



Disrupt Lobbying: Full Transcript

**GFX Cards

[01:00:08:03] HOST: (Voice over) Look man, if you wanna change the news, you have to find the news. I'll go anywhere in search of a good story. Wherever the action is, I'm there.

[01:00:17:09] HOST: On the surface, our political process seems simple. Voters elect the representatives, and they represent the will of the voters, right? Wrong. At the center of this process lies... the lobbyist. Hired by giant corporations to sway our politicians, these agents of corruption - sorry, are the uh...

[01:00:36:02] HOST: (V.O.) Who am I? I'd tell you, but I'm too busy reporting on something terrible. Something that's probably ruining the country. Cause that's what journalists do, and I'm a journalist.

[01:00:43:23] HOST: (V.O.) This is Disrupt, the disruptiest journalism your face has ever seen. We disrupt stuff. Like lobbying. I knew I had to disrupt that, just as soon as someone would tell me what the hell it is.

[01:00:53:22] HOST: What do you do?

[01:00:54:13] MEREDITH MCGEHEE: Uh, I'm a public interest lobbyist.

[01:00:56:20] HOST: (V.O.) Woah. I gotta disrupt you right there. First off, you're not a lobbyist. Lobbyists look like, I dunno, this guy. But, if you insist. (TO MEREDITH) Gimme a concrete example of how lobbying works.

[01:01:06:06] MEREDITH MCGEHEE: Ok, let's say that you run a business, and there's a policy that you want passed in Washington. You hire a paid lobbyist here, maybe a former member of Congress. That person's gonna tell you how much money to give in campaign contributions to influence what's going on up there on The Hill.

[01:01:21:20] HOST: (V.O.) Woah, gotta disrupt you again. What you just described sounds like a rigged system.

[01:01:26:07] MEREDITH MCGEHEE: That's the essence of the rigged system.

[01:01:27:15] HOST: Got it, got it, great. Um, sorry...

[01:01:30:05] HOST: The lobbyists in Washington, they own this town.

[01:01:33:15] MEREDITH MCGEHEE: If you got the money, you can get your message delivered and you're gonna make sure it's delivered effectively.

[01:01:38:23] HOST: (mimics head-exploding sound) It makes me both nauseous and excited. What about the steak dinners, the infamous steak dinners?

[01:01:44:17] MEREDITH MCGEHEE: Got rid of those.

[01:01:45:15] HOST: Do you have to order the fish? Can you not get a side? What does that mean?

[01:01:48:09] MEREDITH MCGEHEE: A group of us got a rule passed in the House that says they can't take gifts from lobbyists.

**[01:01:50:01] TITLES: *"These rules govern congressional gifts"*

[01:01:53:15] That means that you can't take somebody out for a steak dinner, but, if you go to a reception and you can serve the food with a toothpick, then it's permissible under the rules.

**[01:01:57:10] TITLES: *"Different rules govern campaign contributions"*

[01:02:03:04] HOST: You're lobbying me right now.

[01:02:06:14] HOST: (V.O.) I couldn't believe what I was hearing, and yet, I'd seen it with my own two ears. It was time to nail down one of these lowlifes and make them accountable. Someone who looked like, I don't know, this guy. Oh my god, it's that guy! Pay dirt.

[01:02:18:02] HOST: What global conglomerate do you represent and how do you ram that agenda down the American people's throats?

[01:02:23:03] CURTIS DECKER: I lobby on disability issues before Congress. I helped pass the Americans with Disabilities Act, which has changed the face of America for people with disabilities.

[01:02:31:03] HOST: To pass something like that, to get something like that through, I can only imagine the kind of stuff that you have to... So do you have favorite back alley that you've, uh, handed over a big large sum of money to somebody?

[01:02:42:03] CURTIS DECKER: Gosh, I wish I did, we have to go on things like the truth and appeal to people's better instincts.

[01:02:48:03] HOST: You're killing this investigation.

[01:02:49:12] CURTIS DECKER: Sorry to hear that.

[01:02:50:15] HOST: Lobbyists: good or bad?

[01:02:51:15] CURTIS DECKER: Necessary.

[01:02:52:07] HOST: Come on.

[01:02:52:23] CURTIS DECKER: Lobbyists play a really important role in making sure that good information gets to The Hill.

[01:02:57:21] HOST: (V.O.) Gotta disrupt. So even though lobbyist do spend money to influence legislation some are working for worthy causes and some don't even have much money?

**[01:02:59:02] TITLES: *Reported lobbying expenditures: \$3.2 billion dollars in 2015.*

[01:03:07:14] HOST: It's not, not the story that I want, man.

[01:03:09:09] CURTIS DECKER: It always bothers me when, uh, journalists come with a point of view that really isn't very well informed.

[01:03:15:21] HOST: (V.O.) I wanted corruption, greed, the greasy palming of corporate dollars. Where was my story?

[01:03:20:23] THOMAS PONCE: So how's your day so far?

[01:03:22:01] HOST: Kinda sucks [laughs] Lobbying is super confusing.

[01:03:25:13] THOMAS PONCE: Lobbying is just talking to your representatives. You wanna find a cause that you're passionate about. Go to your politician, and then, just, talk to them, get their support. You wanna make sure also, that you get both the Senate and the House side. Very important.

[01:03:37:23] HOST: How do you know anything about lobbying?

[01:03:39:08] THOMAS PONCE: Well, I'm a lobbyist.

[01:03:40:21] HOST (V.O.) This kid can't be a lobbyist! He's like a child! In a suit!

[01:03:43:23] HOST: You can't be a lobbyist, you're, you're, you're a child, in a suit.

[01:03:46:13] THOMAS PONCE: Why are you so interested in learning about lobbying anyway?

[01:03:48:19] HOST: I was gonna expose the system.

[01:03:50:23] HOST: (V.O.) Woah, who just disrupted me?

[01:03:52:14] THOMAS PONCE: (V.O.) Sorry, that was me.

[01:03:53:15] HOST: (V.O.) Look, kid - I do the disrupting around here.

[01:03:56:01] THOMAS PONCE: (V.O.) I figured it was the only way to get through to you.

[01:03:57:18] HOST: (V.O.) Well played, kid. I'm listening.

[01:03:59:13] THOMAS PONCE: There's always gonna be the people that are representing the corporations, and there's, us, we represent what we want. That's essentially what lobbying is.

[01:04:06:05] HOST: I don't even think I have a story.

[01:04:07:15] THOMAS PONCE: You do have a story. Tell them the best way to make a difference would be to strike at the laws. Because I'm talking to my representatives, I'm making a difference, I'm impacting the laws.

[01:04:17:21] HOST: (V.O.) Fine, fine. I get it. If you wanna disrupt the system, you gotta actually disrupt the system. And join the thousands of people lobbying for causes, bad and good. Like this kid.

**[01:04:22:20] GFX *11,520 People registered as Lobbyist* *in 2015*

[01:04:27:09] HOST: Ok, what if I told you you could make a ton of money lobbying for a big oil company?

[01:04:31:15] THOMAS PONCE: Uh, I would turn that offer down.

[01:04:33:19] THOMAS PONCE: (V.O.) What do I need a ton of money for? I'm just a child, in a suit.

END