Elements of "Money in Politics" Stories:

Look for PATTERNS
- ✓ Largest contributors
- ✓ Kinds of contributors: Small donors (individuals), PACS (labor unions, corporations, trade groups, different professions)
- ✓ Connections: source of money (pharmaceutical industry) and position in government (health care committee)
- ✓ Geography (is most of a candidate's money coming from outside his/her district or state? From certain Zip Codes?)
- ✓ Or simply explain something: What's a 527? What role are they playing in our races?

Possible Interviews:
- ✓ Candidates or their campaign officials.
- ✓ Donors
- ✓ Political scientists who study this stuff.
- ✓ Ex-politicians.
- ✓ Watchdog groups (Center for Responsive Politics, NYPIRG)

Quirks/Things to be aware of:
- ✓ Politicians often have their own PACs and give money to each other (Congressional leaders, for example, have "leadership" PACs to help out each other)
- ✓ Contributions often have patterns related to a politician's positions: Members of Congress on a committee overseeing the health care industry, for example, are more likely to get contributions from the health industry. A city council member on economic development committee might get a big share from, say, real estate developers.
- ✓ Can't say that's buying the politicians' votes, without direct evidence. Be careful of those sorts of connections – it's one thing to show the connections, another to draw conclusions.
- ✓ Politicians often get money from outside their district/ home state – usually related to the committees on which they serve.

Resources:
- ✓ www.fec.gov
- ✓ http://www.irs.gov/charities/political/article/0,,id=109644,00.html
- ✓ www.**elections**.**state**.ny.us/

General Resources for Political Reporting:
http://www.poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=54350

Storytelling Tips:
- ✓ Consider a bullet list (graphic in BJ) for key numbers
- ✓ For a bullet list, you need a set-up sentence – something like: Among Walsh's major contributors: (note the colon)
- ✓ Do some creative math: How much did the candidate raise per day? How much is the campaign costing per day (from expenditures)?
- ✓ Keep the writing SIMPLE. Do not overwhelm the audience with the numbers. In print stories, remember that numbers told inside paragraphs are hard for folks to absorb. That's why bullet lists are usually better.