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The Fix

Anatomy of a Washington dinner: Who funds the Competitive Enterprise Institute?

By Juliet Eilperin June 20, 2013

People have plenty of conspiracy theories about the libertarian <u>Competitive Enterprise Institute</u>: that it's merely an extension of the Koch brothers' empire, or a subsidiary of Exxon-Mobil Corp.

While the group does not disclose its donors as a general rule, it does reveal which companies and interest groups sponsor its <u>annual fundraising dinner</u> -- which takes place Thursday night at the J.W. Marriott -- along with how much they contribute. CEI provided a copy of its dinner program to the Fix, ranking donors according to the value of five metals -- chromium, tungsten, nickel, copper and tin -- which <u>ecologist Paul Ehrlich bet economist Julian Simon</u> would be more scarce in 2005 than in 1980, the year of the wager. (Ehrlich lost the bet.)

The lineup of sponsors both confirms certain stereotypes about the right-leaning think tank and challenges others. The energy sector donated \$110,000 to the event, the same amount given by conservative foundations (three of which are associated with the billionaires Charles and David Koch). But the biggest single donor is Google, which gave \$50,000, and Facebook kicked in \$25,000.

Lawson Bader, CEI's new president, said the list shows his group has "a pretty diverse group of supporters." The fact that fossil fuel firms -- and a number of rail companies that transport coal and oil -- rank as generous donors makes sense, Bader said, because CEI has "been working on energy and environmental issues longer than other" Washington groups.

At the same time, CEI ranks as a strong defender of privacy and civil liberty. "We are very committed to the idea of free enterprise and individual liberty," he said. "CEI does see itself as more libertarian than conservative."

The dinner's keynote speaker is <u>Sen. Rand Paul</u> (R-Ky.), whose political stock is particularly high at the moment. "I have no doubt that having Rand Paul as the keynote speaker probably helped drive some of the increased interest in the dinner," Bader observed. "It's hard to test that theory."

Another reason for the impressive turnout may be Bader's own sales skills: he managed to convince both his mother Jeannie and his brother Cole to buy tickets to the event, at \$250 each. When asked whether he thought his mother should have made a bigger donation, Bader replied, "No comment."

Want to know who shelled out the most to support CEI's annual fete? Read the gritty details, below, with donors listed according to sector.

Energy

Murray Energy Corporation \$45,000

Marathon Petroleum \$25,000

Devon Energy \$15,000

Phillips 66 \$10,000

American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity \$5,000

American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers \$5,000

Emerson Electric \$5,000

Transport

Association of American Railroads \$5,000

BNSF Railway \$5,000

Canadian National Railway \$5,000

CSX Corporation \$5,000

Norfolk Southern \$5,000

Union Pacific Corporation \$5,000

Auto Industry

Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, Inc. \$15,000

Ford Motor Company \$5,000

Volkswagen Group of America \$5,000

Alcohol/Tobacco/Beverage

Altria Corporate Services \$10,000

American Beverage Association \$5,000

Distilled Spirits Council of the United States \$5,000

Pepsico, Inc. \$5,000

Foundations/Advocacy Groups

JP Humphreys Foundation \$40,000
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Claws Foundation \$25,000
Koch Companies Public Sector \$15,000
Charles Koch Foundation \$10,000
Dunn's Foundation \$10,000
Americans for Prosperity \$5,000
The Beach Foundation \$5,000
Communications/Entertainment
Comcast-NBC Universal \$10,000
National Cable & Telecommunications Association \$10,000
News Corporation \$10,000
Verizon Communications \$7,500
The American Conservative \$5,000
Motion Picture Association of America \$5,000
White House Writers Group \$5,000
High-Tech
Google \$50,000
Facebook \$25,000

Consumer Electronics Association \$10,000
GTECH \$5,000
Microsoft Corporation \$5,000
Pharmaceuticals/Health/Biotech
PhRMA \$25,000
Glaxo-SmithKline \$15,000
American Optometric Association \$10,000
Generic Pharmaceutical Association \$10,000
Biotechnology Industry Organization \$10,000
Chemical/Agriculture/Business
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Credit Union National Association \$25,000
National Association of Credit Service Organizations \$7,500
American Bankers Association \$5,000
Law Firms/Lobby/Consulting Firms
Bracewell & Giuliani \$7,500
Baker & Hostetler LLP \$7,500
DCI Group \$5,000
Dezenhall Resources \$5,000
Wiley Rein LLP \$5,000
Individuals
Ambassador C. Boyden Gray \$25,000
Stanford Rothschild \$25,000
Stephen Modzelewski \$25,000
Fred Young \$15,000
Jean Claude Gruffat \$10,000
Robert Luddy \$10,000
Jack France \$7,500

Arcadio Casillas \$5,000

James Curley \$5,000

Forrest G. Hoglund \$5,000

Angelo Puglisi \$5,000

Juliet Eilperin is The Washington Post's senior national affairs correspondent, covering how the new administration is transforming a range of U.S. policies and the federal government itself. She is the author of two books—one on sharks, and another on Congress, not to be confused with each other—and has worked for the Post since 1998.
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