Good Politics

M. Simon

I don't normally do politics here (besides, my editor won't allow it) but this is too good to pass up. And it is relevant to the work we all do. According to Wired Magazine [1] and Senator Scott Brown himself who wrote the Wired article (hard to get more authoritative than that), the Senator is sponsoring a bill to help little guys raise capital the same way the big boys do: that is, float a public offering.

The Senator explains his rationale in this excerpt from the Wired article:

> For this new market to flourish, it’s important that every participant has confidence in the integrity of the system. My legislation puts parameters on risk by limiting investments to $1,000 per person and $1 million in total capital. It also provides strong protections to make certain that investors are not deceived about the possible risks associated with a new venture.
>
> Despite these protections, some have voiced concerns that crowdfunding is an avenue for fraud and abuse. But, consider this: Americans are allowed to gamble unlimited amounts at casinos, and can send donations to charities halfway around the world with one tap of a trackpad. Yet, we are legally prevented from making even modest investments in job-creating small businesses.
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> This simple change in law has the potential to unleash a wave of capital investment in companies still on the initial stages of the growth curve. For the first time, entrepreneurs would simply put their ideas up for investors’ consideration using Twitter, Facebook, and other social media. In today’s wired world, where an MIT student can start a profitable business right in his or her dorm room, **crowdfunding might just be one of the ideas that pushes us out of this economic downturn**.
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> While Washington is hopelessly deadlocked on so many other issues today, much progress has been made this year on crowdfunding legislation and it is actually close to becoming law. In addition to my bill currently before the

> Senate, President Obama, the SEC, and an overwhelming majority of the House are now in support of legalizing crowdfunding. In fact, a crowdfunding bill passed the House on November 3, 2011, by a vote of 407-17 [2]—a rare showing of bipartisanship for Congress.

Senator Brown asks that you contact your Senator to help push this bill through Congress so the President can sign it. I think that would be a very good idea.

It fits in with a trend I heard from my cousin-in-law (is there such a term?) Rick in California. I had called his wife (my cousin) to tell her about the article I wrote [3] about how her father inspired me to go into electronics and Rick and I started discussing things. He was telling me about a businesses, Techshop [4], opening up in California (Silicon Valley area) specifically designed to help individual makers bend and cut metal, or precision cut/engrave wood, and other similar operations. He is planning to take classes with the shop (as in machine shop) so he can use the tools for some projects he has in mind. He was telling me about a water jet machine they have that can cut steel pieces up to 4" (10 cm) thick. No messy oxyacetylene torches required. Some of the people doing work in that shop will develop ideas for businesses that could be profitable if only capital wasn't so difficult to raise by current methods.

That shop is not the only thing along those lines happening in California. A yearly event called The Makers Faire [5] is very popular. One exhibit I was reading about had a musical Tesla Coil. I don't know what kind of market there is for that sort of thing but it must have been fun to watch.

In any case, call or write (e-mail too) your Senators and get them to support Scott Brown's Bill. You can find your Senator's contact information at The Senate.Gov [6].

M. Simon's e-mail can be found on the sidebar at Space-Time Productions [7]

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