

The Bloomberg Family Foundation

By Maryan Escarfullett

Summary: *The Bloomberg Family Foundation is one of the largest private charities in the United States. It is funded for the most part by mayor of New York and financial entrepreneur Michael Bloomberg. As Bloomberg's third and final term as mayor of New York winds down, many look at his foundation for clues as to what the mayor's political future may hold.*

The Bloomberg Family Foundation is one of the largest and most visible private charities in the United States. According to tax statements, in 2010 its assets were worth \$2.7 billion, which made it the 22nd largest foundation in the nation. Like many other organizations founded by America's modern billionaires, the Foundation funds social causes supported by its very liberal benefactor: Michael Bloomberg. At first glance the foundation's grantmaking may seem praiseworthy, but a closer examination reveals that it often serves a not-so-noble statist, left-wing agenda.

Bloomberg Family Foundation divides its giving into five areas: the arts, education, the environment, government innovation, and public health. Some of the programs funded by the Bloomberg Family Foundation promote good causes such as the Charlotte R. Bloomberg Children's Hospital, constructed by Michael Bloomberg's alma mater, Johns Hopkins University.



New York City's Nanny-in-Chief: Through his philanthropy Mayor Michael Bloomberg wants to keep on interfering in people's lives long after he leaves elected office.

Some causes the foundation funds seem more or less ideologically neutral, such as the World Lung Foundation (\$165,408,450 from 2007 to 2010), the Centers for Disease Control-affiliated CDC Foundation (\$9,315,000 in 2010), Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation collaborations (\$16,286,280 from 2008 to 2010), and Cities of Service (\$2,000,000 in 2010).

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Bloomberg has donated so much money to private and public foundations that the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* consistently ranks Bloomberg in the top 50, if not top three, most charitable American philanthropists.

But the Bloomberg Family Foundation and the mayor are increasingly turning to port with their philanthropy.

In July 2011, Michael Bloomberg and the Bloomberg Family Foundation committed \$50 million to the Sierra Club's "Beyond Coal" campaign. The campaign is a blatant attack on America's coal industry, the backbone of America's domestic energy market.

The purpose of the "Beyond Coal" campaign is to shutter at least one-third of the nation's coal plants in order to push the nation closer to so-called "clean energy." The campaign has already reportedly stopped 153 coal-fired plants from being built, taking thousands of potential jobs away from the growing ranks of unemployed American workers.

Editor: Matthew Vadum

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Address:
1513 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036-1480

Phone: (202) 483-6900
Long-Distance: (800) 459-3950

E-mail Address:
mvadum@capitalresearch.org

Web Site:
<http://www.capitalresearch.org>

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Michael Brune, who runs the Sierra Club, praised Bloomberg for throwing the group a financial lifeline to wage its war against domestic energy development and fawned over the mayor for revitalizing the green movement. According to Bloomberg Philanthropies, "Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune thanked Bloomberg for the grant calling it a 'game changer,' in the fight against coal."

Brune is joined at the "Beyond Coal" campaign by Al Armendariz, an ex-EPA official who abruptly left public service after he was caught on video saying he would "crucify" companies that failed to adhere to EPA standards.

By donating funds to this destructive environmentalist campaign Bloomberg Philanthropies has given the now-floundering green agenda a second wind. To understand why the Bloomberg Foundation is teaming up with so many liberal organizations it is important to first understand what the foundation is, what it does, and who funds it.

Pandering to the Left

The partnership with the Sierra Club isn't the only climate-change oriented campaign launched by the mayor. In a massive attempt to expand government in 2007, Bloomberg and his foundation started the C40 Cities Climate Change Leadership Group.

Its stated purpose is to connect mayors from the most populous cities and tackle climate change in cities across the world. In reality the group is working to promote central planning and pro-environmentalist agendas. The group hails the imposition of an economy-killing cap-and-trade carbon emissions control program in Tokyo, even though Japan's long-suffering economy remains stagnant.

Apart from grants by Bloomberg and his charity the group also receives funding from former President Bill Clinton. Last year the group was merged with the Clinton Climate Initiative to create one big funding powerhouse for international green programs.

Another liberal charitable effort launched by the Bloomberg Family Foundation is collaboration with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the British government's Department for International Development. Announced at the London Summit on Family Planning, the campaign aims to make cheaper contraceptives available in third world communities. Bloomberg Philanthropies will contribute a whopping \$50 million.

The contraceptive campaign's goal is to expand the work between already bloated paternalistic national governments, donors, non-profits, and others. While this campaign might on the surface seem like a reasonable attempt to improve women's health in the international community, there is still no indication that money will be used for promoting sustainable, faith-based family planning initiatives that incorporate the health and will of the entire family.

Bloomberg's larger, more expansive measure to increase contraceptive availability in the international community should be no surprise, given the mayor's ardent support of Planned Parenthood. He defended Planned Parenthood in 2011 when Congress considered cutting \$75 million from the program and also this past February when the Susan G. Komen Foundation temporarily decided to stop funding Planned Parenthood. (For more on the controversy, see "Breast Cancer Charity: Susan G. Komen for the Cure," by Sean Higgins, *Organization Trends*, February 2012.)

At the time Bloomberg criticized Congress



and the Komen Foundation. Instead of praising Congress's work to balance the budget Bloomberg engaged in political grandstanding. And when the Komen Foundation temporarily cut off Planned Parenthood, the mayor personally donated \$250,000 to the group and urged others to do the same.

The Man Behind the Money

Michael Bloomberg is a self-made man and a stellar example of the American traditions of hard work, determination, and vision. He was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on February 14, 1942. His father was a real estate agent, and his mother a descendent of Russian immigrants.

He attended Johns Hopkins where he earned a bachelor's in electrical engineering, work-

ing his way through university by taking out loans and working during summers.

His time at Hopkins gave him a passion for public health issues that has shaped many of his philanthropic and government campaigns, including his infamous ban on smoking in public and his move to limit soda serving sizes.

Afterwards he earned an MBA from Harvard Business School and eventually founded Bloomberg LP, an international media conglomerate. Currently, Bloomberg is cited by *Forbes* as the 11th richest person in the United States, and like the pre-eminent funder of the Left, George Soros, has a net worth estimated at around \$22 billion.

He grew up in a liberal household and was a Democrat until seeking public office. In 2001 Bloomberg switched his political allegiance from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party. Then he ran for mayor of New York City and won. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Bloomberg was able to convince the voters of New York that his business acumen would steer the city towards greater prosperity.

But even then questions were raised about his courting of special interest groups. Leading right up to the election, the Bloomberg Family Foundation made large donations to mostly African-American Protestant churches to gain support from the black communities in New York, sparking accusations that he was buying votes.

When he was endorsed by the Rev. Calvin O. Butts III, pastor at the Abyssinian Baptist Church, political pundits and New Yorkers alike were shocked. Bloomberg Family Foundation had donated \$1 million to the church's development corporation.

Apart from his campaign to court religious and minority voters in New York, the business tycoon was also criticized for the massive amounts of his own money that he poured into his first mayoral campaign.

Political Flip-Flopping

In 2001 when Bloomberg first ran for mayor he spent millions of dollars of his own money, alarming his opponents and surprising voters. He spent \$74 million and outspent his first opponent, perennial Democratic candidate Mark Green, 12 to 1. Since then, his spending on re-election bids has only pushed that number even higher. To this day Mayor Bloomberg has set the record for the most expensive self-financed campaigns for public office in history, having spent over \$250 million on his three mayoral bids alone. (*New York Times*, October 24, 2009)

Bloomberg's self-financing seems to have inspired a legion of wealthy office seekers across the United States to underwrite their own campaigns. By covering most of his own campaign bills, a self-financed candidate can claim to be free of special interest influence.

Bloomberg's hunger for more political power became clear to voters in two stark instances: first in 2007 when he split from the Republican Party and registered as an Independent in New York City, and second in 2008 when Bloomberg acted like a dictator in a banana republic by strong-arming City Council into changing the term limits law so he could run again. The law had been approved by city voters by referendum in the 1990s.

At the end of his second term Mayor Bloomberg argued to voters that he needed a third term so that city officials could clean up the mess of the financial crisis. Instead of waiting for a public vote to repeal existing voter-approved legislation Bloomberg aggressively campaigned for city council to change the term limit laws.

In October 2008 the City Council Committee on Governmental Operations, supported by Bloomberg ally and deputy mayor Christine Quinn, voted in favor of extending term limits. In the end all that was needed was for City Council to seal the deal, which they did with a vote of 29 to 22. But the term limit fight in New York was not over yet. In November 2010, dissatisfied New York citizens once again voted in favor of re-establishing two-term limits on city officials.

Now the mayor is embroiled in another battle with the New York City Council over minimum wage laws. The "living" and "prevailing" wage laws, which are supported by pro-labor groups and unions, impose higher wage mandates on private companies that lease space to a city agency or receive a government subsidy.

In a surprising turn of events, Christine Quinn, the mayor's close ally and possible successor, is fighting back hard against Bloomberg to keep these laws in place. For once staunchly defending the private sector, Bloomberg has stated that these laws discourage private companies from creating jobs in New York. Even as the end of the mayor's time in office approaches, the man's ideological contradictions continue to perplex voters.

Now that the mayor's third and final term is winding down, he is becoming increasingly strident.

After the tragic theater shootings in Aurora, Colorado, this summer Bloomberg revived his campaign for stricter gun control laws. In a state where critics frequently complain about police brutality and that response times by law enforcement are notoriously slow, the mayor wants to ensure that only government officials are able to use firearms to protect themselves from harm.

On the Piers Morgan TV show the mayor stated, "I don't understand why the police officers across this country don't stand up collectively and say, 'We're going to go on strike. We're not going to protect you. Unless you, the public, through your legislature, do what's required to keep us safe.'"

It's entirely possible Bloomberg will carry his hatred of the Second Amendment into private life by funding more efforts to make gun control stricter in New York, which already has some of the toughest firearms laws in America.

The Bloomberg Family Foundation's Revolving Door

Members of the board of trustees of the Bloomberg Family Foundation consist of the mayor's previous cabinet members; accomplished entrepreneurs such as former CEO of Morgan Stanley, John J. Mack; and former public officials such as Newark mayor Corey Booker, former U.S. Senator Sam Nunn, and former Florida governor Jeb Bush. Three other high profile trustees were also appointed to the board in April. The board's trustees are the MVPs of American politics.

Not only are these Bloomberg Foundation board members some of the most successful politicians and entrepreneurs in America, but they also wield immense political and fiscal influence in American politics. From security

and foreign policy to an understanding of labor regulations, the mayor's coalition is top notch.

Recent appointee and former Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao, the only member of President George W. Bush's term to serve all eight years in her initial appointment, also brings international philanthropic experience to the mayor's table from her work directing the Peace Corps.

Another one of the four new board members announced in April 2012 is retired Navy Admiral Michael Mullin. Admiral Mullin served as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 2007 to 2011 and is the only Navy officer in history to be appointed to four different four-star assignments.

Former U.S. Sen. Sam Nunn also served on the board. Nunn has extensive experience in the realm of nuclear disarmament. The former Democratic lawmaker from Georgia founded and runs the Nuclear Threat Initiative. NTI is a nonprofit that aims to decrease the quantity of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons that exist across the world. Nunn was considered as a potential running mate for Democratic presidential candidates Barack Obama and John Kerry.

Conclusion

Michael Bloomberg has surrounded himself with a coalition of well-experienced and important political leaders. The board members appointed to the Bloomberg Family Foundation run the gamut of political and social ideologies that have been reflected in the mayor's current policies.

The work of the Bloomberg Family Foundation has always paralleled and at times financially supported the policies Bloomberg

has enacted as mayor, from soda limits to the smoking ban.

Ultimately, people are hurt by Bloomberg's harmful, strict regulations, enacted as mayor, and by much of the work that his foundation does to advance his policies.

Bloomberg's legacy may well be that he made it more difficult for others to achieve their version of the American Dream.

New York native Maryan Escarfullett, a Henry Haller Intern at CRC this summer, is starting her graduate studies at the Johns Hopkins Nanjing Center in China.

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Many thanks.

Terrence Scanlon
President

PhilanthropyNotes

The same Marxist agitators who tried to silence **Mitt Romney** in the Hawkeye State a year ago tried to shut down his running mate last month. GOP vice presidential pick Rep. **Paul Ryan** (R-Wisc.) was aggressively heckled by the agrarian socialists and union goons of the **ACORN**-like **Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement** (Iowa CCI) throughout a stump speech at the Iowa State Fair. Police dragged away howling activists, but the group claimed victory over Ryan, declaring it silenced him for 30 percent of his speaking time: "Ryan spoke for only 12 minutes, well under his allotment of 20."

A left-wing political action committee created in 2011 to help candidates who promise to look out for the interests of nonprofits has issued its first endorsements, the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* reports. **CForward** is backing eight candidates, and only one is a Republican, **Becky Massey**, a candidate for the Tennessee State Senate. The only congressional candidate to get the nod was **Nate Shinagawa**, a Democrat seeking office in the newly created 23rd District of New York. Shinagawa is also endorsed by the **ACORN**-affiliated **Working Families Party**. CForward said it seeks candidates who will "promote our role in creating jobs, attracting investment dollars and maintaining the civil society required for traditional business to thrive."

Cash-strapped states struggling to meet their federally imposed welfare obligations are tapping outside groups such as **United Way** and **YMCA** to help welfare recipients, the *Washington Examiner* reports. According to a Government Accountability Office report, 13 states asked nonprofits for help in 2011, up from three in 2007. Another 17 say they will look to nonprofits soon.

Microlending, in which lenders make small loans to help Third World entrepreneurs start businesses, has started to catch on in the United States. "You know this 'Buy Local' movement? There's starting to be this 'Lend Local' movement," said **Premal Shaw**, president of the **Kiva** website that puts online donors together with micro-enterprises in need of capital. As traditional credit dries up in this country, the quantity of micro-loans originated in the U.S. has jumped 25 percent from 2008 to 2010. About 17,000 micro-loans are initiated every year in America, the **Aspen Institute** reports.

Goldman Sachs WATCH

Perhaps after being pressured by Goldman Sachs, prosecutors are taking a second bite at the apple in Manhattan. After being absolved by a federal court of computer crimes, former Goldman Sachs programmer **Sergey Aleynikov** has been charged under New York state law with stealing the same proprietary computer source code from the bank when he quit to work for a start-up company. Although the Fifth Amendment bars double jeopardy, other jurisdictions are still allowed to prosecute an acquitted person under something called the Dual Sovereignty Doctrine. Earlier this year Aleynikov's federal computer crime conviction was overturned by a federal appeals court, according to the *New York Times*. The code in question was used for Goldman's high-frequency trading operations.