



# Most 'dark money' spending in recent elections came from 15 groups: analysis

BY CHRIS MILLS RODRIGO - 09/12/18 01:27 PM EDT

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Three-quarters of the "dark money" spending in the most recent full election cycle came from the same 15 groups, according to a new report by a non-profit group that focuses on campaign finance.

Issue One found that among the 15 groups were the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, National Rifle Association (NRA) and Planned Parenthood Action Fund.

According to the Center for Responsive Politics, these "dark money" groups reported spending over \$800 million between January 2010 and December 2016. "Dark money" refers to money given to certain organizations often used to influence elections, something that has become a hot-button issue since the Supreme Court's landmark Citizens United ruling in 2010.

The analysis also detailed some of the organizations that had donated to those 15 groups, arguing that the donations help shed light on the issues driving the spending. For example, although the Chamber does not reveal its donors, the report traced nearly 100 blue-chip companies which did disclose payments to the trade association. This process found that Dow Chemical Co. contributed \$13.5 million and Chevron Inc. added \$4.5 million more.

Although dark money groups are expressly prohibited from coordinating with candidates, Issue One argues in its analysis that there are various work-arounds which have allowed money to pour into elections. These sources remain major players in the 2018 midterm elections.

Other notable findings from the report include that more than 12 of the country's largest trade associations have contributed to many of the top 15 dark money groups. Some funds from these groups, which include Crossroads GPS and 45Committee, are so obscured that a meager two percent of money raised could be tied to specific donors.

The research, which combed through available data, including Federal Election Commission filing, tax returns, and corporate filings, to attempt to match donations to donors, is now available on a public database in collaboration with ProPublica.

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