposed changes in law; though he charged the tribes many millions, he saved them billions by ensuring votes to support the livelihoods of their reservations. Much of Jack's share was funneled not into his own coffers, but to charities. Abramoff on the front pages could not be further from the Jack Abramoff who's ready to tell his honest and compelling story.

Capitol Punishment: The Hard Truth about Washington Corruption from America's Most Notorious Lobbyist Details

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From Reader Review Capitol Punishment: The Hard Truth about Washington Corruption from America's Most Notorious Lobbyist for online ebook

Mike Daly says

Jack Abramoff relates his story honestly and completely. We meet a brilliant man who gets carried away and is doing the best he can for his client and at times his judgment is clouded by the status quo and mistakes are made.

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Mr. Abramoff takes responsibility for his actions, but his book leaves out a large part of the price he paid for his errors - the toll of prison on himself and his family, the painful process of coming to terms with his failure and then after he and his family serve his sentence he has to readjust being home with his family and building a new life. That is where I think Mr. Abramoff could have educated us. He moves quickly through that part and deprives us of the opportunity to decide if his punishment was too harsh or if it fit his "crimes". Sometimes the loss of a business and the toll that takes on an individual and their family is sufficient.

When I finished reading it I felt I had gained an insight into the man but did not know the whole story. I am not sure I understand how it all happened because the narrative is fast. I found myself wondering why so many others - the legislators, the congressional staffers, other lobbyists and last but not least the lobbying firm clients - all who had to be involved in the "alleged conspiracies" were not punished.

Perhaps there will be a sequel.

Ashley says

Love him or hate him, Jack Abramoff has changed American politics (and politicians) unlike any other lobbyist Washington has ever seen. This post-prison memoir is an exquisite example of a man who may never understand why white-collar crimes are crimes at all, judging by the obvious lack of understanding in his misguided, but well-meaning, apologies. Perhaps unintentionally, Abramoff has created a user's guide to what goes on behind the scenes on Capitol Hill, much to the chagrin of old political cohorts like Tom DeLay. Rousing tales of Congressional mutiny against former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, along with a several-page diagnosis of Gingrich's weaknesses, lends a plethora of new dimensions to figures who often work tirelessly to show only one. Abramoff takes no prisoners (heh) while he details backroom deals with Microsoft, the Mariana Islands, and the infamous Indian casino deal which ultimately landed him behind bars. Jack may never quite understand why everyone was so mad at him that fateful day in the Senate, but none of that matters if you're looking for a full disclosure of what still goes on in Washington today. From business moguls to Occupy Wall Streeters, any American of voting age (or with hopes to someday be one) can benefit from learning the way the K Street crowd thinks, operates, rationalizes, and survives. In fact, I wouldn't even mind if he's not really sorry. Jack Abramoff has contributed to the solving the incessant plague of political quid-pro-quo whether he knows it or not, and for that, I can't thank him enough.

Jack Koford says

Got the book after seeing Jack Abramoff on 60 Minutes. Quick read to start, then kind of bogs down. May be partly due to some of the highlights of the book already shown and discussed on 60 Minutes. Or could be the repetitive descriptions of his deal making. Doesn't seem to be much remorse. He saw his role as a lobbyist whose job was to do whatever he had to do to help his client. Which he did- right or wrong, ethical or unethical, legal or not. Would love to know what was left out of the book.

It was interesting some the people he met and worked with along the way from his Young Republican college days e.g. Grover Norquist.

The book does a nice job of illustrating the corruption in Washington and how easy it is/was to buy votes.

Harold says

I saw Jack Abramoff, the notorious lobbyist, reviewing this autobiography of his on BookTV. It is a page turner written like a novel. He reveals the way laws really get written, a way that reminds me of Winston Churchill's remark that "those who like sausages and laws should never watch either being made." Abramoff reveals how disgusting this can be for laws.

Besides his enlightening us on the legislative process, Abramoff has interesting insights on the big politicians that he worked with such as Reagan, both Bushes, Newt Gingrich, Tom Delay, Harry Reed, and others. Some of his best contacts were buddies from his days as president of College Republicans, such as Carl Rove and Grover Norquest, the same Grover Norquest whose no-tax pledge almost shut down the government recently.

The most fascinating part of Abramoff's story is how a master lobbyist gets congress to do what his clients want. Of course, they use campaign contributions, golf trips, sports tickets, sumptuous lunches, and other well-known perks. Abramoff says one powerful ploy was to tell a key congressional aide that he had a job for him after government service. Then the aide worked like crazy for Abramoff. Another good trick was to drop some incomprehensible language (for example, Section 9 of Article 16 is repealed) into some reform bill because reform bills always speed through Congress like greased lightning. Abramoff says his most powerful scheme was to appeal to Republican Ideology. This would work, he says, when appeals to self-interest failed. He used this to keep Indian Casinos from paying a cent to the IRS, saving them billions and costing the rest of us billions. He roused red-meat Republicans to see these sensible efforts to tax the Indians as another underhanded Democratic tactic to raise taxes. The Republicans blood boiled and the Indians laughed all the way to the bank.

But, I ended feeling sympathy for Abramoff. He was contrite and regretted breaking laws and undermining democratic government. He repeatedly apologizes for his crimes. Behind bars he was abused, put in "the hole" for trying to get a Torah for religious services, unable to help his financially broke family, unable to help his mother dying from cancer or to go to her funeral, etc. This made him a changed man. He lists reforms needed to restrain lobbyists like him. In further defense of him, he gave most of the money he made to setting up Jewish Orthodox schools and other charities.

Kevin says

I read this for obvious reasons. It is sad when people can't tell the truth.

Foxglove says

A sad, Faustian book, beautifully written and touched my heart.

Steve Davis says

This is a fairly quick read - especially if you begin to skim read the endless paragraphs of Jack's golf games and endless anecdotes of his self-described brilliant lobbying escapades. Oh, you can also skip lots of paragraphs where he tells you he is Jewish - repeatedly. Several years in jail apparently did not deminish Mr. Abramoff's self image.

That said, the book did give me great insight into just how corrupt is our democratic system. Jack describes the tactics and bribes ALL (he names names) our elected politicians are involved in - irregardless of party affiliation - and how necessary lobbyists are within this system as it currently stands. These guys are tricky!!! Jack gives a very brief chapter at the end of the book describing his suggested remedies for today's political system - nothing new that we all haven't seen in endless emails except for one interesting suggestion: eliminate the general election of Senators and return the election to the way it was. Senators would be elected by the state congressmen in their respective states. This change would greatly reduce the super PAC influence that pervades the current elective process. Might work - if the state congressmen could make a decision... Probably not possible in NY!

Christopher Reed says

Little more than a self-congratulatory narcissistic rant; offers some interesting morsels about inside Washington, but nothing spectacular or that can't be found elsewhere.

Chad says

Eye-opening view of what a lobbyist really does. The action isn't surprising, but the personal nature of the business is sobering.

Even though this is essentially his autobiography, I was amazed at how much I didn't like Abramoff. Here's something I wrote to a friend, which pretty much sums up my feelings at the end of the book.

"You know - sometimes I wish there was a god. This bastard professes to be an orthodox Jew, and "gave 80% of his income to charity", while thinking all he did wrong was give a few congressmen free dinners and football tickets. Yet he basically is the Washington equivalent of an arms dealer - absolutely no scruples in any way, shape, or form... Of course he is a classic everyman underdog conservative hero - stymied at every turn by his dastardly liberal opponents."

SeaShore says

This book details the life of Jack Abramoff, his upbringing, life with his parents and family, his education and what motivated him. It's his journey, his life filled with the good, the bad and the ugly.

This book showed me that whatever you do in life, what it boils down to is how you've overcome the snags and obstacles but mainly love and support of people closest to you. I like that Jack Abramoff included a list of persons involved and where they are now as well as a timeline from his birth in February 1959 to June 2010 when he was released from Cumberland.

Charles Blumberg says

Good book, honesty from the author about his lobbying, he wasn't the menace the media made him out to be, and the effects on his life. It brings light to how the sausage in the made in the factory. Makes great point that the problem isn't lobbying but politicians open to lobbying.

Makes several great suggestions for fixing DC:

- (1) Prohibit anyone financially benefiting from public funds from making political contributions, be it through lobbying, receiving federal contracts, or compensation from any company that does
 - (2) Ban all gift giving of all kinds to politicians
 - (3) Ex-members of Congress or Congressional staff should be barred from lobbying or working for a company that lobbies the gov't
 - (4) Term limits for Congress
 - (5) Repeal the 17th Amendment and restore election of senators to the states
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Kristy Cahoon says

It was a good book, but I think spend too much of the book on the first part and not really enough time on the second (his indictment and imprisonment). Interesting to read, though.

Ron says

A well written memoir of "the most evil lobbyist ever to be operating in Washington".. concluding that:

In order to get reform & remove all temptations and to eradicate graft & impropriety in our government.....

1. If an individual, company, union, law firm or an association that receives any funding or perks from public funds, they should not be allowed to contribute to campaign funds, officials or their organizations. No gift giving, no wine, dining or golf.
 2. Eliminate any "post public service lobbying." If one choses to serve in Congress or on a congressional staff, they should be barred for life from working for any company, organization or association which lobbies the government.
 3. We need term limits for all public officials.
 4. Do away with "bringing home the bacon" quid-pro-quo and "horse trading". Officials should be barred from proposing, lobbying for and voting on projects in their districts and states.
 5. Every law that is enacted by Congress should apply to Congress itself.
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Richard says

An interesting story showing us the inside story of the lobbying world and the sickening level of corruption in the world of politics. If you believe Abramoff, this is the story of a hard-charging lobbyist who plays the system to the hilt for his clients. He fights to protect the rights and economy of the Mariana Islands, he meets with Imelda Marcos in spy-novel conditions, and he vigorously defends tribal legal gaming operations. He also attempts to produce an action film in Africa.

Not having previously read anything about Abramoff, the story seems believable. I was inclined essentially to accept Abramoff's version of events. However, I noticed here on Goodreads, Tony Ring, an Abramoff staffer and another person convicted for his participation, gave the book 1 star and intimated that the account is not truthful. I suppose if Rod Blagojevich authors a book, the reader will come away with a pretty good impression of the disgraced governor, too. So, I don't know where the truth lies.

Taken on its own, the book is interesting and "juicy" and makes for a worthwhile read. Abramoff seems to hold nothing back, admitting where he screwed up, but defending himself where he believes he was maligned. But now I'm prepared to listen to another side of the story should I encounter one.

Joanie says

Even though the Abramoff scandal did not happen that long ago, I was not too familiar with the intricacies of this case. If even half of what Jack Abramoff wrote in this book is true, the hypocrisy of the politicians involved in his downfall is flabbergasting, and I am hard to shock. This book should be required reading all any ethics class.
