

## Street money and selling voters down the river



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Excellent column today by Gromer Jeffers Jr. on street money -- the seamy side of street level politics.

Gromer grew up in Chicago, as did I, so we're pretty aware of these sorts of election tactics. But that this was done in front of a reporter with envelopes changing hands is simply mind-bogglingly dumb. Apparently no one here heeds the advice of the late West Virginia congressman Robert Byrd: *Do not run a campaign that would embarrass your mother*, or the Chicago caveat of *if you do, don't get caught*.

I can't remember the last time I heard anything as openly cold and calculating as this episode. The closest is JFK's famous quip about his father doling out money at election time: *I have just received the following wire from my generous Daddy. It says, "Dear Jack: Don't buy a single vote more than is necessary. I'll be damned if I am going to pay for a landslide."*

As I said, I'm not surprised that such horse-trading is occurring in Dallas. but I am stunned by the relative openness of the bartering. At the very least, the column pulls back the curtain in way that ought to attract investigators who might be wondering the source of those dollars and whether public or campaign money is being misused.

It's not vote buying per se, but it is buying an organization, and in the court of public opinion -- if not in the law -- that is just a step removed from buying a vote. And it also explains why the best candidates -- those who don't want to play the game either lose or simply decide not to run.