



ACORN'S GRANDCHILDREN: WEAPONIZING CHARITABLE CASH TO WIN POLITICAL BATTLES

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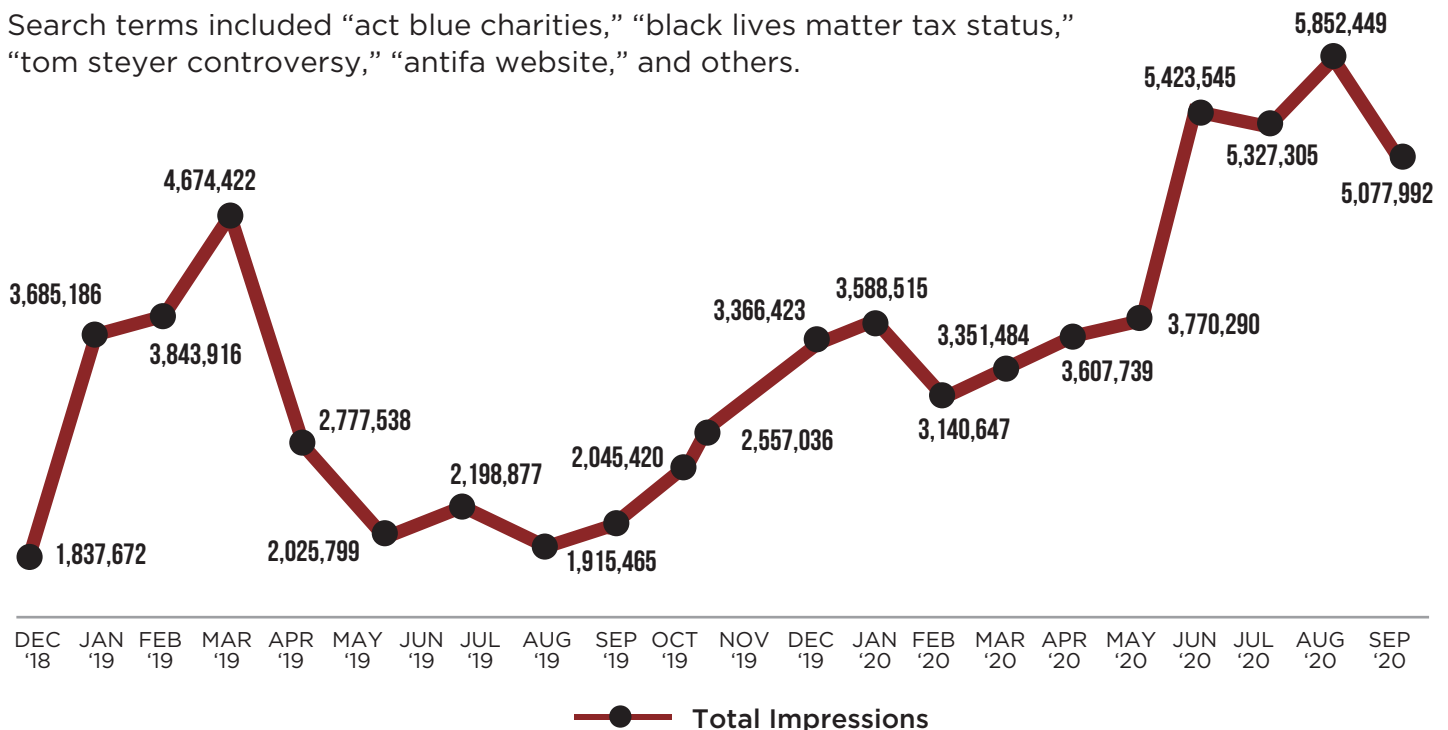
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CAPITAL RESEARCH CENTER
AMERICA'S INVESTIGATIVE THINK TANK

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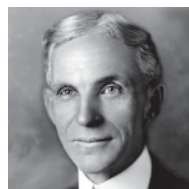
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Is Your Legacy Safe?



An instructive and cautionary tale for our time.

—W.J. Hume,
Jaquelin Hume Foundation

This is a must read for anyone thinking about establishing a private foundation.

—Linda Childears,
*Former President and CEO
The Daniels Fund*

No, your legacy is not safe.

It is hard enough to give well when you're living. After you're gone, the odds of successful giving are stacked even higher against you. Entrepreneurial geniuses like Andrew Carnegie, John D.

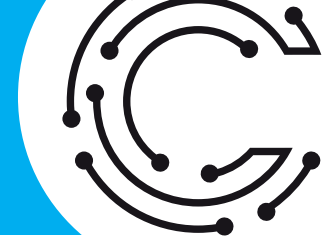
Rockefeller, and Henry Ford were rarely tricked out of their money in business deals. But when they gave their money away, they failed to have their intentions respected.

This fascinating book covers the history of some of the biggest philanthropic mistakes and offers practical tips on how to protect your legacy. Everyone who wants to use their money to change the world needs to read this book.

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MUZZLES FOR YE, NO SHOTS FOR WE

By Michael Watson

At this point, the obstinacy of the teachers unions in refusing to enable the provision of the public education that most state constitutions guarantee to parents should require no recounting. Public policy scholars have found that teachers union power is correlated with more protracted school closures. Unions demanded full enactment of radical-left policy programs if they were ever to be expected to do their jobs again.

Randi Weingarten, the nation's most prominent teachers unionist, responded to criticism of this obstinacy with the unbelievable assertion that “we [her union] wanted kids in school.

[sic] I have been arguing for that since April 2020.”

Meanwhile, the Chicago Teachers Union, Local 1 of Weingarten's American Federation of Teachers, is already demanding health metrics that would close schools *again*, despite vaccination being available to all adults and many students.

With the Biden administration pushing for a return to the mask-and-lockdown policies of a time before adult vaccination for COVID-19, local teachers unions are all-in on restrictions—on your children and the general public,



Even blue-staters are tired of their face diapers.



The Chicago Teachers Union, Local 1 of Randi Weingarten's American Federation of Teachers, is already demanding health metrics that would close schools again, despite vaccination being available to all adults and many students.

but largely *not their own members*. As blue state and city school districts, with aid and comfort from Republicans like Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson, push mask mandates on children (who face less danger of complications from COVID-19 than from “ordinary” respiratory infections), the teachers unions and Weingarten cheerlead the mandates.

Even blue-staters are tired of their face diapers, so liberal public officials looking for a face-saving way out of the COVID crisis and Delta variant panic are beginning to demand that government workers (including teachers) get vaccinated against COVID. Now the loudest yelps for liberty are coming from the muzzlers of children, as teachers unions

Michael Watson is Capital Research Center's research director and managing editor for InfluenceWatch.

Credit: C-SPAN. License: <https://bit.ly/3hEEJfY>.

like the New York State United Teachers have objected to vaccinating teachers as a condition of employment.

For her part, Weingarten flip-flopped to favoring vaccination mandates after initially opposing them. While she cited changed circumstances, a cynic might suggest that the image of Weingarten muzzling children while excusing anti-vaccine teachers from mandates might have been too much for her union's political position to bear.

The teachers unions did not stand alone among Big Labor organizations supporting ineffectual mask mandates for the masses while rejecting requirements to get COVID-19 shots. In Maryland, the University of Maryland Medical System understandably required health care workers to get the shot, but 1199SEIU, the nurses union that also represents many nursing-home workers, opposed the demand. In New Jersey, the Health Professionals and Allied Employees union opposed a mandatory vaccination requirement for health care workers proposed by some hospitals.

Before the CDC flip-flopped on mandating public masks after some vaccinated men at “Bear Week” came down with SARS-Cov-2–induced colds, the few remaining places vaccinated people were forced to wear masks on pain of fines or imprisonment were settings controlled by organized labor and organized labor's allies in the Biden administration, like public transport, commercial aircraft, and schools that Big Labor have turned into little more than prisons.

In their demands that union members not face mandates while demanding that the public “mask up” on pain of fines or imprisonment, Big Labor shows once again that it serves its own special interest, not the public interest. As states like Illinois and the federal government consider expanding union power ever further, that truth must remain front of mind. ■

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BIG MONEY IN DARK SHADOWS

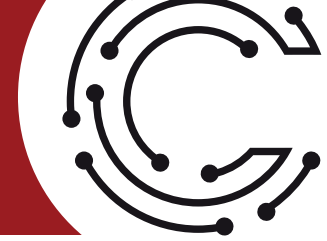
Arabella Advisors' Half-billion-dollar
“Dark Money” Network

—Hayden R. Ludwig

According to media personalities and politicians, nameless, faceless donors wield outsized influence over the American political process due to the so-called “dark money” they use to fund think tanks and advocacy groups. But that's far from the whole story. “Dark money” exists on both sides of the aisle. In fact, the Left seems to have deeper and darker pockets of cash than anyone suspected. Learn more about liberal “dark money” in CRC's original report.



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AMERICA'S INVESTIGATIVE THINK TANK



SHELDON WHITEHOUSE AND THE LEFT'S MYSTERY BILLIONAIRE

By Ken Braun

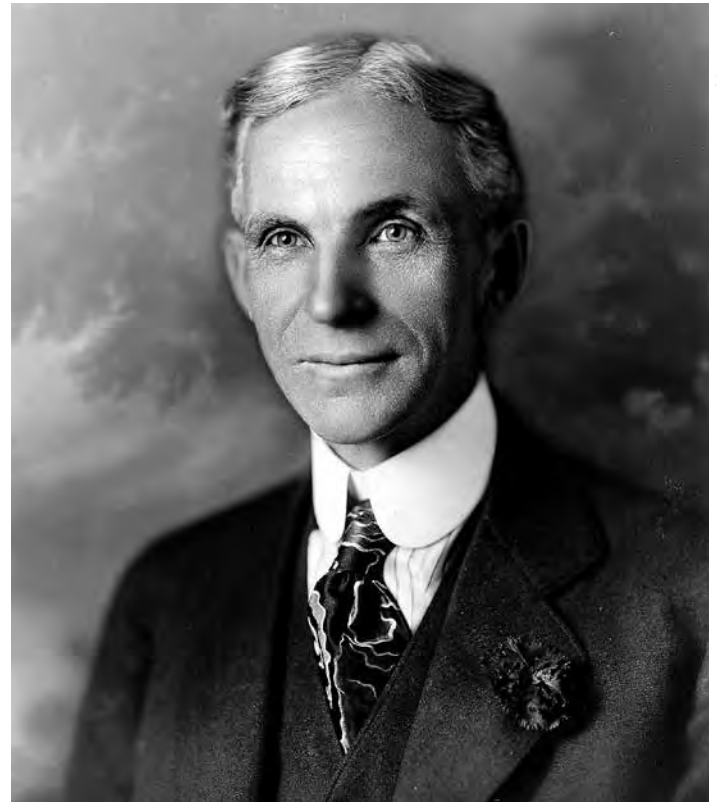
Summary: *Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) has tried to make his reputation policing so-called “dark money.” The Ford Foundation gives well over \$100 million per year to programs that advance policy and political wins for the Left and Democratic politicians, yet Whitehouse recently claimed it “doesn’t seem to have much in the way of a political motive or purpose.” Funded with Henry Ford’s fortune and now worth more than \$12 billion, today’s Ford Foundation is run by people almost nobody knows and funds things ole Henry would almost certainly disagree with. How much darker does money get?*

Michael Bloomberg ranked fourth on a recent *Forbes* list of “The 25 Philanthropists in America Making the Biggest Donations.” One of several billionaires with a well-known bias for left-wing causes, *Forbes* noted Bloomberg’s bucks had been “especially active on the issues of gun control, public health and climate change; the latter has included efforts to shutter coal-powered plants in the U.S.”

The *Forbes* list did not include Ford Motor Company founder Henry Ford, even though Ford’s recent philanthropic footprint slightly exceeded Bloomberg’s. He may have died in 1947, but the fortune Henry built has lived on—with other people spending it—at the Ford Foundation. And, though likely contrary to what ole Henry would have wanted, the foundation also been one of the biggest benefactors of left-leaning causes for more than half a century.

It has been a long time since the hefty-lefty influence of Henry Ford’s money has received anything but indifferent to non-existent attention from conventional media. It is a secret so well concealed that even a major left-leaning politician who benefits from the agenda—Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI)—can get away with professing no knowledge it.

To deploy one of Whitehouse’s favorite phrases, one might call it “dark money.”



Public Domain.

Henry Ford may have died in 1947, but the fortune he built has lived on—with other people spending it—at the Ford Foundation.

The Committee Hearing Debacle

In an April 2021 appearance on the *Strict Scrutiny* podcast, Whitehouse fielded softball questions from two law professor hosts about his oft-repeated assertion that free market and right-leaning donors have too much influence over the selection of U.S. Supreme Court nominees.

Ken Braun is CRC’s senior investigative researcher and authors profiles for InfluenceWatch.org and the Capital Research magazine.

This was also the subject of a March 10 Senate hearing chaired by Whitehouse. But the performance didn't go well for him. Witnesses such as the Capital Research Center's Scott Walter provided overwhelming evidence that the agenda of the Ford Foundation and many other monster donors on the left swamps everything Whitehouse could be concerned about from the right.

After this debacle, according to the Strict Scrutiny podcasters, Whitehouse's staff "reached out" for an opportunity for him to appear on the show. The whiff of damage control by Senate staffers was hard to miss.

At several points in the discussion with the professors Whitehouse tried to deny that the Left spends activist bucks to influence Supreme Court confirmations. The charade reached its climax when the senator described the Ford Foundation as an "amazingly well-established public interest foundation that doesn't seem to have much in the way of a political motive or purpose."

Since 2016 the Ford Foundation has given at least \$22.4 million in total donations to the Center for American Progress, the Alliance for Justice, and the Leadership Conference Education Fund. All three of these left-leaning recipients took public stands and actions in recent years against the confirmation of President Donald Trump's three Supreme Court nominees.

And they were just a few drops in a vast bucket of lefty cash flowing from the Ford Foundation. For a five-year period beginning in 2016, records kept by the charitable recordkeeping service FoundationSearch show the Ford Foundation gave a *minimum* of \$604.8 million to support more than 100 other organizations that clearly favor Democratic successes and left-leaning policy outcomes.

This is a very generous, low-ball estimate. Many millions of dollars given to universities are excluded, even though there was justification for including many of them. For example, the Ford Foundation's description of a \$400,000 grant to

CC _____
From 2016 to 2021, the Ford Foundation gave a minimum of \$604.8 million to support more than 100 organizations that clearly favor Democratic successes and left-leaning policy outcomes.

Rutgers University reads "For the Gloria Steinem Endowed Chair and Program Fund in Media Culture and Feminist Studies which will examine the relationship between media and the promotion of democratic participation."

Similarly, the estimate of Ford's lefty funding also excludes single-issue organizations narrowly focused on social or civil liberties issues. For example, the estimate does *not* include \$6.5 million given to Planned Parenthood over the preceding five years or the \$350,000 Ford sent to NARAL. Both are pro-abortion organizations that for decades have been reliable and severe opponents of Supreme Court nominees chosen by Republican presidents. Similarly, the estimate also excludes grants given to organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union Foundation (\$4.7 million), the NAACP (\$825,000), and the Migration Policy Institute (\$5 million).

Senator Cancel Culture

Yet even with these careful exclusions, what remains is the Ford Foundation's \$120 million annual agenda to fund the Left. Somehow, all of this eluded the notice of Sen. Whitehouse, even though he fancies himself something of an expert on right-leaning and free market donors.

Before he joined the Senate, Whitehouse was the attorney general of Rhode Island. In that capacity, he once tried to defend a precedent-setting property rights violation the state was inflicting on a private landowner. The case wound its way up to the U.S. Supreme Court, and in a 2001 decision Whitehouse got his tail kicked by the Pacific Legal Foundation (PLF), which was representing the landowner. As in nearly all its work, PLF was providing pro-bono (free) legal assistance to a client squaring off in court against a government accused of violating constitutional rights.

The case, *Palazzolo v. Rhode Island*, could more descriptively be called "*Owner of Polly's Auto Wrecking v. The Functionally Limitless Legal Resources of the State of Rhode Island*." But Whitehouse (the attorney for Goliath in this *David v. Goliath* dispute) didn't see it that way ... and didn't forget. In a 2016 Senate speech he called PLF a "creepy front group."

Then in 2018, during the future Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh's confirmation hearing, Whitehouse obliquely raised the issue of the *Palazzolo* case when he grilled the nominee. "Do you know what they do?" demanded Whitehouse, referencing the Pacific Legal Foundation. A mystified Kavanaugh responded: "I'll take your description." Plot spoiler: Whitehouse's description did not include "provide free legal representation to tow truck drivers."

During the summer of 2016 Whitehouse led his fellow Senate Democrats through two days of Senate floor denunciations of more than a dozen free market think tanks such as the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI), at one point shrieking that they were all a “filthy thing in our democracy.”

The alleged stain on democracy was CEI’s disagreement with Whitehouse’s extreme-left energy and climate policy positions.

Then he went lower. As a witness during a September 2020 committee hearing in the U.S. House of Representatives, Whitehouse accused the Judicial Crisis Network and the libertarian/right-leaning Federalist Society of conducting a “massive covert operation, screened behind dark-money secrecy, run by a small handful of big special interests, against their own country.”

Dark Money and the First Amendment

There is disagreement regarding the definition of “dark money.” The general idea is that it is a somewhat or totally anonymous donation given to promote a political or public policy cause, often one that is controversial.

There are very important First Amendment justifications for permitting this donor privacy. To consider just one: A donor might wish to avoid having his or her political and free speech rights held hostage by a grandstanding hypocritical U.S. senator who recklessly accuses people of being traitors.

Spending a Dead Man’s Dark Money

Sen. Whitehouse could benefit from a nonpartisan look at the Ford Foundation. After all, what is darker than a cabal of largely unknown lefty foundation staffers controlling a \$12 billion-plus pot of gold earned by a man who has been dead for more than seven decades and then spending billions of it on things the departed almost certainly wouldn’t have supported?

The Ford Foundation is an accidental byproduct of bad tax policy and unforeseen consequences. Confiscatory estate tax rates during the first half of the 20th century left one of the richest men on earth with a difficult decision: He could leave his family with control of his car company or his fortune, but not both. He chose for them to keep the company, and the foundation got the fortune.

Shortly before Henry died in 1947, his grandson Henry Ford II, became president and CEO of Ford Motor. “The Deuce,” as he was known, was the dominant leadership



Credit: Hugo van Gelderen/Anfo. License: <https://bit.ly/3A17k7a>.

Shortly before Henry Ford died in 1947, his grandson Henry Ford II, became president and CEO of Ford Motor.

force behind the automaker until 1980. In the 1950s, Henry II permitted the Ford Foundation’s board to expand to the point where the family no longer held the majority.

It was a decision he would regret.

Shortly before Christmas 1976, the frustrated Ford Motor CEO became the last Ford family member to walk away from the Ford Foundation board. In a farewell message he reminded his erstwhile board members that their financial plaything was the result of “competitive enterprise” and the “fruits of our economic system.”

Then he twisted the dagger a bit:

In effect, the foundation is a creature of capitalism—a statement that, I’m sure, would be shocking to many professional staff in the field of philanthropy. It is hard to discern recognition of this fact in anything the foundation does. It is even more difficult to find an understanding of this in many of the institutions, particularly the universities, that are the beneficiaries of the foundation’s grant programs.

The foundation’s leadership responded with a press statement announcing Henry II’s resignation that quoted only a self-serving short passage in which Ford said nice things about the board.

Somehow (one can imagine an obvious scenario) the *New York Times* ended up with a copy of the entire letter, with all the colorful criticisms intact. This led to a front page story

on January 12, 1977: “Henry Ford 2d Quits Foundation, Urges Appreciation for Capitalism.”

The *Times* report quoted additional barbs from his rebuke:

I’m not playing the role of the hardheaded tycoon who thinks all philanthropoids are socialists and all university professors are Communists. I’m just suggesting to the trustees and the staff that the system that makes the foundation possible very probably is worth preserving.

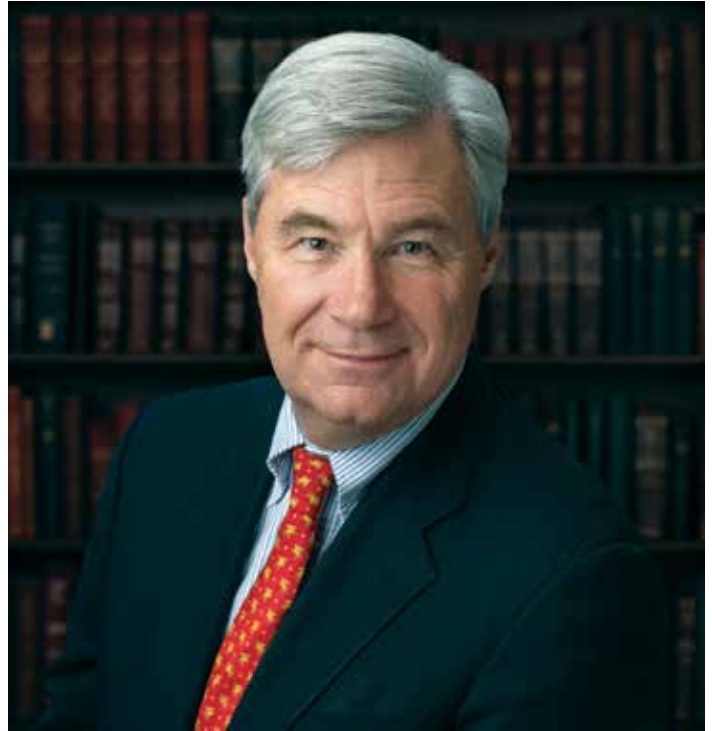
What sort of mischief had the Deuce so worked up?

In July 1967, the Ford Foundation contributed \$175,000 (\$1.4 million in 2021 dollars) for an African American voter registration drive in Cleveland. The timing was conspicuous and the agenda absurdly transparent. The registration drive occurred just before the November 1967 Cleveland mayoral election pitting Carl Stokes, an African American Democratic candidate, against the white Republican nominee. Stokes won by roughly 2,000 votes out of more than 256,000 cast for both candidates, a whisker-thin margin where any and every little thing could have made the difference. The Ford Foundation grant had registered 25,000 Cleveland voters, and an estimated 75 percent were African Americans.

The supposedly nonpolitical nonprofit had concocted a way to drop a big financial thumb on the scale to juice turnout toward a partisan Democratic victory. This skirting of the spirit of the nonprofit status offended even the Democratic-controlled Congress. A new tax law passed in 1969 and signed by President Richard Nixon placed tighter restrictions on voter registration drives run by nonprofits. As a result, these voter engagement activities now must be broad-based over multiple states and election cycles, not laser-focused on influencing the results of one specific contest.

Some in Congress referred to the changes as the “McGeorge Bundy amendments”—a reference to the Ford Foundation’s president at the time.

Bundy addressed and defended his role in the controversy in the Ford Foundation’s 1978 annual report. In a prelude to the comically wrong conclusion that Sen. Whitehouse reached more than four decades later, Bundy wrote, “There



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Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse’s assertion that the Ford Foundation “doesn’t seem to have much in the way of a political motive or purpose” is contradicted by tens of millions of dollars in recent grants that were not just “left-leaning” but “far-left-leaning.”

are private foundations whose agenda seems to me plainly political—in the ideological sense—as ours is not.”

But the problem of rabidly partisan capture of the Ford Foundation that Henry Ford II denounced is still there. What is different now is it happens in the shadows of minimal scrutiny. If that’s not precisely “dark” money, then the cash certainly isn’t spending its days enjoying sunlight.

Hard Left Turns for Henry Ford’s Fortune

Sen. Whitehouse’s assertion that the Ford Foundation “doesn’t seem to have much in the way of a political motive or purpose” is contradicted by tens of millions of dollars in recent grants that were not just “left-leaning” but “far-left-leaning.”



Stokes won by roughly 2,000 votes, a whisker-thin margin where any and every little thing could have made the difference.

The Center for Popular Democracy (CPD) is a pleasantly named organization with an agenda well to the left of most of the Democratic Party. It raked in \$16 million from the Ford Foundation over the preceding five years. An April 2021 policy paper from CPD advocated that the Federal Reserve deprioritize its focus on price stability—a reversal of nearly four decades of highly effective bipartisan agreement to keep inflation under control. The CPD also endorses the Green New Deal, a cryptically socialist climate proposal so radical and expensive that it was mocked by Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) as the “green dream, or whatever they call it, nobody knows what it is.”

Also way out beyond the left flank of all mainstream U.S. politics is the Grassroots Policy Project, recipient of \$3.4 million from the Ford Foundation. An April 2020 policy paper from Grassroots Policy called for politically exploiting the COVID-19 pandemic to enact a left-wing wish list of policies such as the Green New Deal and Medicare for All. And these were just the warm-up for an explicit call to socialism, with one section titled “Leveraging government loans and bailout as openings for public control and ownership.”

Similarly, over the same era the Ford Foundation gave a combined \$30.5 million to eight other organizations that publicly endorsed the Green New Deal or its objectives: the Sunrise Movement, Greenpeace, Demos, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the People’s Action Institute, Public Citizen, the Institute for Policy Studies, and the Rainforest Action Network.

Speaker Pelosi’s worries about the Green New Deal are well founded. An American Action Forum analysis estimated that the 10-year price tag would cost Americans \$51 *trillion* to \$93 *trillion*. That high-end number roughly matches the annual gross domestic product of the entire Earth. Yet demonstrating a peculiar intellectual independence, the Rainforest Action Network (recipient of more than \$2.2 million from the Ford Foundation) criticized the Green New Deal for *not being radical enough*.

These grants total to \$50 million over the preceding five years to organizations promoting policies decisively to the left of every Democratic presidential nominee since at least George McGovern, arguably back more than a century to William Jennings Bryan.

Much bigger chunks of Ford Foundation cash since 2016 have been handed over to organizations favoring the more conventional-left goals of Democratic politicians.

The Center for American Progress (CAP), founded and operated by longtime Clinton Family consiglieres such as John Podesta and Neera Tanden, is the flagship think tank promoting all major Democratic Party policy priorities. Ford Foundation grants to CAP since 2016 total almost \$7.2 million.

Over the same period the Ford Foundation has given more than \$123 million total to three dozen additional think tanks and policy organizations that promote some of the same Democratic Party policy priorities. Some of the better known recipients include the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (fiscal policy), William J. Brennan Center for Justice (judicial and legal policy), and the Environmental Defense Fund (climate and energy policy).

In addition to what has been listed to this point, the Ford Foundation has provided roughly \$350 million since 2016 in grants to an eclectic mix of other recipients whose work benefited the Left generally and Democrats specifically.

Examples included \$10 million to the Advancement Project (an organization works against voter ID regulations), another \$10 million to Color of Change (an advocacy organization promoting student loan debt cancellation, plus other left-leaning tax, labor, and education policies), \$1.1 million to the Foundation for National Progress (publisher of *Mother Jones*, a left-wing opinion journal), and \$500,000 to the Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund (an anti-Second Amendment advocacy group).

Nine Big Labor advocacy organizations such as the Restaurant Opportunities Centers United and the Economic Policy Institute received a combined total of \$78.2 million.

The Dark Roads Through Arabella Advisors

Finally, at least 114 separate Ford Foundation grants, totaling almost \$65 million, were given over the previous five years to the New Venture Fund. In Sen. Whitehouse’s classification system, each one could be considered a “massive covert operation, screened behind dark-money secrecy, run by a small handful of big special interests.”

This recent Ford Foundation support was part of more than 1,300 separate grants New Venture Fund received from hundreds of other foundations, totaling well over \$900 million since 2016.

While that is already pretty “massive,” New Venture is just one moving part of a larger “operation.” It is one of four foundations managed by Arabella Advisors, a for-profit



The four Arabella foundations fund a dizzying number of programs, many of which stridently advance Democratic and left-wing causes.

philanthropy consulting firm founded and run by Eric Kessler, a veteran of lefty ramparts such as the Clinton White House and the League of Conservation Voters. The Hopewell Fund, another Arabella appendage, received more than \$2 million from the Ford Foundation during the 2016–2020 period.

Each year Arabella’s network rakes in hundreds of millions of dollars from some of the biggest names in left-of-center advocacy. The four Arabella foundations then use a lot of this to fund a dizzying number of programs, many of which stridently advance Democratic and left-wing causes. One good example is Demand Justice, a judicial advocacy organization purposely built to spend millions of dollars to prevent confirmation of Supreme Court candidates nominated by Republican presidents (and to promote those nominated by Democratic presidents).

Recall that Whitehouse’s accusation about the “massive covert operation” committing something traitorous against America was a reference to a right-leaning organization doing exactly what Demand Justice has been doing for the Left.

With me so far? This is where it gets dark and complicated...

Arabella-linked foundations, such as the New Venture Fund, often provide a filter that obscures who is funding the advocacy programs.

For example, during the 2016 through 2020 period, New Venture took in \$165 million from the Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund. Fidelity is a donor-advised fund that takes in billions of dollars annually from hundreds of thousands of donors and then redistributes that money to what is likely millions of individual recipients that are specified by the original donors.

The \$165 million in Fidelity grants to the New Venture Fund were described as “For grant recipient’s exempt purposes.” This is foundation speak for “it could be for absolutely anything that the New Venture Fund is involved in!”

So it is unclear who gave the \$165 million to Fidelity for it to give to the New Venture Fund, and it is unclear for what the New Venture Fund was to use the money.

We do know that the New Venture Fund finances and incubates an almost incalculable list of left-leaning projects such as the Inclusive Economy Fund, which advocates for Big

Labor wish list items such as a \$15 minimum wage. We also know that this agitation is deliberately and suspiciously concentrated in “states such as Florida, Michigan, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania”—presidential election battlegrounds. But we have no idea how much of the Fidelity money is used for this project (if any), nor where it came from.

Somewhat more clearly, we know that New Venture’s Inclusive Economy Fund also received funding from the Ford Foundation during this era. We know this because the descriptions of the grants to New Venture Fund from the Ford Foundation are specifically identified as such. Similarly, we know that the Ford Foundation gave \$5.5 million to New Venture’s Media Democracy Fund, an issue advocacy organization that promotes left-leaning policies such as net neutrality and enhanced government control over the internet.

But there is also at least \$16 million given by the Ford Foundation to New Venture under various grant descriptions that all include the term “civic engagement.” Many of these descriptions also include terms such as “political engagement,” “voting policies,” and “voter engagement.”

Battleground state spending and “political engagement.” Perhaps, not much has changed about the Ford Foundation since its hyper-partisan Cleveland mayoral work in 1967?

It is possible (perhaps probable?) that this all went to New Venture’s Civic Engagement Fund. This New Venture program incubates still more programs, all generally aimed at spiking turnout among likely Democratic voting constituencies.

Many of the Ford Foundation grant descriptions to New Venture were even less clear. For example, \$11.8 million was given in 15 separate grants, all under the vague term “Technology and Society–Technology.”

In the big picture the financial trail between the Ford Foundation and the Arabella Advisors network (through the New Venture Fund) is well concealed. As previously discussed, the Ford Foundation staff is probably not spending the money as Henry Ford would have wanted. This leaves us with a rich guy who died in the middle of the 20th century who is today generously funding a reliable and strident incubator of programs that seem to favor Democratic electoral victories and left-leaning policy.



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Lyndon Baines Johnson and John F. Kennedy. He is arguably best remembered as one of the primary cheerleaders for escalating the Vietnam War.

If you told a modestly well-informed right-of-center American in 1970 that Bundy was spending a huge fortune on lefty causes, this would not have been a surprise.

Similarly, Michael Bloomberg is hardly the only well-known name behind big money going to today's political and strongly ideological causes. Rivers of identifiable bucks from the Left and Right flow from names such as Koch, Gates, Soros, and more. The billionaires with those fortunes are still in control of the money and the agenda.

Not so with Henry Ford.

According to the 2018 IRS filing, the Ford Foundation spent \$188.5 million on operating expenses, more than \$90 million of which went to employee compensation. More than half a billion was given out as grants.

An architectural design firm was paid \$3 million.

A \$765,174 expense was listed as going to “the production of an authoritative history of the Ford Foundation to help educate the philanthropic community and the general public.” (This was perhaps not as effective as it could have been?)

At the top of the organizational pyramid sits the president, Darren Walker, with total compensation exceeding \$1 million—one of five employees to crack seven-figures. If you are shaking your head quizzically, then you are not alone. While many Americans can identify the name of the man who put the money in the Ford Foundation (because he put America on wheels), functionally zero know the names of any of the powerful people who now control the money.

This includes, it seems, Sheldon Whitehouse, the U.S. Senator who prides himself most on tracking the influence of money in politics. ■

Read previous articles from the Foundation Watch series online at [CapitalResearch.org/category/foundation-watch/](https://www.CapitalResearch.org/category/foundation-watch/).

McGeorge Bundy was the Ford Foundation president from 1966 to 1979. If you told a modestly well-informed right-of-center American in 1970 that Bundy was spending a huge fortune on lefty causes, this would not have been a surprise.

An Anonymous Agenda

The left-leaning agenda was much more obvious back in 1976 when Henry Ford II fired off his acrimonious resignation letter. Back then the names of the people spending the fortune were still relatively well known.

McGeorge Bundy was the Ford Foundation president. He took the job in 1966 and stayed until 1979. Before that he had already become a well-known historical figure as the National Security Advisor to two American presidents:



THE LEFT'S VOTING MACHINE

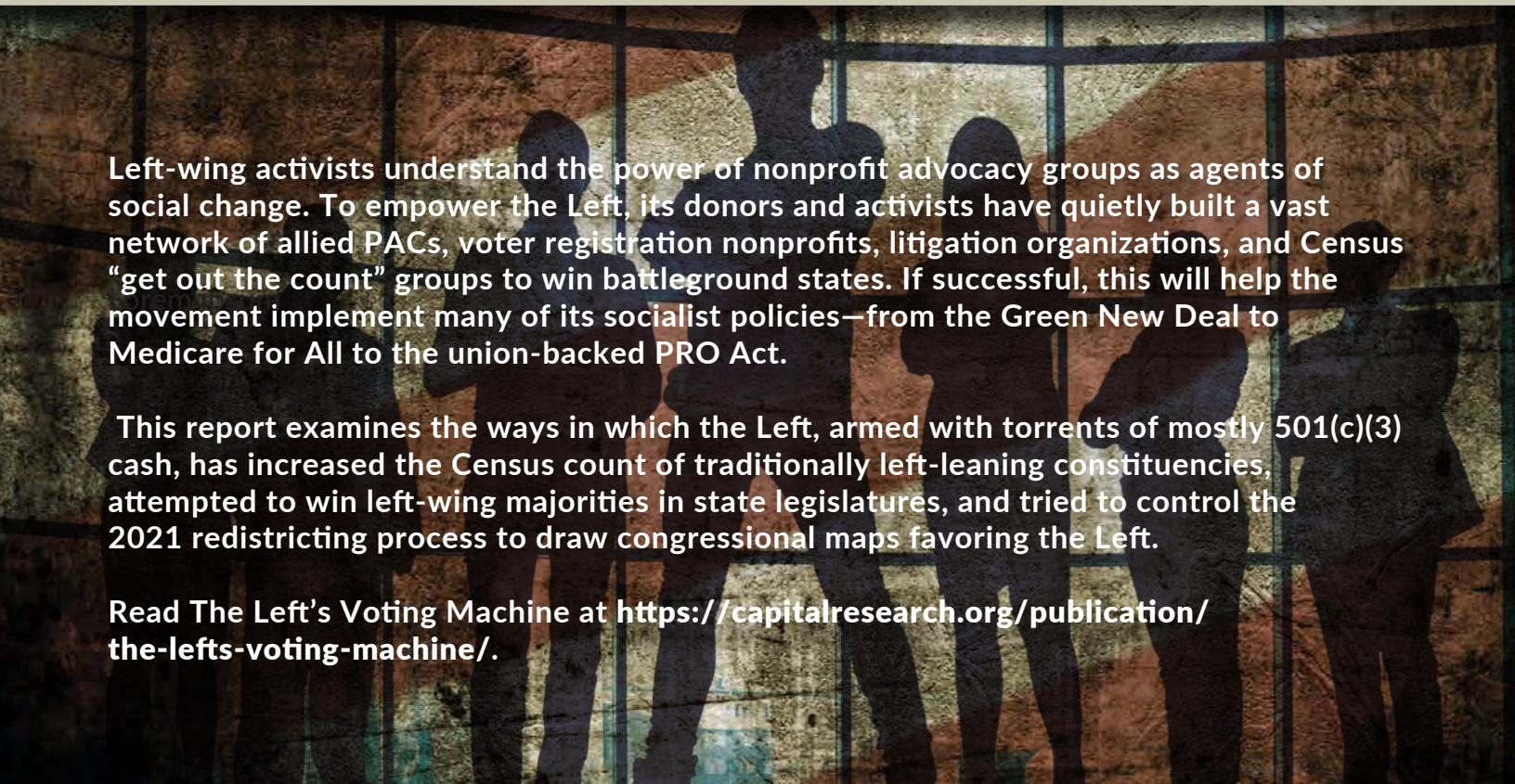


CAPITAL RESEARCH CENTER
AMERICA'S INVESTIGATIVE THINK TANK

Left-wing activists understand the power of nonprofit advocacy groups as agents of social change. To empower the Left, its donors and activists have quietly built a vast network of allied PACs, voter registration nonprofits, litigation organizations, and Census “get out the count” groups to win battleground states. If successful, this will help the movement implement many of its socialist policies—from the Green New Deal to Medicare for All to the union-backed PRO Act.

This report examines the ways in which the Left, armed with torrents of mostly 501(c)(3) cash, has increased the Census count of traditionally left-leaning constituencies, attempted to win left-wing majorities in state legislatures, and tried to control the 2021 redistricting process to draw congressional maps favoring the Left.

Read The Left's Voting Machine at <https://capitalresearch.org/publication/the-lefts-voting-machine/>.





THE LEFT WEAPONIZES CHARITABLE CASH TO WIN POLITICAL BATTLES

Exposing a Massive “Nonpartisan” Voter Turnout Scheme

By Parker Thayer

Summary: *Democratic consultants worked with foundations and the 2016 Hillary Clinton presidential campaign to create a multiyear, \$100 million plan to register voters in ways that would win elections for the Democratic Party. We have combed through leaked emails and public documents to trace the long and winding path of this massive undertaking, which saw private foundations and public charities—both required by law to be strictly nonpartisan—weaponize tax-exempt dollars to change the political battlefield.*

In November 2015, Robert Richman, president of the Democratic consultancy firm Grassroots Solutions, sent an email to Stephanie Schriock, president of EMILY’s List, a Democratic-aligned political action committee (PAC) that contained confidential plans for a scheme called the Everybody Votes Campaign.

Within hours Schriock had forwarded the plan to John Podesta, who was preparing to launch Hillary Clinton’s 2016 presidential campaign, asking Podesta, “Is this the voter registration program you were hoping for? Can I push it?” The email was later published on Wikileaks, after Podesta’s email account was hacked, but since then virtually nothing has been discovered or written about the mysterious Everybody Votes Campaign.

Until now, everything known about the Everybody Votes Campaign came from the confidential executive summary attached to those emails. (Capital Research Center is the only outlet that reported on that plan.)

The confidential executive summary states that the campaign would require \$106 million from 2016 to 2020 to fund voter registration initiatives in eight target states: Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, and Virginia, to “close the gaps in the rate of voter registration between white and non-white voters.”

The Everybody Votes Campaign summary observes that newly registered voters have very high turnout rates and that the campaign would register enough “non-white” voters in each state to close the vote margins between the Republican winners and Democratic losers of previous elections, so it



Credit: Grage Skidmore. License: <https://bit.ly/3rVoGxo>.

John Podesta, Hillary Clinton’s 2016 presidential campaign director. His leaked emails show he asked about “c3 versions” of a voter registration plan more than once.

would be hard to claim the campaign’s goal of changing which party wins elections has no relation to partisan politics. But that raises a major issue if any 501(c)(3) nonprofit groups were to involve themselves in this campaign, because federal law forbids such groups from conducting partisan electioneering.

In a better world, the fact that such a plan even existed and that it was shared with Hillary Clinton’s campaign manager ought to have been a major scandal in the nonprofit sector, but unfortunately the Everybody Votes Campaign was nothing special. The sad reality is that “nonpartisan” voter registration by nonprofits has been a favored tactic of the Democratic Party and its nonprofit allies since at least 2008.

Parker Thayer is a research assistant at CRC.

Democrats and their allies claim it's merely a fortunate coincidence that their party benefits from what they like to call "increased civic participation" among "historically disenfranchised" groups. The nonprofits are just performing a public service, they insist, and the nation should thank them for their generosity, as if what they're doing is akin to opening a soup kitchen or funding cancer research.

When confronted over their partisanship, these groups have scampered behind the fig leaf of transparently disingenuous philanthropy, because it is difficult to *prove* their partisan intentions. Yet in the case of the Everybody Votes Campaign, Capital Research Center has uncovered a lot of evidence of partisanship.

Where Did the Everybody Votes Campaign Originate?

A close examination of the campaign summary reveals that the plan was not originally developed by Grassroots Solutions. Rather, it was almost certainly taken from an earlier voter registration scheme found in John Podesta's emails.

In 2018, Capital Research Center reported in "A Dark Money Assault on U.S. Elections," that the Civic Participation Action Fund (a left-of-center dark money organization) and Corridor Partners (a prominent left-leaning consultancy firm) had first designed a partisan voter

Cast of Characters

The Voter Registration Project (VRP). The main character, a "nonpartisan" 501(c)(3) nonprofit created to fund the Everybody Votes Campaign. It pays numerous other left-wing groups to carry out voter registration at the national and state levels.

- **The Voter Registration Project Education Fund.** A 501(c)(3) nonprofit affiliate of the Voter Registration Project.
- **Register America.** A 501(c)(4) nonprofit affiliate of the Voter Registration Project, created and funded by the Civic Participation Action Fund and the SEIU.

Corridor Partners. Democratic-aligned consulting firm that created a voter registration plan that did not pretend to be "nonpartisan." Changes to make the plan appear "nonpartisan" are still visible in later versions. Civic Participation Action Fund used this plan, which is almost certainly the basis for the Everybody Votes Campaign.

Grassroots Solutions. Consulting firm that drafted the Everybody Votes Campaign plan that became the Voter Registration Project. The Voter Registration Project initially shared an address with Grassroots Solutions.

Everybody Votes Campaign. A plan developed by Grassroots Solutions that appears to be based on—and nearly identical to—the Corridor Partners plan. It had a \$106 million price tag, targeted eight states, and had a five-year duration aimed at garnering 2.2 million votes by 2020.

State Voices. Voter Registration Project's closest ally. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit that runs "state engagement tables," which coordinate the state's left-wing activist groups. The Voter Registration Project gave millions of dollars to State Voices and its state tables. Former State Voices president Roger Vann co-owns Voices Vote Now.

America Votes. A 501(c)(4) nonprofit loosely tied to the Voter Registration Project and closely tied to State Voices. America Votes president Greg Speed co-owns Voices Vote Now.

Voices Vote Now (VVN). Consulting firm created by the presidents of State Voices and America Votes. It is the actual employer of the staff of the Voter Registration Project and provided tech-consulting to help the Project's grantees use Democratic databases to register voters. Works out of the State Voices office.

- **Project Switchboard.** A recently launched project to develop easy software for voter registration groups to use.

Civic Participation Action Fund. A 501(c)(4) nonprofit created by Atlantic Philanthropies (the largest funder of Obamacare advocacy), which in turn funded and helped create Register America, the 501(c)(4) affiliate of the Voter Registration Project.

John Podesta. Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign director. Both the Corridor Partners Plan and the Everybody Votes Campaign were eventually shared with him. He may have been the driving force behind the campaigns. His leaked emails show he asked about "c3 versions" of a voter registration plan more than once.

registration scheme for 501(c)(4) groups and PACs and then adapted it to be “acceptable” for 501(c)(3) nonprofits that are not allowed to operate as partisans.

The Corridor Partners plan was sent to Podesta from a left-wing foundation president in February 2015, with the simple description “new c3 version.” It contained “notable changes from earlier versions” that supposedly made it non-partisan. The changes, which can be seen here, were revealed using Microsoft Word’s “track changes” function. They show that the “partisan” and “nonpartisan” versions of the plan were nearly identical.

Edits included replacing partisan phrases with neutral terms. For instance, an “enormous” difference in “potential political outcomes” became an enormous difference in “potential voter participation outcomes.” Even more obviously, the “new c3 version” deleted several paragraphs from the original version that explicitly detail how three narrow Republican victories in multiple states could have been won by Democrats with more “non-white” votes. Still, though some verbiage in the c3 version of the plan was changed, the meat of the report—its data and funding recommendations—remained the same. In short, the c3 version was the same Democratic Party get-out-the-vote project with a nonpartisan coat of paint.

The data and recommendation from the Corridor Partners plan apparently later became the basis for the Everybody Votes Campaign. Here are key features of the Corridor Partners plan, compared with the Everybody Votes Campaign executive summary:

Corridor Partners vs. Everybody Votes Campaign

Corridor Partners Plan	Everybody Votes Campaign
Created in February 2015	Created in November 2015
\$105 million price tag	\$106 million price tag
Six-year plan: 2015-2020	Five-year plan: 2016-2020
Eight focus states: AZ, CO, FL, GA, IL , NC, NM , NV	Eight focus states: AZ, CO, FL, GA, OH , NC, VA , NV
Projected 2.4 million new votes by 2020	Projected 2.2 million new votes by 2020.

Note: Differences between lists of target states are bolded.

The Everybody Votes Campaign duplicates the specifications of the Corridor Partners plan almost exactly, except for switching out Illinois and New Mexico in favor of Ohio and Virginia (the latter two states were mentioned as alternative targets in the Corridor plan).

Because the Everybody Votes Campaign was almost certainly taken from the Corridor Partners Plan, any 501(c)(3)



Credit: Gage Skidmore. License: <https://bit.ly/2VY1x88>.

Even though the Everybody Votes Campaign was transparently partisan, developed by Democratic consultants, and pushed by Hillary Clinton’s campaign manager, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit did end up adopting and funding the project, originally called Voting for America. It received a facelift when the Clinton campaign kicked off in 2016.

nonprofit using that campaign would, at the very least, be on the edge of illegal, partisan election influence. No 501(c)(3) group should have touched the campaign with a 10-foot pole, but America’s left-leaning nonprofits—and their billionaire foundation donors—haven’t let trivial concerns like legality stop them in the past.

The Everybody Votes Campaign Becomes Reality

Even though the Everybody Votes Campaign was transparently partisan, developed by Democratic consultants, and pushed by Hillary Clinton’s campaign manager, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit *did* end up adopting and funding the project.

That nonprofit was a wing of the Obama-era ACORN affiliate Project Vote and was originally called Voting for America, but it received a facelift when the Clinton campaign kicked off in 2016. The organization’s board was entirely replaced, its finances were overhauled, and it was given a new, non-descript name: the Voter Registration Project. In addition to the new name, the group also opened two new affiliated groups: the Voter Registration Project Education Fund, also a 501(c)(3), and Register America, a smaller 501(c)(4).



Since 2016, the Voter Registration Project has been extremely secretive, staying completely out of the public eye.

Since 2016, the Voter Registration Project (VRP) has been extremely secretive, staying completely out of the public eye. It has no website. It has never spoken to the press or been covered by any news organization we can find. Its name and IRS disclosures are vague. Even its employees' LinkedIn pages don't mention the group by name.

Despite the lack of available information, several pieces of evidence show that VRP is directly connected to the Everybody Votes Campaign.

First, from 2016 to 2018, VRP reported on its IRS Form 990s that it had relocated to an address in downtown Washington, DC, that is also listed as the office of Grassroots Solutions, the consulting firm that sent Podesta's allies the Everybody Votes Campaign plan. Additionally, since 2016, the VRP 990s show it has paid Grassroots Solutions millions in consulting fees.

Second, other groups have revealed the connection between the VRP and Everybody Votes. In 2018, a \$500,000 grant to the VRP from the JPB Foundation lists the purpose of the grant as supporting the Everybody Votes Campaign (see p. 127 of the foundation's IRS Form 990). Additionally, a Funders Committee for Civic Participation webinar from 2016 lists then-VRP campaign director Kimberly Rodgers as a speaker from Everybody Votes. Another webinar from 2020 lists VRP's current campaign director, Betsy Linn, as a speaker from an organization abbreviated "EVC."

Third, Register America, the VRP network's 501(c)(4) wing, was created in 2016 using a \$2 million grant from the Civic Participation Action Fund, the organization using the original Corridor Partners Plan that seems to have become the Everybody Votes Campaign.

Finally, between 2016 and 2019, VRP and its affiliates raked in more than enough money to cover the campaign's \$100 million price tag and distributed these funds to state-based voter registration groups *exclusively* in the eight states from the campaign summary. (See details in the InfluenceWatch.org entry for VRP.)

The connection between the Everybody Votes Campaign and VRP is irrefutable and damning, and it's a wonder VRP has avoided the public eye so far, especially given the high-profile donors who funded it.

VRP's Donors

From 2016 to 2019 (the most recent year with available data), the Voter Registration Project (VRP) and its sister groups, the Voter Registration Project Education Fund, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, and Register America, a 501(c)(4) nonprofit, have received a combined \$122 million in revenue, mostly from grants.

In the world of left-leaning philanthropy, VRP's donors are A-list celebrities, and it is astounding that no one has yet reported on VRP's activities and that VRP hasn't taken to the streets to boast of its accomplishments. Because of this secrecy, it seems possible that VRP and its donors, aware of the partisan nature and shaky legal standing of the Everybody Votes Campaign, wanted to keep their activities out of the public eye.



Credit: Fortune Live Media. License: <https://bit.ly/3nMwQYy>

The Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation, the private foundation of Warren Buffett, contributed over \$3 million to the Voter Registration Project.

The Billionaire Club

Much of the VRP's funding came from the private foundations of some of the Left's most well-known billionaire donors. For example, the Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation, the private foundation of Warren Buffett, contributed over \$3 million. George Soros's Foundation to Promote Open Society gave VRP \$2.5 million.



Credit: TED Conference. License: <https://bit.ly/3EY0NyK>



Credit: TED Conference. License: <https://bit.ly/3AtYijc>

In 2019, the Voter Registration Project received \$2.4 million from the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, another donor-advised fund provider for numerous left-leaning tech billionaires, including Netflix co-founder Reed Hastings (top) and Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey (bottom).

Other grants came from less well-known but equally influential billionaires. As mentioned earlier, Register America received \$2 million from the Civic Participation Action Fund, which is financed by former billionaire Chuck Feeney. The Wallace H. Coulter Foundation—a private foundation founded by Wallace Coulter, a long-deceased billionaire inventor—was also a major VRP supporter, giving \$4 million from 2016 to 2019.

Hedge fund manager John R. Taylor, one of three secretive billionaires behind the Wellspring Philanthropic Fund, is the likely source of a lion's share of VRP funding as well. Former VRP president Jeff Malachowsky and current VRP president Ilona Prucha were both senior staff members at Wellspring Advisors, a consulting firm connected to the

Wellspring Philanthropic Fund. Taylor is managing partner of Wellspring Advisors, which oversees Wellspring's vast philanthropic empire. Taylor's well-documented efforts to remain anonymous could explain both VRP's secretive behavior and also the \$22 million in untraceable grants that VRP and its sister organizations have received from the Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund, a donor-advised fund provider that Wellspring Philanthropic Fund has used to conceal more than \$400 million of its giving.

The VRP has received large grants from *other* donor-advised fund providers and philanthropic pass-through groups as well. Since 2016, VRP has received \$10 million from the Proteus Fund, \$1 million from the New Venture Fund and the Hopewell Fund, \$850,000 from the Tides Foundation, \$750,000 from ImpactAssets, and \$500,000 from NEO Philanthropy. These are all major players in the Left's "dark money" game, well known for obscuring the original sources of donations that end up in "grassroots" left-wing activist groups.

In 2019, VRP received \$2.4 million from the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, another donor-advised fund provider for numerous left-leaning tech billionaires, including Facebook creator Mark Zuckerberg, who has given the community foundation more than \$1 billion; Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey; Netflix co-founder Reed Hastings; and WhatsApp co-founder Brian Acton.

Big Labor

Big Labor, which overwhelmingly donates to one political party, is also involved in funding this partisan scheme. Register America, the VRP network's 501(c)(4) activism wing, received \$1.25 million from the Service Employee's International Union (SEIU), and VRP itself has received \$250,000 from the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME).

Environmental Activists

Not to be outdone, environmental activists have also generously supported the VRP network. Since 2016, VRP has received just under \$10 million from the League of Conservation Voters Education Fund, making that group one of VRP's biggest supporters. NextGen Climate Action, a 501(c)(4) climate-change activism group funded by billionaire Tom Steyer, also contributed \$500,000 to VRP in 2016.

What Does VRP Actually Do?

What does VRP do? The answer is simple: pay for voter registration. Lots of it.

VRP and its sister groups have reported they made \$61 million in grants from 2016 through 2019 to dozens of left-leaning groups on the state and national levels. Those grants paid for “nonpartisan” voter registration. The VRP network’s efforts in 2020 are unknown because nonprofit organizations may delay publicly disclosing their finances for a year after their own fiscal year ends. But with over \$40 million in assets stockpiled at the end of 2019, one may safely assume they paid for a lot of voter registration in 2020.

During the 2016–2019 period, VRP followed the Everybody Votes plan precisely, paying for voter registration in just eight states: Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Ohio, North Carolina, Virginia, and Nevada. Presumably to ensure their grantmaking was as effective and wide-reaching as possible, the VRP network funded a variety of nonprofits, at both national and state levels.

The largest portion of VRP funding went to State Voices, a national group that oversees a network of state civic engagement tables, each of which bring together a state’s left-leaning activist groups and helps them coordinate their efforts. From 2016 to 2019, VRP and its affiliates reported granting more than \$6.7 million to the State Voices headquarters.

The VRP network also gave sizeable grants to several of State Voices’ state tables as well. Blueprint NC received \$1.7 million, the Colorado Civic Engagement Table received \$403,000, Ohio Voice received \$89,114, and ProGeorgia received \$1.1 million. In total, State Voices and the state engagement tables under its control have received just over \$10 million from the VRP network since the Everybody Votes Campaign began. According to the State Voices 2020 Post-Election Report, the group and its state tables helped register 2.1 million voters in 2020 alone.

Although the VRP network’s funding for State Voices dwarfs its other grantmaking, it also gave generously to many other groups. The League of Conservation Voters Education Fund, Mi Familia Vota Education Fund, the Fair Share Education Fund, the Voter Participation Center, One Arizona, the

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What does VRP do? The answer is simple: pay for voter registration. Lots of it.

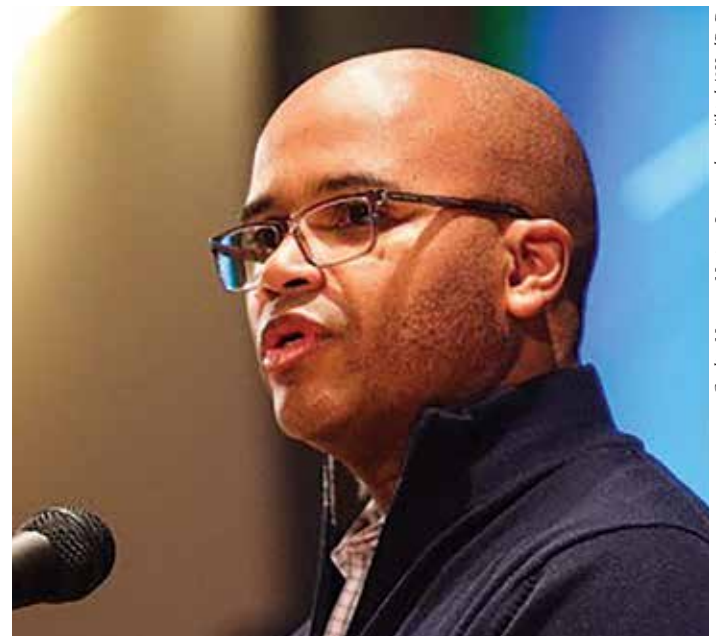
Ohio Organizing Collaborative, and the New Virginia Majority Education Fund each received more than \$3 million in combined grants from the VRP network from 2016 to 2019.

For a more complete list of the VRP network’s grant-making, visit the Voter Registration Project’s profile on InfluenceWatch.

Given the size of its funding operations, one may suspect the VRP network is nothing more than the final link in a daisy chain of left-leaning pass-through groups used to carry out the Everybody Votes Campaign, but that would be a mistake. A small detail from VRP’s financial disclosures reveals that VRP is more than a simple grant-maker, and likely provides its grantees with much more support than just money.

Hands-on Involvement and Coordination with Other Groups

A small section at the end of the Voter Registration Project’s IRS Form 990 explains that VRP and its sister organizations were not the actual employers of VRP employees, which numbered as many as 11 in 2017. Rather, VRP entered into



Credit: Nervous Nation. License: <https://bit.ly/2XuUbuD>.

If Voter Registration Project (VRP) employees were really employed by Voices Vote Now (VVN), and VVN is owned by Greg Speed (not shown) and Roger Vann and shares an office with State Voices, then VRP’s operations were almost certainly coordinated with State Voices and possibly America Votes.



“Project Switchboard” is a software that allows clients to use voter databases to conduct voter registration drives while skirting federal robocalling prohibitions.

an agreement with Voices Vote Now (VVN), which is the legal employer of record for all VRP employees.

VVN is yet another left-leaning consulting firm and has published multiple reports on voter registration issues on its website. According to its website, “VVN provides our primary clients, State Voices and America Votes, with state of the art big data management, consulting and targeting.”

What VVN doesn't mention is that State Voices and America Votes are more like its owners than its biggest clients.

Records in the District of Columbia Corporate Registry reveal that VVN is owned by Greg Speed, the president of America Votes; Roger Vann, the former president of State Voices; and Ezra Reese, a lawyer who worked at Perkins Coie (the nation's top law firm for the Democratic Party and a pass-through funder of Fusion GPS's notorious Russia collusion project). Reese left recently with its most prominent attorney, Marc Elias, to launch a new Democratic firm. Furthermore, VVN's website shows that it shares an address with State Voices, although State Voices listed a totally different address on its IRS filing for 2019, which disclosed it had paid VVN \$384,000 for technology consulting.

If VRP employees were really employed by VVN, and VVN is owned by Greg Speed and Roger Vann and shares an office with State Voices, then VRP's operations were almost certainly coordinated with State Voices and possibly America Votes. The organizers behind VRP likely approached the leaders of State Voices and America Votes to gain access to their ready-made activist networks. With the VRP providing the money, America Votes and State Voices could help direct the cash to the most effective groups.

Once the state-level groups had received their money, Voices Vote Now, a subtle synthesis of the names of its owners “State Voices” and “America Votes,” provided technical support to these organizations to help them incorporate the large voter databases like NGP VAN that Democratic operatives use to conduct voter outreach and win elections. VVN's website shows that the firm is very well versed in the use of database technology and has even begun work on “Project Switchboard,” a software product that would allow its clients to use voter databases to conduct voter registration drives while skirting federal robocalling prohibitions.

So the VRP provides the money while VVN connects groups with sophisticated databases so they can use it—two halves of one operation.

Sophisticated, Planned, and Partisan

Put together here, for the first time ever, the evidence shows that the Everybody Votes Campaign was probably the largest and most partisan nonprofit voter registration effort in recent American history. The Everybody Votes Campaign was never nonpartisan.

The scheme was apparently requested by Hillary Clinton's campaign manager, designed by Democratic consulting firms, funded by over \$122 million from some of the Democratic Party's biggest supporters, and coordinated with some of the Left's largest activist networks. Nothing about it was charitable or nonpartisan. Yet somehow, Americans are supposed to accept that it was all above board because the partisans involved used words like “diversity” and “underrepresented.”

The groups that backed this campaign knew what they were doing. Even if they did not know the precise origins of the Everybody Votes Campaign or had never seen the data and figures on which the plan was based, the goal behind this plan is implicitly understood by anybody with the least understanding of American politics. That understanding is voiced by liberal journalist Sasha Issenberg, who has written of the Voter Participation Center, a participant in the Every Votes Campaign: “Even though the group was officially nonpartisan, for tax purposes, there was no secret that the goal of all of its efforts was to generate new votes for Democrats.”

Similarly, in the Everybody Votes Campaign, the goal was always to use tax-exempt “charitable” cash to benefit the Democratic Party and convert key swing states to Democratic strongholds by playing identity politics. It is past time for something to be done about these “nonpartisan” organizations that function more like tax-exempt Democratic PACs. ■

Read previous articles from the Special Reports series online at CapitalResearch.org/category/special-report/.

A project of Capital Research Center



CLIMATE DOLLARS

HOW ONE FLAWED STUDY FOOLED THE MEDIA AND
POISONED THE DEBATE ON CLIMATE CHANGE

In a widely cited 2014 study, sociologist Robert Brulle purportedly exposed a “climate change counter-movement” of center-right groups “distort[ing] the public’s understanding of climate change.” He calculated that from 2003 to 2010, these nonprofits recorded revenues averaging “just over \$900 million” annually—a number that led to media claims that “Conservative groups spend \$1bn a year to fight action on climate change.”

A Capital Research Center study cuts Mr. Brulle’s calculations down to size: Not only is Brulle’s assessment off by 93 percent, the resources of environmentalist groups and government agencies overwhelmingly dwarf those of skeptics. To learn more about the climate debate, visit www.ClimateDollars.org.



ARABELLA'S LONG WAR AGAINST TRUMP'S DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

How leftist “dark money” activists brought down Trump’s secretary of the interior and paved the way for Biden’s radical environmentalists

By Hayden Ludwig

Summary: For years “dark money” activists ran a coordinated campaign to sabotage and undermine the Trump administration from the offices of Arabella Advisors in Washington, DC. The campaign culminated in the most extreme environmentalist regime in American history under President Joseph Biden. This report goes inside that campaign to destroy Trump’s Department of the Interior and promote the Left’s war on affordable energy.

In 2019, the Capital Research Center’s groundbreaking report on Arabella Advisors exposed the half-billion-dollar network for the first time, dragging Arabella into the limelight as the posterchild of the Left’s “dark money.” Since then we’ve continued to uncover this now \$730 million activist empire, tracing its shadowy campaigns on everything from abortion on demand to packing the Supreme Court to its war on the Trump administration.

This report on the Arabella network examines the professional Left’s years-long campaign to undermine President Trump’s Department of the Interior, laying the groundwork for the Biden administration’s crusade against oil and the most radical environmentalist policies in American history.

“Keep It in the Ground”

The U.S. Department of the Interior is primarily responsible for managing roughly 450 million acres of federal land and conservation of their natural resources, most critically the nation’s vast reserves of oil and natural gas. It manages hundreds of dams and reservoirs, regulates drilling on public lands, runs the National Park Service, and maintains public monuments, including dozens attacked by radical Black Lives Matter activists in 2020.

The department also plays a role in foreign diplomacy and national security. Under President Trump that included international wildlife trafficking bans, encouraging trade of precious metals and rare earths, and promoting his Indo-Pacific security and economic strategy.



License: Public domain.

The U.S. Department of the Interior is primarily responsible for managing roughly 450 million acres of federal land and conservation of their natural resources, most critically the nation’s vast reserves of oil and natural gas.

But the department’s openness to expanding oil and gas production brought the sharpest attacks from the Left. Since the department is entirely under the president’s purview, halting all drilling on public land is far easier than attempting to halt private oil and gas production nationwide—the radical Left’s ultimate goal.

“The natural place to start phasing out supply is on our public lands and oceans where a ban on new leasing will keep up to 450 billion tons of carbon pollution in the ground,” Center for Biological Diversity director Kieran Suckling said in 2015. Bill McKibben, founder of the ultra-leftist 350.org, has also stated that “public lands are one of the easiest places for us to control the flow of carbon into the atmosphere.”

Unsurprisingly, that’s been the policy of Democratic presidents and their activist allies for years. President Barack

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Obama canceled lease sales in the Arctic and Atlantic offshore sites and banned the leasing of coal on federal lands. Phasing down “extraction of fossil fuels from our public lands” was in the Democratic Party’s 2016 platform. That same year a 350.org activist asked Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton what she meant by “extraction on public lands is a done deal?” Clinton replied, “That’s where [President Obama] is moving: No future extraction. I agree with that.” Her running mate, Virginia Sen. Tim Kaine, later assured another 350.org activist that “I actually am now in that position.”

But even “phasing down” is too conservative for today’s “keep it in the ground” Left. No less than 20 Democratic presidential hopefuls vowed to ban drilling on public lands outright during their party’s 2020 primary. Ever the pawn of the radical Left, on January 27, 2021—exactly one week after his inauguration—President Biden indefinitely suspended development of new oil and gas wells on public lands, which the left-leaning *San Francisco Chronicle* cheered as “a first step to halting the granting of federal drilling leases permanently.”

Why does this matter? Federal lands account for roughly 24 percent of America’s oil, natural gas, and coal production. In 2019, total crude oil production reached an all-time high of 4.471 billion barrels, with a significant chunk of that growth coming from oil drilled on federal lands. Biden’s ban blocks future development of these key resources, removing them from the supply stream and hampering the energy independence the United States struggled to achieve in recent years. This means higher gasoline and household electricity prices,



Credit: CRC. License: <https://bit.ly/364k3oQ>.

Arabella Advisors manages four in-house nonprofits collectively called the “sisters,” each of which controls a small army of activists and a legion of “pop-up” groups.

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With a single executive order, the Left could advance its crusade to “keep it in the ground” for years in the name of global warming.

an estimated \$11.3 billion in lost federal royalties and rental fees, and the destruction of hundreds of thousands of jobs across the economy.

With a single executive order, the Left could advance its crusade to “keep it in the ground” for years in the name of global warming. The stakes couldn’t be higher—all that stood in its way was the Trump administration.

A Web of “Pop-Up” Groups

Enter Arabella Advisors, a consulting firm based in Washington, DC, that quietly runs arguably the most powerful activist and lobbying network in politics. Arabella Advisors manages four in-house nonprofits collectively called the “sisters,” each of which controls a small army of activists and a legion of “pop-up” groups. And each pop-up group is made to look like a slick, stand-alone website. These pop-ups target virtually every issue in politics—control of the courts, abortion access, gun control, and voter registration and mobilization, even the Trump-Russia collusion hoax—pushing left-wing policies in every corner. What makes Arabella so powerful is how these “pop-ups” deceive individuals into believing they represent genuine local grassroots interests, such as one pop-up in Alaska created to oppose creation of the Pebble Mine run from Arabella’s plush offices in DC.

Arabella’s network is extraordinarily well-funded. In 2019 alone, the four “sisters” reported total revenues exceeding \$730 million and poured out \$648 million. Between the network’s creation in 2006 and its Form 990 filing for 2019 (the latest available), Arabella’s empire has received more than **\$3 billion** and spent nearly **\$2.5 billion**. Most of that funding was directed to the network’s flagship 501(c)(3) nonprofit, the New Venture Fund, whose largest known donors include the Gates, Ford, Hewlett, Packard, and Buffett Foundations.

Beginning in 2017, Arabella turned its guns on Trump’s Department of the Interior using a pop-up pair: Western Values Project (WVP) and its “sister,” Western Values Project Action (WVPA).

According to their websites, WVP and WVPA were created in 2013 in Helena, Montana, to expose corrupt corporate lobbyists preying on public lands in the West. In

reality, WVP is run by the 501(c)(3) New Venture Fund while WVPA is run by the 501(c)(4) Sixteen Thirty Fund, Arabella's in-house lobbying shop. Whatever staff the groups actually have would have been paid by one of Arabella's nonprofits or possibly by Arabella Advisors itself; we'll likely never know. But in its 2018 Form 990, New Venture Fund revealed that it is the "paymaster" for Sixteen Thirty Fund (which reported zero employees on its own 2018 Form 990) and "pays the salary and immediately invoices Sixteen Thirty Fund, which reimburses the full amount."

It's common for groups to use both kinds of nonprofit to maximize their ability to lobby through the 501(c)(4) and raise non-lobbying funds through the 501(c)(3), since donors may deduct donations to the 501(c)(3) from their taxes. But Arabella takes that tactic to another level, using pop-up fronts for its nonprofits that can take advantage of the New Venture and Sixteen Thirty Fund's respective tax advantages without disclosing their relationship to one another. Donations to WVP and WVPA in fact benefitted the Arabella-run nonprofits behind the projects, as an archived version of WVP's website from October 2019 reveals.

Until late 2019 the website for WVP and WVPA revealed a handful of staffers, including Chris Saeger, ex-communications director for the Montana Democratic Party and former Service Employees International Union (SEIU) staffer; Jayson O'Neill, a Democratic staffer for Montana's legislature and Gov. Brian Schweitzer (D); and Yetta Stein, a staffer for the left-wing political action committee End Citizens United and staffer for the 2018 reelection campaign Sen. Jon Tester (D-MT). The archived website also showed a small advisory board consisting of:

- Kjersten Forseth, a former chief of state for Colorado State Senate Democrats, former director of the left-wing strategy group ProgressNow Colorado, political director for the Colorado AFL-CIO, and chief political strategist for Rocky Mountain Voter Outreach, a Denver-based get-out-the-vote and ballot initiative firm.
- Kent Salazar, an environmental health manager for Albuquerque, New Mexico, former New Mexico State game commissioner for Gov. Bill Richardson (D), and a board member for the left-wing National Wildlife Federation.
- Pat Smith, a lawyer representing Indian tribes in Montana, member of the 2010 Montana Redistricting Commission, and appointee of Montana Gov. Steve Bullock (D) to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council.

WVP's advisory board also included Caroline Ciccone, who in 2019 was executive director of the New Venture Fund pop-up and anti-Trump "oversight" group Restore Public Trust. Ciccone is a former communications director for the Democratic National Committee (DNC), Obama appointee to the U.S. Small Business Administration, and Democratic strategist. From 2014 to 2017 she led Americans United for Change (AUFC), a top left-wing strategy

group whose national field director Scott Foval was recorded in late 2016 by undercover journalists from Project Veritas bragging that AUFC had paid mentally ill and homeless people to instigate violence at Trump campaign rallies. "We know that Trump's people will [tend to] freak the f— out," Foval said in the video. "It is not hard to get some of these assholes to 'pop off.'" The scandal ultimately led back to Robert Creamer, co-founder of the powerful consulting firm Democracy Partners and a former general consultant to AUFC who directed parts of a vast network of advocacy groups all aligned in support of Hillary Clinton's presidential bid. This led to speculation that his firm helped Clinton's campaign violate collusion laws. Foval described Creamer's role in the scandal as the "kingpin" who is "diabolical, and I love him for it." Within days of the video's release Creamer resigned, and Foval was fired.

Also present was Kyle Herrig, a New Venture Fund board member who sat on the advisory boards of at least five New Venture Fund projects, including American Oversight, a judicial activist and litigation group; Allied Progress, which attacked Trump cabinet officials; and the Ciccone-run Restore Public Trust.

In early 2020 it was announced that Western Values Project and these three Arabella "pop-ups" were being rolled into a new organization: Accountable.US, *itself* a former New Venture Fund project fully established as an independent nonprofit sometime later that year, headed by president Kyle Herrig and executive director Caroline Ciccone. (It appears that Western Values Project Action remains a project of Sixteen Thirty Fund, but that remains unclear as of writing.)



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From 2017 to 2018, Western Values Project ran an all-out attack against Trump administration Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke, publishing post after post savaging Zinke and his staff.

This reveals that Western Values Project, far from being a grassroots group, is enmeshed in a deeply networked, highly coordinated cabal of professional activists—and it always was.

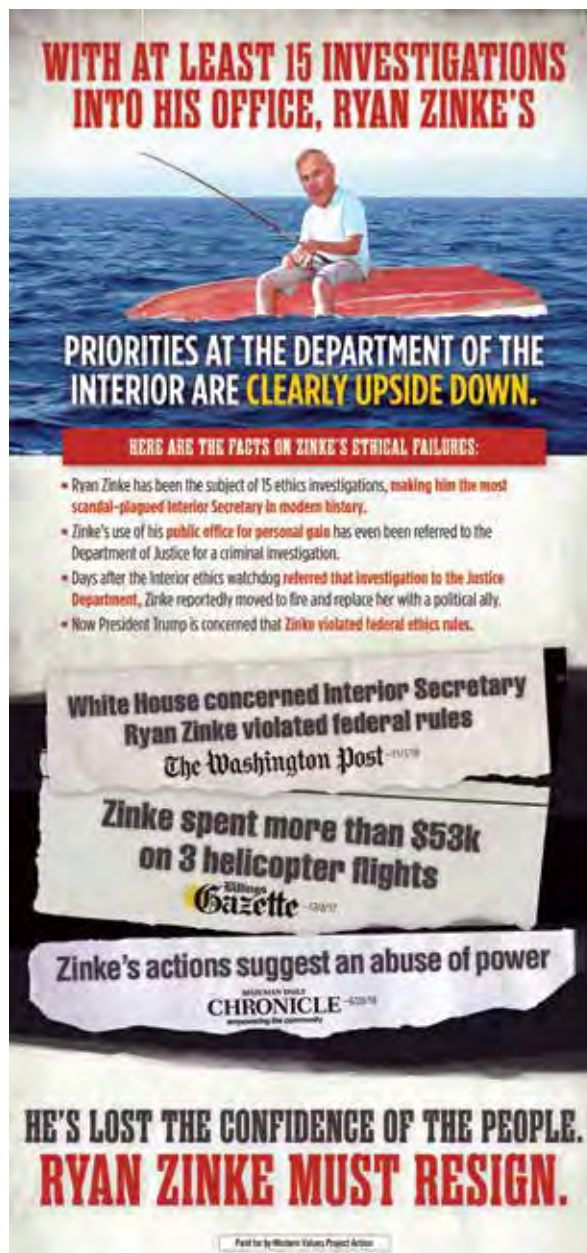
Anatomy of an Arabella Campaign

From 2017 to 2018, WVP ran an all-out attack against Trump administration Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke, publishing post after post savaging Zinke and his staff. WVP even published a massive website, DepartmentofInfluence.org, which compiled boatloads of data on nearly every appointee to the Trump administration's Department of the Interior. The group's goal was clear: Drive Ryan Zinke out of office and undermine the department's policies. They finally succeeded in December 2018, and Zinke resigned in early January 2019 amid ethics complaints alleging he had misused public funds during official travel and spent large sums on frivolous things.

CRC has counted nine Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) cases filed by WVP between April 2017 and Zinke's resignation, all sporting WVP's supposed address: a UPS store in Whitefish, Montana (704C 13th St. E., #568, Whitefish, MT 59937). As investigative reporter Dave Skinner points out, "Suite 568" is actually a \$150-per-year private mailbox, snuggled next to a sales placard touting a 'street address, not a P.O. box number."

In these complaints WVP describes itself as "a not-for-profit public interest organization" and "a tax-exempt organization within the meaning

of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code," never mentioning its status as a project of the New Venture Fund or its connection to Arabella Advisors. At least one FOIA request was co-filed with American Oversight, another former New Venture Fund pop-up run by Kyle Herrig that also used a UPS Store address in its filings (1030 15th St., NW, Suite B255, Washington, DC 20005) and describes itself as "a nonpartisan, non-profit section 501(c)(3) organization."



Credit: WVP License: <https://bit.ly/2XsNmkl>

On November 9, 2018, Western Values Project Action (WVPA) released a \$30,000 attack ad in seven Montana newspapers accusing Ryan Zinke's "priorities" of being "upside down" and calling for his resignation—presumably paid for by the Sixteen Thirty Fund, which controls WVPA's finances.

These FOIA complaints exclusively targeted the Department of the Interior. Highlights include:

- Requests for Zinke's travel receipts, "a daily schedule of the Secretary's events, meetings and activities including locations and attendees";
- Seeking correspondence between department heads and members of various oil and gas interests, such as the American Petroleum Institute, Colorado Oil and Gas Association, and Independent Petroleum Association of America;
- Demanding access to all records, emails, and expenditures pertaining to Lolita Zinke, Ryan Zinke's wife;
- Asserting that Zinke threatened Alaska Republican Sens. Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan for voting against the 2017 effort to repeal Obamacare; and
- Multiple FOIA complaints complaining that department had not complied with prior FOIA complaints.

On October 22, 2018, the Department of the Interior's Office of Inspector General released its investigative report into Zinke's alleged ethics abuses and recommended it to the



*Western Values Project published the website
DavidBernhardt.org, calling Bernhardt
“the ultimate DC swamp creature.”*

Department of Justice. The office noted that it “initiated this investigation” in December 2017 “based on information we received while investigating [Zinke’s] use of noncommercial aircraft for U.S. Governmental travel.” The source of that information isn’t named, but it isn’t a stretch to believe it originated with Western Values Project.

Eight days later on October 30, WVP released its statement on the probe calling on Zinke to resign. It launched a website (HasRyanZinkeBeenFiredYet.com) demanding the same. On November 9, WVPA released a \$30,000 attack ad in seven Montana newspapers accusing Zinke’s “priorities” of being “upside down” and calling for his resignation—presumably paid for by the Sixteen Thirty Fund, which controls WVPA’s finances. One month later Zinke resigned.

Big Green’s Campaign Rolls On

Joining WVP and WVPA was the Center for Western Priorities (CWP), a front for the California mega-activist group Resources Legacy Fund—by my count the 16th-largest environmentalist group in the country, spending over \$42 million in 2018 alone. CWP painted Zinke as a feckless tool of the oil and gas industry, accusing him of “following President Trump’s marching orders to attack our public lands” and fomenting an “illegal attack on America’s national monuments.” When Zinke resigned in January 2019, CWP labeled him “the most anti-conservation Interior Secretary of all time.”

Almost immediately after Ryan Zinke resigned in December 2018, CWP and WVP turned their guns on undermining Deputy Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt, who became acting secretary on January 2, 2019, and was officially confirmed in April.

Bernhardt served in the George W. Bush administration’s Department of the Interior, leaving in 2009 as the department’s solicitor. After that he led the Denver firm Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck’s natural resources law practice, where his clients included Halliburton Energy Services and the Independent Petroleum Association of America, and he lobbied for Cobalt International Energy and Samson Resources. Before his appointment to the

Trump administration, Bernhardt was also registered as a lobbyist for the Westlands Water District in California’s San Joaquin Valley.

On December 17, CWP policy director Jesse Prentice-Dunn published a long hit piece calling Bernhardt a “walking conflict of interest” who would continue “Ryan Zinke’s culture of corruption” and accusing the department of shilling for Big Oil. That same day WVP published the website DavidBernhardt.org, calling Bernhardt “the ultimate DC swamp creature” and an “ex-lobbyist who is too conflicted to be Interior Secretary,” while detailing a laundry list of ethics charges in an attempt to derail his confirmation to the post. Memos about Bernhardt’s background and conflicts of interest and more FOIA requests followed from WVP and CWP, including one from Democracy Forward, a leftist litigation group created by Clinton crony Marc Elias (of Perkins Coie fame) in 2017 to target the Trump administration.

In February, the Campaign for Accountability (CFA), a former “pop-up” of the Arabella-run Hopewell Fund, petitioned the Interior Department inspector general to investigate Bernhardt’s ties to Westlands Water District as a conflict of interest and urged the Senate to reject his confirmation. CFA, which specialized in targeting Trump political appointees, was founded by alumni of another left-wing litigation group, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW), and has been represented by the ex-Arabella pop-up American Oversight in past lawsuits.

The Center for American Progress joined in, labeling Bernhardt “the most conflicted Trump Cabinet nominee.” Greenpeace and the Center for Biological Diversity urged the department’s inspector general to investigate those conflicts of interest, melodramatically declaring him “the most dangerous man in America for endangered species and public lands.” The Sierra Club demanded the Senate reject his confirmation, as did the National Parks Conservation Association and the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC).

In March, WVPA launched a six-figure television ad buy targeting Democratic Sen. Martin Heinrich (NM) and moderate Republican Sens. Cory Gardner (CO) and Martha McSally (AZ) to oppose Bernhardt’s confirmation. The assault continued until the Senate confirmed Bernhardt in April

2019. From then on the group's crusade against Trump's Department of the Interior focused on thwarting its agenda.

Harried Until the End

WVP filed another five FOIA requests against the Department of the Interior between 2019 and 2020, almost certainly with the intent of discovering ammo for future ethics complaints. Among its requests were all communications between the department and Bernhardt's former clients from Brownstein Hyatt and the Westlands Water District as well as copies of "all text messages sent by Secretary David Bernhardt from July 1, 2017," through February 2020. The leftist website Outside Online even set up a "David Bernhardt Scandal Tracker" days after his confirmation.

But much of the Left's campaign shifted to halting Trump's supposed war on public lands until he left office in January 2021. "Yes, Trump really is coming to take your public lands," WVP howled in late 2019, claiming the administration was selling off federal land to oil interests bent on pillaging it. In reality, the Bureau of Land Management (which is part of the Interior Department) continued to *lease* lands to drilling companies in 5-10-year options, a decades-old practice. As a result, oil and gas production soared in 2019, particularly in New Mexico and Wyoming, which sit atop massive deposits.

The Department of the Interior disbursed a staggering \$11.69 billion to the states in 2019 alone from energy production on federal and Indian-owned lands, a \$2.76 billion increase over 2018. Gasoline prices dropped from a nationwide average of \$2.813 in 2018 to \$2.691 in 2019 to \$2.258 in 2020. And the United States achieved energy independence in 2019, with energy production exceeding consumption for the *first time* since 1957. In a single year, energy production increased by an impressive 5.7 percent, with so-called fossil fuels accounting for 80 percent of all energy production and consumption that year.

WVP harried Trump and his cabinet out of office, blasting "Secretary David Bernhardt's Wildly Destructive Track Record" in December 2020—which included such silliness as staging Trump's May 2020 Fox News town hall inside the Lincoln Memorial, allowing national parks to be used as "centerpieces" for his reelection campaign, and holding "expensive military-infused Independence Day rallies on the National Mall" (the horror!).

Targeting Trump's energy and environmental policies were among Biden's first moves in office. Biden cancelled a planned expansion to the Keystone oil pipeline (Keystone XL or "export limited"), pledged to protect 30 percent of U.S. land and water by 2030, and froze new leases for oil and gas development on federal land.

Biden's nominee for the department, Rep. Debra Haaland (D-NM), was confirmed in March 2021 on a nearly party line vote (four Republicans joined with every Democrat in the Senate). Haaland has been criticized by conservatives as a far-left extremist with a perfect 2020 score and 98 percent lifetime score from the League of Conservation Voters, which ranks politicians for their fidelity to leftist environmental legislation. (Incidentally, Haaland received a 100 percent score from the pro-abortion groups Planned Parenthood and NARAL Pro-Choice America.) While Haaland told Congress during her confirmation process that fossil fuels "will continue to play a major role in America for years to come," she's a global warming ideologue who trumpeted "keep fossil fuels in the ground," voting "against all new fossil fuel infrastructure," and transitioning to "100% clean energy" in her 2018 reelection campaign.

In May, the Biden administration proposed ramping up the Interior Department's 2022 budget by \$2.5 billion (17 percent) to \$17.6 billion in order to "address the climate crisis" and create "good-paying union jobs." Biden wants to conserve 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters by 2030 (it's currently about 26 percent), a plan proposed by liberal groups in the states as "30 by 30" largely as a measure to "slow climate change" by storing carbon dioxide in plants and soil. He also wants to spend \$86 million on the "Civilian Climate Corps," a reboot of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal-era Civilian Conservation Corps. He also wants to spend \$300 million "plugging orphan oil and gas wells" and \$249 million to boost renewable energy production on public lands.

With pressure from the far Left and willing enablers embedded in the executive branch, the Biden administration will undoubtedly continue down the road toward ever more radical "green" policies—with Arabella's support. Only one question remains: How much does Biden owe to Arabella's long war against the Trump Department of the Interior? ■

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NUCLEAR POWER-HATING HYPOCRITES IN THE CLIMATE LEFT SPEND \$1 BILLION ANNUALLY

By Ken Braun

Summary: *Most of the climate Left opposes carbon-free nuclear energy. The list includes big names such as the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Sierra Club, and the Environmental Defense Fund. The donors to the anti-nuclear Left are many of the nation's Big Philanthropy giants, such as the Ford Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation. Collectively, the organizations that oppose the most dependable form of carbon-free power spend at least (and likely well more than) \$1 billion per year.*

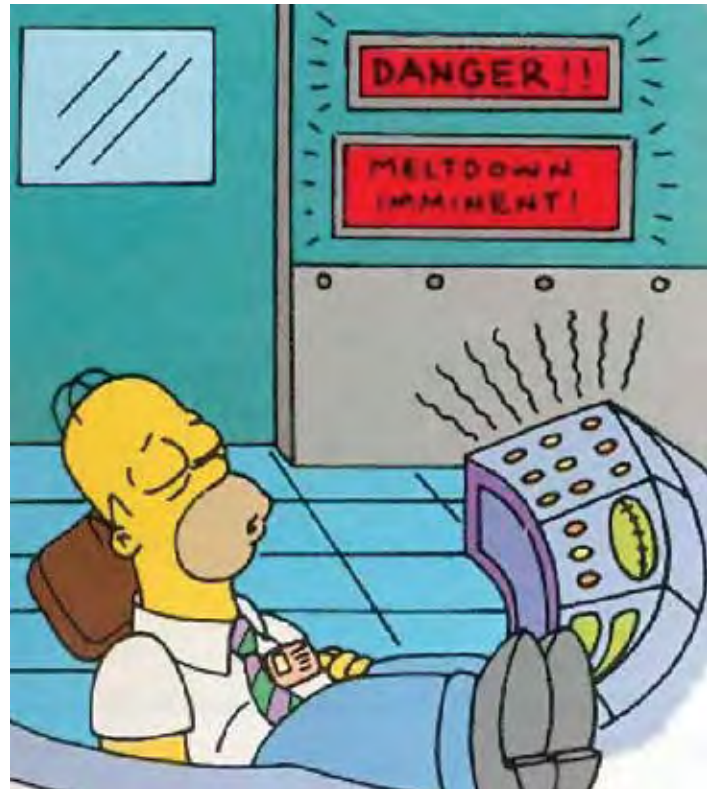
Since 1989 in TV land, hapless nuclear power plant employee Homer Simpson has been the cause of countless comic atomic accidents. The original opening credits of *The Simpsons* show him recklessly racing home with a glowing uranium rod accidentally stuck to his shirt, which he discovers and indignantly tosses onto the street.

This admittedly hilarious portrayal of the technology is grossly and damagingly misleading. Nuclear power is a safe, reliable, and unmatched as a carbon-free source of electricity. The United States currently generates 20 percent of its electricity from nuclear fission, dwarfing idiosyncratic and spasmodic sources such as wind (8.4 percent of U.S. electricity production) and solar (2.3 percent).

James Hansen, a one-time NASA scientist that the lefty journalists at *The Guardian* refer to as “the father of global awareness of climate change,” believes in the carbon-cutting effect of nuclear power so strongly that in 2015 he advocated building 115 new reactors *every year* through 2050. Deploying thousands of them in just a few decades is a NASA-esque astronomical goal. As of July 2021, the World Nuclear Association counted just 443 civilian reactors in operation worldwide.

Similarly, a 2018 proposal from the Nature Conservancy (TNC) recommended building a path to lower carbon emissions by sharply increasing nuclear from a 7.8 percent share of world energy production to 33 percent.

Homer Simpson's hilarious propaganda has almost certainly erected a tough cultural bias against these lofty ambitions. But ironically, to say nothing of hypocritically, far more damaging opposition lives among the largest names in the climate Left. Collectively, they have a combined annual



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Since 1989 in TV land, hapless nuclear power plant employee Homer Simpson has been the cause of countless comic atomic accidents.

advocacy budget exceeding \$1 billion. Admittedly, they spend the \$1 billion advocating for more issues than just a nuclear-free future, but the anti-nuclear issue is a major issue for many of them that interlocks with other priority issues. A lot of their loot has been coming from the nation's richest philanthropic foundations.

The list of hypocrites includes the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), the League of Conservation Voters (LCV), the Sierra Club, the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), the

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Climate Reality Project (founded by Al Gore), and dozens more. This list even includes the League of Women Voters and the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA).

The League of Women Voters (with a 2018 budget of \$5.5 million) generally enjoys an undeserved reputation as a nonpolitical, neutral host of candidate forums and debates. This contrasts with its reliably center-left agenda on almost every controversial issue on which it has a position (e.g.: in favor of affirmative action and ObamaCare and opposed to education vouchers, the Keystone XL pipeline, and the Electoral College).

On nuclear energy the league doesn't just lean left, it's out on the left wingtip. In January 2019, it joined 625 other climate-Left organizations in co-signing a letter to Congress regarding the "Urgent Threat of Climate Change."

The letter wasn't so much opposed to carbon emissions as it was hostile to every form of dependable energy that we have. Pleading with Congress to enact "100% renewable energy" policies, the letter pointedly demanded that "any definition of renewable energy *must also exclude*" nuclear ... and even "large scale hydro" (emphasis added). The letter elsewhere maligned nuclear power as an example of "dirty energy."

Large-scale hydroelectric dams provide carbon electricity from falling water. This coalition was so extreme that even power from the pull of gravity wasn't pure enough.

Greenpeace, Public Citizen, and the Center for Popular Democracy (CPD) were also signatories. The 501(c)(4) Greenpeace and the 501(c)(3) Greenpeace Fund had a combined 2018 budget of \$46.8 million. Similarly, Public Citizen and the Public Citizen Foundation had a combined budget of \$18.2 million. CPD and the Center for Popular Democracy Action Fund teamed up for \$41.2 million.

Other lefty organizations with reasonably large reputations or budgets that also signed the letter included:

- GRID Alternatives (2018 budget of \$23.4 million),
- 350.org (\$15.4 million),
- Waterkeeper Alliance (\$15.2 million),
- The Indivisible Project (Indivisible) (\$13.2 million),
- Demos (\$11.8 million),
- Friends of the Earth (\$11.6 million),
- The Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development (\$8.9 million),
- The Surfrider Foundation (\$7.7 million),
- The Rainforest Action Network (\$6.8 million),



Credit: Zach A. License: <https://bit.ly/3bJ2qf1>.

The League of Women Voters generally enjoys an undeserved reputation as a nonpolitical, neutral host of candidate forums and debates. On nuclear energy the league doesn't just lean left, it's out on the left wingtip.

- The Institute for Policy Studies (\$4.4 million),
- Green America (\$4.4 million) and
- Earthworks (\$4 million).

A movement with no known budget, the lawless Extinction Rebellion (XR) was a signatory. (For a look at XR and its vandalism, please see "Unabombers Without Bombs," a cover story from *Capital Research* magazine in 2019).

Opposition to Whatever Is Working

Since 1976, the League of Women Voters has supported energy policies that "limit reliance on nuclear fission." Yet for seven-plus decades fission reactions have been the only source of nuclear energy we have. So, this careful word selection seems to provide the pretense that the league might theoretically support nuclear energy ... but only from something other than splitting atoms.

This dodge is typical of many left-leaning policy organizations: "We don't oppose nuclear power in general ... just any specific type that gets the job done!"

As with the League of Women Voters, this often results in the otherwise irrational organizations receiving undeserved credit for being reasonable.



We don't oppose nuclear power in general ... just any specific type that gets the job done," say left-leaning organizations.

For example, a September 2018 analysis from the Pew Charitable Trusts stated that “the Environmental Defense Fund and the Natural Resources Defense Council fear that energy from nuclear plants will be replaced by emissions-producing coal and natural gas plants.” In November 2018, *U.S. News & World Report* reported that both EDF and NRDC “cautiously see nuclear as a necessary part of decarbonizing the economy.”

But this is not how NRDC and EDF behave in practice.

Each organization recently celebrated former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo's decision to close both reactors at the Indian Point nuclear plant by April 2021—14 years ahead of schedule. Both organizations fed the public a credulous theory that wind and solar energy could make up the lost output.

Energy journalist Robert Bryce spoke for the sensible environmentalists who knew this math was bogus. Writing in April 2020 as the first of Indian Point's two reactors was decommissioned, Bryce noted that the little pile of uranium had produced “about 8,000 gigawatt-hours of electricity a year from a site on the Hudson River that covers less than a half square mile.” Solar panels producing the same power, according to Bryce, would need to cover “140 times” that space (or about 70 square miles), and a wind farm with the power output of the lost reactor would need 250 square miles.

It should be obvious (though it is apparently not to many) that obtaining carbon-free electricity from a half-square-mile plot the size of an upscale suburban housing development is far preferable to chewing up a space equal to half the acreage of Grand Teton National Park with a wind farm.

That is the magic of power density. Coal, natural gas, and oil pack far more energy for their size than does wood. And nothing humans have in our toolbox beats the power density of a uranium fuel rod.

Conversely, the wind and the sun scatter their energy across the globe, dripping just tiny fractions of the density provided by our dependable energy sources. Compounding the density problem, solar and wind are also notoriously intermittent. No matter how sunny it is where you live, it is an inalterable fact of astronomy that your sunlight stops working every single day.

So, storage is essential for any form of reliable energy. If it cannot be stored, then it cannot be held until you need it

most. High density energy stores itself, with no need for batteries. Think of a trainload of coal or a tank of gasoline, which sits there waiting to be used.

But there is no such thing as a battery that efficiently stores the wind and sunlight on a mass scale equal to our dependable natural batteries. If the super batteries to store wind and solar are ever economically available, they might suck up *even more* acreage to go alongside the vast fields of wind turbines and solar panels catching the trickles of power from the sky.

Michael Shellenberger, founder of Environmental Progress, is fond of pointing out that a lump of carbon-free nuclear fuel no bigger than a can of Coca-Cola can hold all the energy currently used over the entire lifetime of a typical American.

How's *that* for advanced battery technology?

It was a lie to assert that Indian Point's carbon-free power could be replaced with less intrusive energy sources. And the celebration by EDF and NRDC over the Indian Point closure was not an aberration.

In June 2016, EDF was cheering for the closure of the Diablo Canyon nuclear facility with the boast that there was a “zero-carbon replacement strategy for California's last remaining nuclear power plant.” But by August 2021, Californians for Green Energy was asking for the plant to be kept open because (no surprise!) there was no “zero-carbon replacement strategy.”

Similarly, over the past five years NRDC staffers have argued the case for closing nuclear facilities in California, New Jersey, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

In each instance the two organizations criticized the cost of the nuclear facilities and sometimes accused their owners of seeking a “bailout” to keep the nuclear plants running.

Nuclear energy does cost more than the other dependable fuels (e.g., coal and natural gas) that could theoretically provide most (or even all) of our electricity. The United States is the largest natural gas producer on the planet and also has the largest proven coal reserves (enough to last us three centuries at current consumption rates).

Dramatically ramping up use of nuclear power to cut carbon emissions is an optional luxury. It is not a necessity. There is a principled economic case to be made for letting the market decide the best mix of energy options.

But EDF, NRDC, and their radical anti-nuclear allies can't argue those principles with any sincerity. The cost and subsidy criticism rings hollow from those that have supported staggering taxpayer giveaways for wind and solar. Robert Bryce reports, "In 2018, on an energy-equivalent basis, the solar sector got 253 times as much in federal tax incentives as nuclear energy. The wind industry got 158 times as much as nuclear."

Shutting down nuclear plants will always require a switch to either high-density, carbon-emitting fuel sources or unreliable, low-density, space-swallowing wind and solar. If NRDC and EDF were really trying to substantially cut carbon emissions and reduce the impact on the land and nature (i.e., "the environment"), then they would promote nuclear energy subsidies that are hundreds of times greater than those of wind and solar, not the other way around.

The behavior of these two organizations shows them opposed to what works best for producing zero-carbon energy. Their agenda is instead what works for the wind and solar industry. Environmental Progress refers to EDF and NRDC as two of the "most influential anti-nuclear organizations in the United States."

It's a charge that sticks.

The Vast Anti-Nuclear Conspiracy

Similarly, the Sierra Club, the third of America's three largest climate policy organization, is described by Environmental Progress as "one of the most effective anti-nuclear environmental organizations in the world." Unlike EDF and NRDC, the Sierra Club has been clear about its nuclear opposition:

The Sierra Club continues to oppose construction of any new commercial nuclear fission power plants. Further, the Sierra Club supports the systematic reduction of society's dependence on nuclear fission as a source of electric power and recommends a phased closure and decommissioning of operating commercial nuclear fission electric power reactors.



Credit: Chris Peoski. License: <https://bit.ly/34yYnj7>.

Shutting down nuclear plants will always require a switch to either high-density, carbon-emitting fuel sources or unreliable, low-density, space-swallowing wind and solar.

Put together, the Sierra Club, the Environmental Defense Fund, and the Natural Resources Defense Council had a combined budget of at least \$474 million in 2018.

The dozens of supposed environmentalists who oppose the single most viable form of carbon-free power spent at least \$1.1 billion in 2018, and likely much more than that.

The New York Public Interest Research Group (\$4.2 million budget for 2018) also celebrated the closure of Indian Point as a "huge victory." Other anti-Indian Point participants included Food & Water Watch (\$17.3 million), Riverkeeper (\$4.3 million), Hudson River Sloop Clearwater (\$2.4 million), and the Nuclear Information and Resource Service (\$710,000).

As noted, the list of groups promoting the radical anti-nuclear Left's agenda even includes the National Parks Conservation Association. The NPCA (with a \$35.4 million budget in 2018) has promoted a predictably firm commitment to expanding the amount of land protected from development.

The most viable path to sharply cutting carbon emissions that also protects wild American real estate from getting gobbled up by wind turbines and solar panels is nuclear power. Alas, in April 2019, the National Parks Conservation Association issued a news release opposing the extension of the operating life for the Turkey Point nuclear station near Miami. In 2016, the NPCA registered



A lot of the money for the hypocritical war against nuclear power is coming from some of the richest and most well-known foundations in America.

opposition to a proposal to add two new reactors to the same facility.

If completed, just the two new nuclear reactors at Turkey Point will exceed the total gross MW capacity lost by the two reactors recently closed at Indian Point. In reliably opposing all nuclear power generation at Turkey Point, both existing and new capacity, the NPCA was advocating against quite a lot of carbon-free electricity.

It is less surprising to see the League of Conservation Voters in this stridently anti-nuclear camp. Representatives from dozens of climate alarmist organizations sent a letter to the U.S. Senate in November 2020 to express their opposition to the American Nuclear Infrastructure Act of 2020. One of the signatories was LCV's legislative director.

The letter referred to nuclear power as one of the “dirty energy industries” that “amplifies and expands the dangers of climate change.” The LCV, a 501(c)(4), and the League of Conservation Voters Education Fund, its 501(c)(3) affiliate, had a combined 2018 budget of \$88 million.

Funding the Anti-Nuclear Left

A lot of the money for the hypocritical war against nuclear power is coming from some of the richest and most well-known foundations in America.

The Ford Foundation, one of the nation's wealthiest foundation with \$13 billion in assets, has given away at least \$58.3 million since 2016 to organizations that oppose nuclear energy. Top recipients included the Center for Popular Democracy (\$16 million) and the socialism-supporting Movement Strategy Center (\$11.8 million). With smaller donations Ford also supported the NRDC, the Greenpeace Fund, the Rainforest Action Network, and Friends of the Earth.

Similarly, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation with \$7.2 billion in assets has given at least \$79 million since 2016 to organizations opposed to nuclear energy. Major examples include the Environmental Defense Fund (\$32.7 million), the Sierra Club Foundation (\$25 million), and the NRDC (\$8.6 million).

The Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation (\$6.4 billion in total assets) was funded by Intel co-founder Gordon Moore.

This foundation has given at least \$56.8 million to the anti-nuclear Left since 2016, with more than \$54 million going to the World Wildlife Fund. Other recipients include the Surfrider Foundation, the EDF, the Sierra Club of British Columbia, and the Waterkeeper Alliance.

The anti-nuclear organizations have received at least \$39.2 million since 2016 from the JPB Foundation (\$3.9 billion in assets). The NRDC received \$17 million of the total. Other multi-million-dollar recipients of JPB grants include the Sierra Club Foundation, the People's Action Institute, the Movement Strategy Center, and the Center for Popular Democracy.

Two of America's giant grantmaking foundations were created from the fortunes of the co-founders of the Hewlett-Packard computer equipment firm: the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation (\$10.9 billion in assets) and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation (\$7.9 billion). Together they have directed tens of millions of dollars to anti-nuclear advocates since 2016, including the NRDC, the Sierra Club Foundation, the Rocky Mountain Institute, and the Greenpeace Fund.

Finally, a little-known billionaire named Fred Stanback Jr. has given more to the anti-nuclear cause than all these big names. Stanback has been a major donor to a creepy mix of anti-human causes, such as pro-abortion organizations, population control organizations, and anti-immigration organizations. A 2014 *Los Angeles Times* report established that Stanback directs most of his support through the Foundation for the Carolinas (FFTC), a donor-advised fund dominated by his donations.

Since 2016, according to the charitable foundation record-keeping service FoundationSearch, FFTC (i.e., Stanback) has given nearly \$200 million in combined donations to more than two dozen anti-nuclear climate policy organizations. (For more on Stanback, see “Anti-Humanist Environmentalism” in *Capital Research*, Issue 5 of 2019).

The top anti-nuclear energy recipients of FFTC's grants were the Natural Resources Defense Council (\$43.7 million in donations since 2016), the Sierra Club Foundation (\$37 million), the Rocky Mountain Institute (\$28.1 million), the League of Conservation Voters Education Fund (\$12.5 million), Friends of the Earth (\$9 million), the Southern



Credit: Ian Bancroft. License: <https://bit.ly/3zhqQz1>.

The 1986 explosion of the reactor containment building at the Chernobyl nuclear station in the Ukraine (then a part of the Soviet Union) was by a wide margin the worst nuclear accident in history. Pictured here is the New Safe Confinement structure built in 2017 to encase the reactor ruins and temporary shelter built in 1986 to prevent further radioactive contamination.

Alliance for Clean Energy (\$9 million), and the Center for Biological Diversity (\$8.5 million).

But How Safe Is It Really?

Probably close to 1,000 organizations in the United States display a recognizable hatred of nuclear energy. No matter what one's nuclear phobia, there's an advocacy group out there to represent it. For example, there is a niche anxiety closet named the Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space, which reported \$0 in spending for 2016, 2018 and 2019, but more than \$30,000 during most of the other years since 2011.

With all that worrying going on, is there a lot to worry about?

The 1986 explosion of the reactor containment building at the Chernobyl nuclear station in the Ukraine (then a part of the Soviet Union) was by a wide margin the worst nuclear accident in history. The World Nuclear Association explained

the disaster as “the product of a flawed Soviet reactor design coupled with serious mistakes made by the plant operators” and “a direct consequence of Cold War isolation and the resulting lack of any safety culture.”

A less diplomatic interpretation is that the Soviet bureaucracy hired a team of Homer Simpsons to design and build a dangerously flawed nuclear reactor. Then they located another team of Homers to operate it. As if it were an episode of the TV show, but without the laughs, this crew managed to accidentally blow up the building, light the reactor core on

CC —————
The Oxford Martin analysts concluded, “Contrary to popular belief, nuclear power has saved lives by displacing fossil fuels.”

fire, and get it to spew radiation across international borders. The Soviet bureaucracy compounded the deadly fiasco by initially trying to keep neighboring nations and the world from finding out about it.

How Deadly Was Chernobyl?

During 2020 in the United States alone, 29 coal miners were killed. A U.S. Department of Labor news release celebrated this as “the sixth consecutive year that mining fatalities were below 30.” This means the safety-conscious and stringently regulated U.S. coal industry is still almost as lethal every year as the dangerously incompetent Soviet nuclear program was at its worst more than three decades ago.

More than two decades after Chernobyl the U.N. Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR) issued a report analyzing the fatality and health effects of the disaster. It noted that of the 134 nuclear workers and first responders directly exposed to the worst radiation, 28 died during or in the weeks after the incident. Over the following 18 years, there were 19 additional disease-related fatalities

that could be credited to the accident but “not necessarily associated with radiation exposure.” So, less than 50 direct fatalities from the accident.

Additionally, the investigators credited most of an estimated 6,000 additional thyroid cancer cases over the ensuing two decades to persons who were children during the incident and living nearby. These were thyroid *cases* over 20 years, not fatalities, and the five-year survival rate for thyroid cancer is 98 percent.

Apart from those deaths and statistically estimated fatalities, the UNSCEAR report stated there was “no clearly demonstrated increase in the incidence of solid cancers or leukemia due to radiation in the exposed populations” and “the vast majority of the population need not live in fear of serious health consequences due to the radiation from the Chernobyl accident.”

Precisely one radiation-related death is attributed to the 2011 Fukushima disaster in Japan, the next worst nuclear accident in history. In that case a radiation-exposed plant worker was diagnosed with a lung cancer four years after the incident.



Credit: Tom Wilberding. License: <https://bit.ly/3hL9aPbu>.

In 2020, the worldwide relative deaths for each source of energy was calculated by the Oxford Martin Programme on Global Development at the University of Oxford. The researchers crunched the numbers on all realistically imaginable causes of death from energy production and use over many decades, such as Chernobyl, coal and uranium mine accidents, oil rig fatalities, estimated deaths from air pollutants (a lot of those), and all else.

On the nuclear side, they used a much higher estimated radiation death toll from Chernobyl than UNSCEAR. They also included 573 people assumed to have “died as a result of evacuation procedures and stress-induced factors” after Fukushima, a nuclear accident triggered by a devastating earthquake and tsunami. The authors drily note that “the evacuation of populations affected by the earth-

Today, bald eagles are a relatively common sight if you watch the skies near a reasonably large river or other body of water. With a wingspan of seven feet or more and striking white head and tail, like America itself, our national symbol is both unmistakable and difficult to look away from.



In 2020, Robert Bryce wrote, “The wind industry considers bird kills to be a trade secret.”

quake and tsunami at the time can make sole attribution to the nuclear disaster challenging.”

Their conclusion was that nuclear energy fatalities equaled 0.07 people per terawatt-hour (TWh) of energy generated, functionally equivalent in safety to wind power (0.04 deaths per TWh), solar power (0.02), and hydroelectric dams (also 0.02). Both due to inherent safety concerns and air pollution emissions, all rival forms of energy generation were found to be tens to hundreds of times more lethal: brown coal (32.72 deaths per TWh), coal (24.62), oil (18.42), and natural gas (2.82).

Even at this, the Oxford Martin analysts concede their tally of fatalities from nuclear power may be much too high because of the possibility that many researchers are overestimating the risk of low-level radiation exposure from Chernobyl. They concluded, “Contrary to popular belief, nuclear power has saved lives by displacing fossil fuels.”

Nuclear Energy Is for the Birds

Protecting human lives is obviously important, but those are not the only lives humans care about.

Today, bald eagles are a relatively common sight if you watch the skies near a reasonably large river or other body of water. But this takes nothing away from the majesty of seeing them. With a wingspan of seven feet or more and striking white head and tail, like America itself, our national symbol is both unmistakable and difficult to look away from.

Yet within the living memory of many Americans this glorious show was almost impossible to see and nearly ended forever. In the 1950s the lower 48 states were down to just 412 nesting pairs of bald eagles, a number that had recovered to only 1,482 pairs as late as 1982. Saving these glorious predators was arguably the most iconic accomplishment of the American environmental movement.

But not all supposed protectors of the land and its coolest creatures hold this accomplishment in such high esteem. As Obama administration staffers were packing to leave at the end of 2016, the Associated Press reports some last-minute permission slips were signed for raptor-killers:

The Obama administration on Wednesday finalized a rule that lets wind-energy companies operate high-speed turbines for up to 30 years—even if means killing or injuring thousands of federally protected bald and golden eagles. Under the new rule, wind companies and other power providers will not face a penalty if they kill or injure up to 4,200 bald eagles, nearly four times the current limit.

To appreciate the magnitude of this policy absurdity, imagine the outrage if you simply remove the word “wind” from the previous quote. Few other (perhaps no other) “companies”—energy or otherwise—would dare ask for permission to slaughter thousands more bald eagles each year than we even knew existed just a few decades ago.

Yet Big Wind got away with it. In 2020, Robert Bryce wrote, “The wind industry considers bird kills to be a trade secret and it has even sued to prevent government agencies from releasing data on bird kills.” His estimate was that more than 600,000 migratory birds are killed by wind turbines each year.

Once again, consider a hilarious hypothetical counterfactual: “*Big Oil: It’s none of your business how many eagles we’ve killed!*”

As Bryce noted, bald eagles are just the most iconic carnage. Migratory birds are also at risk. And name your favorite big raptor or even bats and you might find some of its kin (or pieces of same) lying dead under a local wind turbine—that is, if you’re allowed to go look at the “trade secrets.”

Mass-scale solar energy also contributes to the carnage. In 2014, a *U.S. News & World Report* journalist offered this morbidly colorful description:

A California solar farm may be killing as many as 28,000 birds a year, The Associated Press reported earlier this week, roasting the birds midflight as they flap through the sun’s magnified rays, turning them into smoking “streamers” as they plummet to the ground.

Although the solar and wind industries claim to be making progress in limiting this damage, morbidly obese taxpayer subsidies and other government goodies aimed at ramping up the wind and solar farms will obviously increase the kills

and (per the poor power density problem) needlessly reduce the habitat.

It's comical to see what some supposed conservationists will go through to avoid even mentioning nuclear energy as alternative to killing our biggest and most beautiful birds. The Sierra Club produced a "Fact Sheet" on "Wind Energy & Birds." Their big point: "It's not a choice between wind and nothing, it's a choice between wind and fossil fuels."

Some choice. It's missing something important. According to the Department of Energy, in 2020 nuclear power plants in the United States produced almost two times the electricity of wind and solar *combined*: 20 percent versus 10.7 percent.

The Sierra Club fact sheet also identifies the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) as one of the "conservation groups" that "understand the need for more wind energy." WWF (with a 2018 U.S. budget of \$258 million) registered its own firm opposition to nuclear energy as recently as April 2021.

Another dubious Sierra Club "fact" was a chart demonstrating that house cats kill more birds than wind turbines. It's true as far as it goes, but eagles are slow breeding apex predators not generally at risk from any other predator (except humans). They've even been known to grab and take away house cats and small dogs.

So anyone living with a huge, uncaged cat that is theoretically vicious enough to be out killing eagles would not be alive long enough to report it.

Cutting Out the Carbon Hypocrites

A conservation group isn't worthy of the claim if it implies that a Siamese kitty killing hundreds of homely house sparrows is morally equivalent to a wind turbine that slices up even one difficult-to-replace bird of prey.

Yes, that's a value judgment biased strongly in favor of protecting the wildlife humans prefer, rather than saving whatever "nature" has "created" for us. We own the planet; nature does not. We make the rules—the laws. If the laws are not meant to save the world for the things we wish to enjoy and need for our prosperity, then what—or whom—are we making them for?

Of course, we can and often do disagree furiously over what laws we wish to create, based on conflicting values and concerns. Few political and policy arenas are more acrimonious than the carbon and climate debates.

To one side are climate scientists and activists, such as the previously referenced James Hansen, who counsel that humanity is on a collision course with terrifying environmental and economic consequences. They advise that drastic policy action is needed to reduce carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

On a *different* side are those such as theoretical physicist Steven E. Koonin, a former undersecretary for science in the Department of Energy during the Obama administration. In a 2018 *Wall Street Journal* essay, using his own close reading of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's 2014 report, he wrote that it showed human-induced temperature changes were not a "significant" threat to the American or world economies and that the "overall economic impact of human-caused climate change is expected to be quite small."

The carbon emitted by our current energy choices has been a small concern for policymakers partial to Koonin's perspective. Conversely, those listening to Hansen have placed carbon-free preferences and carbon-reduction mandates at the center of the laws they propose.

These have been irreconcilable differences for too many years to count. This does not need to continue.

The carbon-fearing have precious little to show for the lopsided subsidies gifted to the wind and solar industries. Conversely, the carbon indifferent have been unable to kill those giveaways. Simply moving the money to nuclear power would accomplish the carbon reduction desired by one perspective and produce the reliable power insisted upon by the other.

This could—perhaps should—be considered an affordable compromise for free market purists opposed to all energy subsidies. After all, we have already been spending the money to create tiny trickles of power while killing some extra birds. Why not save the birds and radically ramp up the electricity output?

The only factions that can't afford this agreement are the grossly overfunded, extremist, and hypocritical left-wing environmental movement and its benefactors in Big Philanthropy. A radical ramp up of reliable carbon-free power would largely end the disputes that keep them employed. Perhaps that explains why so many of them are standing in the way. ■

Read previous articles from the Green Watch series online at CapitalResearch.org/category/green-watch/.

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**EDITED BY
HAYDEN LUDWIG**



RISE OF THE ECO-RIGHT

A few dozen lobbying, litigation, and activist nonprofits that identify themselves as free market or broadly right-of-center are attempting to rebrand environmentalism and global warming ideology as conservative values. The Capital Research Center broke the news that these “eco-Right” groups also are secretly bankrolled by liberal mega-donors.



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AMERICA'S INVESTIGATIVE THINK TANK



INTERNATIONAL FINANCE AND INTRIGUE IN *LUCIFER'S BANKER UNCENSORED*

By Hayden Ludwig

Summary: *In Lucifer's Banker Uncensored, Bradley C. Birkenfeld spins a compelling tale of power and corruption at the highest levels of international finance, tax evasion, political scandal, and government corruption. It reads like an Ian Fleming thriller, filled with intrigue, betrayal, and double-crossing government agents. And the author was in position know the dirty details.*

Lucifer's Banker Uncensored by Bradley C. Birkenfeld (Republic Book Sellers, 2020) is about power and corruption at the highest levels of what's arguably the world's most powerful institution—international finance—with Birkenfeld cast as the plucky rogue poised to take it all apart. The book even opens with a quotation from *Wall Street* villain Gordon Gekko trumpeting the virtues of greed.

"If you haven't gotten the gist of me yet," Birkenfeld writes, "I'm a hammer looking for nails."

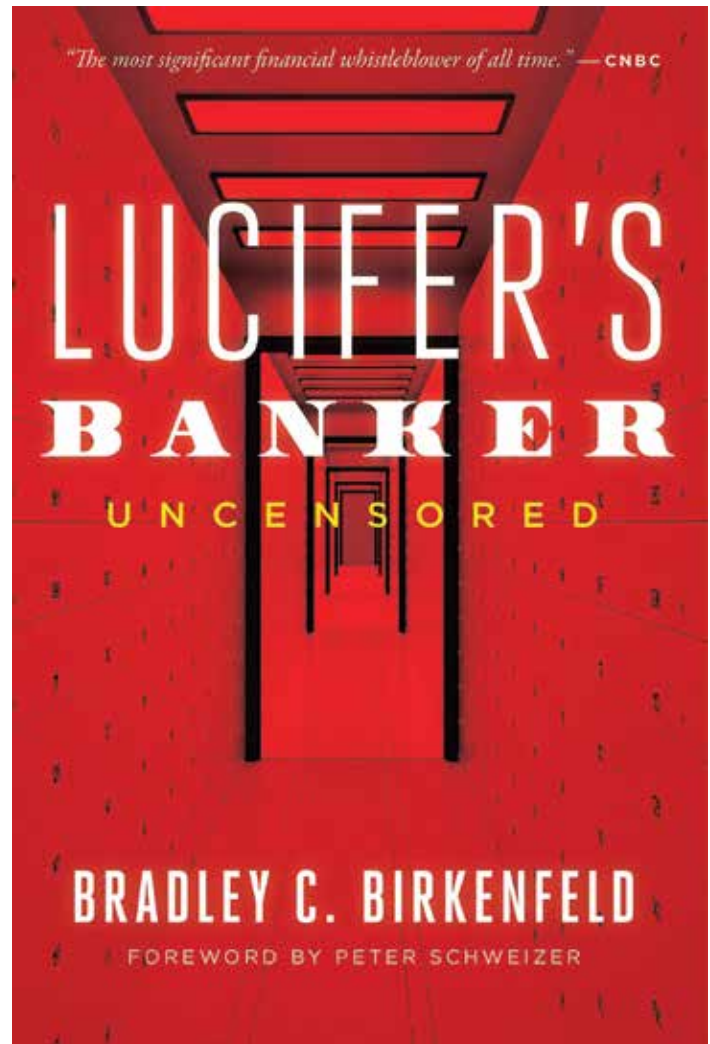
Lucifer's Banker Uncensored reads like an Ian Fleming thriller, filled with intrigue, betrayal, and double-crossing government agents. So much so, at one point Birkenfeld compares his own luxurious life in Switzerland and America with that of the dashing British spy—beautiful Brazilian babe, expensive champagne, parachuting from airplanes, and all. Anyone who's read a Tom Clancy novel will feel right at home with Birkenfeld's no-nonsense, straight-talking style.

Birkenfeld was a master of money living large with the rich and famous, and he wants you to know it. But all that lucre dried up the minute he decided to expose a \$25 billion tax fraud scheme hatched by UBS, one of the most powerful banks in the world. It even earned him the wrath—and a 30-month prison sentence—from the U.S. government.

Lucifer's Banker originally debuted in October 2016 at the National Press Club in Washington, DC—and just barely.



From there," Bradley Birkenfeld adds, "the snowball picked up more cow dung in its inexorable roll downhill.



Credit: Amazon. License: <https://amzn.to/2Z2dtJf>

Lucifer's Banker Uncensored is about power and corruption at the highest levels of what's arguably the world's most powerful institution—international finance—with Bradley Birkenfeld cast as the plucky rogue poised to take it all apart.

Hayden Ludwig is a senior research analyst at CRC.

According to Birkenfeld, his tell-all true story incurred the wrath of powerful movers in business and derailed the book's publication with major publishers. "I knew too much," he writes. Facing the threat of lawsuits he published a censored copy of the book, what he recalls as "a bitter-sweet event," but the desire to tell the *whole* truth only burned brighter.

Four years later, we have *Lucifer's Banker Uncensored*.

Boston Beginnings

Birkenfeld's tale begins in the late 1980s in Boston, where his struggle up the corporate ladder landed him in the currency department of a major pension-management firm handling some \$30 billion in dozens of major currencies from around the globe. It was there he had his first colorful brush with corruption when his team was asked to make up a \$750,000 loss by "padding" currency sales with undisclosed markups—a practice he calls "so illegal it would've made Tony Soprano blush."



Credit: NHH Norwegian School of Economics. License: <https://bit.ly/3tHmLff>

Bradley Birkenfeld recounts his capers wining and dining the ultra-wealthy into Swiss tax havens from Credit Suisse to Barclays and finally to UBS, the 15th-largest bank in Europe. Seemingly overnight he became UBS's highest-paid banker in Switzerland.

"From there," he adds, "the snowball picked up more cow dung in its inexorable roll downhill." The illegal practices included false pension profit reports to clients that concealed losses, mail and wire fraud, bribery, and even wiretapping clients by failing to disclose their phone calls with the firm were being recorded via Dictaphone. (Massachusetts is a two-party state when it comes to recording conversations).

When Birkenfeld brought the matter to the firm's legal department and even its annual shareholder meeting, his reward was the unemployment line—a foreshadowing of his situation with UBS so many years later, FBI investigation and everything.

When that investigation dead-ended, he was left blackballed in the United States. Birkenfeld blames the failure on rampant corruption in the FBI's Boston office, which was simultaneously taking bribes from the murderous gangster James "Whitey" Bulger" as it was investigating his case. So Birkenfeld turned to the global hub of banking: Switzerland.

Birkenfeld calls the country a "banker's Disneyland" and little wonder. Private banking is practically ingrained in the national DNA, dating back to its days as a refuge for beleaguered Protestants in the 16th and 17th century Reformation. Swiss bankers offered simple money management services to the largely middle-class Reformed exiles from Roman Catholic France, and they grew more sophisticated with time. This complemented the Swiss cantons' already famous policy of neutrality in foreign wars, eventually making Geneva the center of humanitarian groups such as the Red Cross and international treaties like the Geneva Conventions.

Eventually bank secrecy was even embedded in the national constitution in 1934, making it a criminal act for a banker to reveal details of a client's account. This effectively rendered that invisible money virtually untaxable.

Birkenfeld recounts his capers wining and dining the ultra-wealthy into Swiss tax havens from Credit Suisse to Barclays and finally to UBS, the 15th-largest bank in Europe, with total assets of €782 billion (\$926 billion). Seemingly overnight he became UBS's highest-paid banker in Switzerland.

From there the book assumes a dizzying *Wolf of Wall Street* vibe: loose women, \$25,000 watches, luxury cars sporting six-figure price tags, high-powered business negotiations in Wolfsburg Castle ("where Alexandre Dumas and Franz Liszt had once bedded down"), and even sipping



Credit: Axel Hindemith. License: <https://bit.ly/3EIV6jO>.

Lucifer's Banker Uncensored *assumes a dizzying Wolf of Wall Street vibe: loose women, \$25,000 watches, luxury cars sporting six-figure price tags, high-powered business negotiations in Wolfsburg Castle.*

Courvoisier with Osama bin Laden's sister in a surreal (and heated) scene shortly after the 9/11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center.

Banker Turned Whistleblower

But 9/11 also put the squeeze on lucrative private banking. The PATRIOT Act and new regulations brought unprecedented scrutiny from the U.S. government on UBS, which, Birkenfeld writes, secretly produced a get-out-of-jail-free card for the firm, in which the firm would pin the blame for billions of dollars in hidden money on its star employees. These same star employees had made the company a fortune squirreling rich Americans' cash away. If the feds came knocking, UBS could sell Birkenfeld down the river and get away scot-free.

So before jumping ship in late 2005 he set about quietly documenting UBS's complicity in helping him violate its own secret rule barring employees from helping clients

dodge U.S. tax regulations (much of it included in the book's appendix). "It was time to become the scourge of every great financial institution," he writes, "a pissed-off, dangerous internal whistleblower."

To hear him tell it, the \$20 billion tax evasion case that Birkenfeld eventually brought to the Justice Department was at least as motivated by guilt as indignation at UBS's betrayal. After all, hadn't he helped the "sneaky Swiss banking pirates" hide billions from Uncle Sam while regular Americans had to *pay* their taxes?



What Bradley Birkenfeld found at the Justice Department can hardly be described as justice.

Hilariously, at one point in 2006 while shopping for law firms, Birkenfeld considered hiring Covington & Burling, where future attorney general Eric Holder was a partner and where the scandal-ridden Obama appointee would slink back to an office that was reportedly kept open for him for six years. Birkenfeld passed because UBS was a Covington & Burling client.

I won't spoil the details, but what Birkenfeld found at the Justice Department can hardly be described as justice. He names names of the federal agents who *should* have welcomed a whistleblower cracking open a massive case of tax fraud committed against the U.S. government but didn't, largely for reasons he ascribes to corruption and department politics. He also names the American account holders at UBS and the eye-popping size of their secret accounts, including famous actors, businessmen, and politicians. Suffice it to say Eric Holder, Hillary Clinton (including the Clinton Foundation), John Kerry, and other members of the Obama administration feature heavily in the cover-up.

Thanks to Birkenfeld's testimony, UBS was ultimately forced to turn over the names of 4,500 Americans with secret accounts in April 2009 (although Birkenfeld points out that, out of its 19,000 U.S. account-holders, that list was "cherry-picked"), leading to recovered assets and fines worth a stunning \$25 billion.

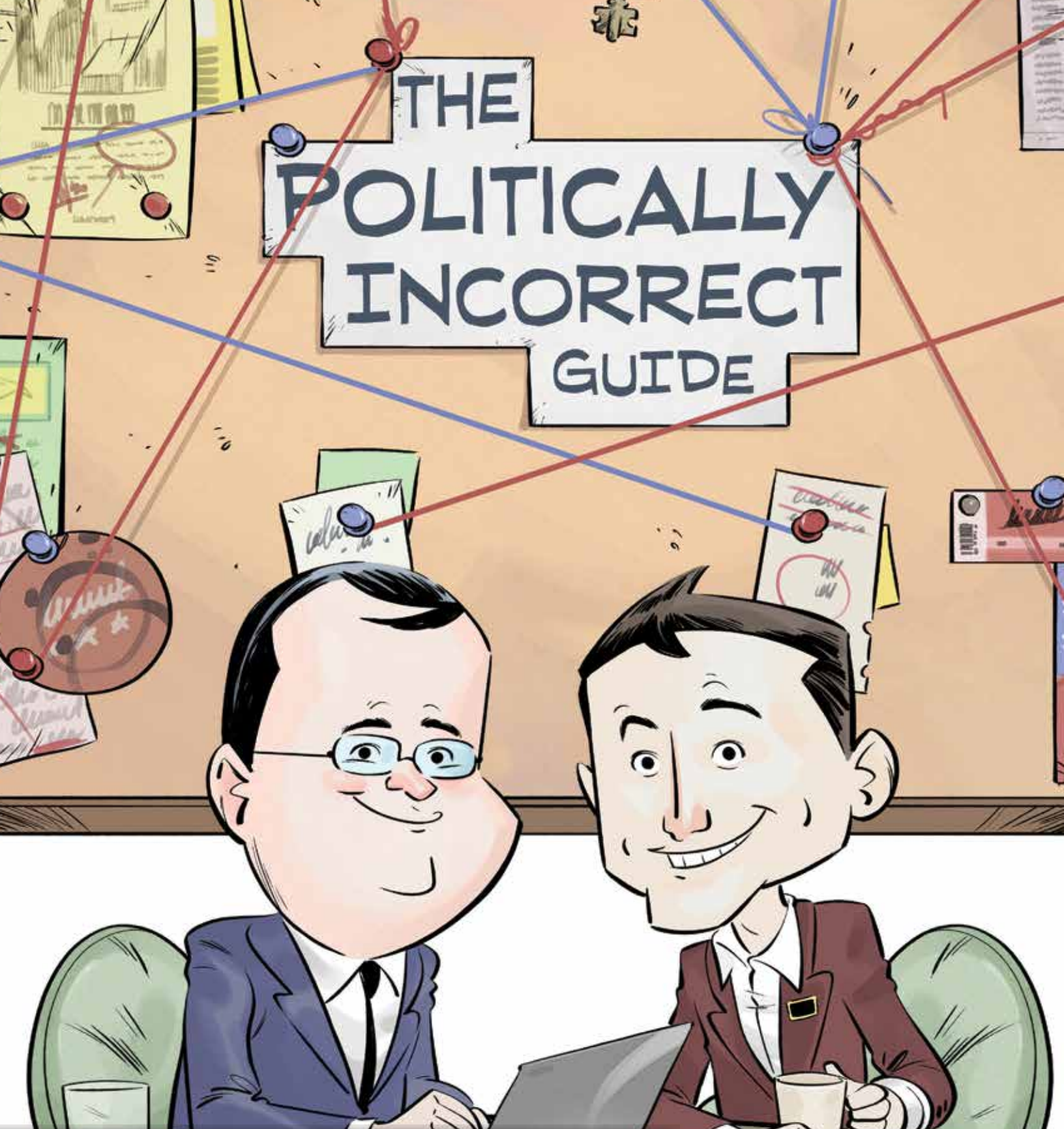
Less than six months later Birkenfeld was sentenced to three years in prison for failing—according to the government—to disclose his personal involvement in the UBS tax evasion scandal when he came forward as a whistleblower. (Birkenfeld maintains that he was up-front about his role at UBS from the start.)

Cover-up Revealed

The story has a happy ending, however. Birkenfeld was released in August 2012, around the time the Justice Department's cover-up was revealed—largely thanks to a watchdog group, the National Whistleblower Center in Washington, DC. As a whistleblower, the IRS awarded him \$104 million (less taxes), and Birkenfeld took his new book to town, exposing UBS's scheme across Europe and Canada.

As *Lucifer's Banker Uncensored* closes, he even mulls over the idea of starting his own "whistleblower headquarters" to deliver justice where it's needed. The name: Hammer, Inc. ■

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