18 Including former Rep Dick Gephardt, D-Missouri and former Rep. Harold Ford, Sr., D-TN. Gephardt served as the House Majority leader; Ford sat on the House Banking Committee.

The revolving door between Wall Street and government doesn't just lead into and out of Congress. Consider the circuitous career path taken by former White House Chief of Staff Joshua Bolten. Bolten graduated with a law degree in the early 1980s, and between 1985 and 1989, he bounced between the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, the law firm of O'Melveny & Myers, which represents Goldman Sachs -- and is a registered lobbyist for Citigroup, according to Legistorm ($$) -- and the Senate Finance Committee.

After a brief stint in the first Bush administration, Bolten went over to Goldman Sachs, where he served as executive director of legislative affairs for five years. Then he became policy director on George W. Bush's 2000 campaign. After the election, he worked his way up from assistant to the president to director of the Office of Management and Budget and, finally, to White House Chief-of-Staff, which some believe to be the second most powerful position in the government. In that role, he was credited with recruiting then-Goldman CEO Henry Paulson to head up the Treasury Department, where he would preside over the bank bailouts – much to Goldman's benefit. ***http://tinyurl.com/pxeey*** After leaving the White House, Bolten got a cushy sinecure as the John L. Weinberg/Goldman Sachs & Co. Visiting Professor at Princeton.

It's an exceptional career, but not an unusual story. Robert Rubin, Bill Clinton's Treasury Secretary, was vice-chairman at Goldman before helping to orchestrate the deregulation of just the kinds of complex financial instruments that took down the economy. After his stint at Treasury, Rubin landed at Citigroup, where he raked in $128 million over the course of eight years.
http://tinyurl.com/7e2hmz

"Without question, direct government support was critical in stabilizing the financial system, and we benefitted from it," Goldman's Lloyd Blankfein said. ***http://tinyurl.com/28w7fwj***

Campaign Donations

The big banks are some of the biggest donors to political campaigns in the country. Yet, when you compare what they spend on candidates to what they got in bailouts, it's pennies on the dollar. In other words, it's a worthwhile investment to spend money on candidates.

Corporations can't give money directly to politicians running for federal office. They get around that sticking point in several ways. First, they can donate to campaigns through their political action committees (PACs). (A corporation can't fund its PACs from its revenues directly; it can create a PAC, pick up its administrative costs, and then solicit contributions from the company's executives and shareholders.) But corporate PACs can give no more than $5,000 a year to a given federal candidate.

Another way is through the use of what's known as "soft money." Soft money is used to build party infrastructure or to buy political ads that are produced independently from a campaign. Soft money ads are ostensibly used to educate voters about various issues, but they often look exactly like campaign ads that convey a clear message of whom a voter should or shouldn't support.

"Bundling" is another way corporations inject money into politics. There are limits on how much an individual can give to a candidate for federal office, so wealthy donors seek out contributions from friends, family and business associates, and "bundle" them into large pots of cash. In exchange, they usually become part of a club – like the Bush "Rangers" – and get invited to insiders' events where they have plenty of opportunities to influence a candidate.