

Nader Encourages Civic Engagement

Americans feel they're losing control of their government, their lives, and their children – and need to become more civically engaged to combat corporate influence of government. That was the message consumer advocate and former Green Party presidential candidate Ralph Nader brought to Peru State College Monday night.

During his hour-and-a-half long presentation, Nader criticized U.S. foreign and domestic policy. He said U.S. foreign policy is increasingly militarized, and he said that a small number of large corporations have undue influence on the political process.

To combat that influence, Nader says students need to become involved in their communities and the political process. (play audio :47)

Nader challenged schools to help in the effort. He said colleges should offer a “civics skills” course, and a course called Congress 101 – to study the actions of current members of Congress. That’s something he says would be easy to do. (play audio :53)

Ralph Nader’s first foray into public life came when he took on the automobile industry in his 1965 book “Unsafe at Any Speed.” He’s formed several citizen groups over the years, including the Center for Auto Safety, Public Citizen, the Pension Rights Center, the National Coalition for Universities in the Public Interest, and the student Public Interest Research Groups. He says his message resonates with people across the political spectrum. (play audio :30)

Nader was the final speaker in the college’s 2011-2012 Distinguished Speaker Series. He replaced Anthony Shadid on the Distinguished Speaker Series. Shadid was a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist who died suddenly while on assignment in Syria. Nader is a friend of the Shadid family. He began his remarks with a tribute to Anthony Shadid, calling him the greatest foreign correspondent of his generation.