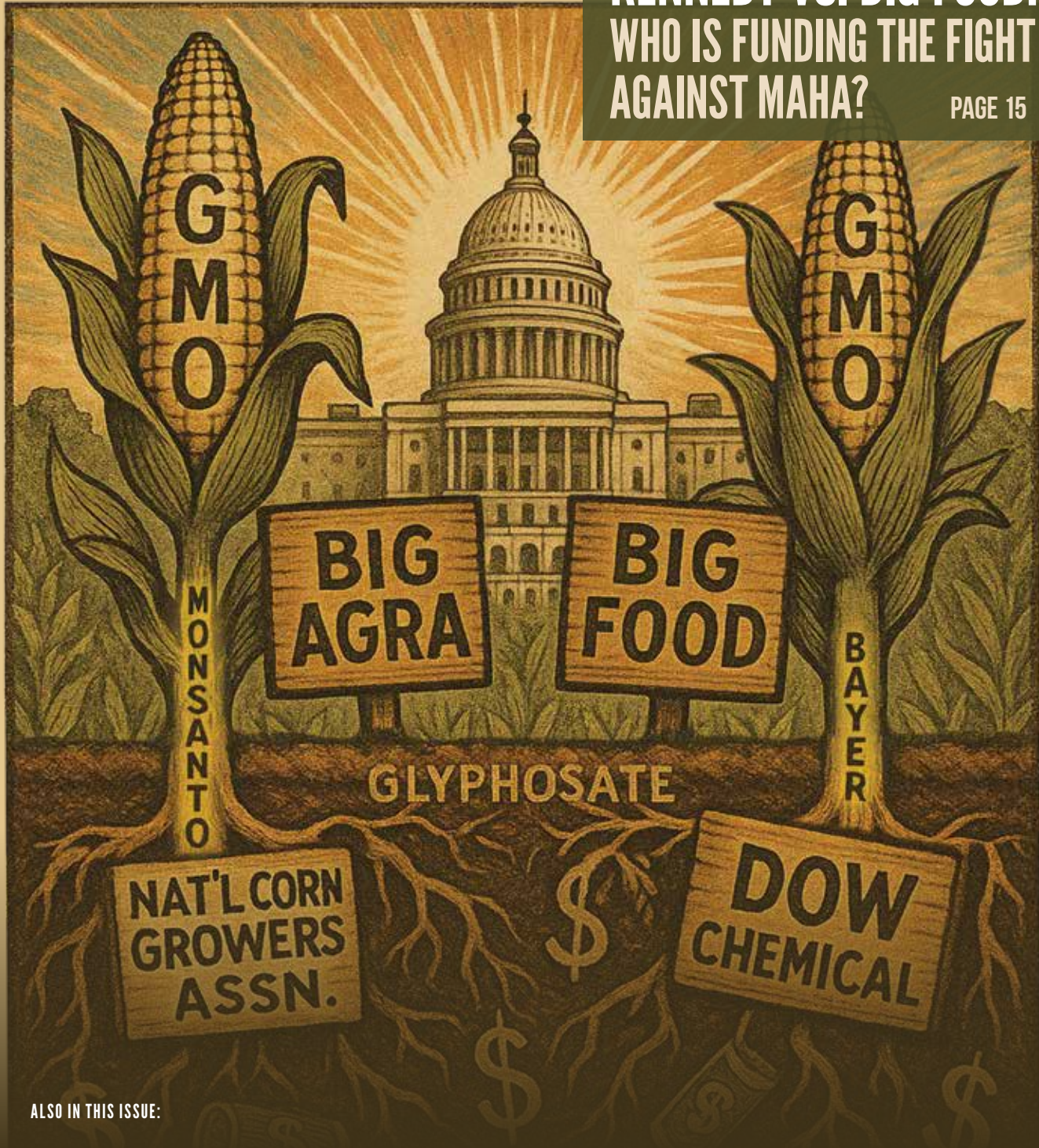




KENNEDY VS. BIG FOOD: WHO IS FUNDING THE FIGHT AGAINST MAHA?

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U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Accountability, Subcommittee on Delivering on Government Efficiency, June 4, 2025, *"Public Funds, Private Agendas: NGOs Gone Wild."*



U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Oversight, July 15, 2025, *"How Leftist Nonprofit Networks Exploit Federal Tax Dollars to Advance a Radical Agenda."*



U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on Federal Courts, Oversight, Agency Action, and Federal Rights, June 25, 2025, *"How Leftist Nonprofit Networks Exploit Federal Tax Dollars to Advance a Radical Agenda."*



U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, December 10, 2024, *"Desecrating Old Glory: Investigating How the Pro-Hamas Protests Turned National Park Service Land into a Violent Disgrace."*



U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, April 30, 2024, *"Examining the Influence of Extreme Environmental Activist Groups in the Department of the Interior."*



U.S. House Committee on House Administration, February 13, 2024, *"American Confidence in Elections: Confronting Zuckerbucks, Private Funding of Election Administration."*



U.S. House Ways and Means Committee, December 13, 2023, *"Growth of the Tax-Exempt Sector and the Impact on the American Political Landscape."*



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U.S. Senate Finance Committee, Subcommittee on Taxation and IRS Oversight, May 4, 2022, *"Laws and Enforcement Governing the Political Activities of Tax Exempt Entities."*



U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on Federal Courts, Oversight, Agency Action, and Federal Rights, March 10, 2021, *"What's Wrong with the Supreme Court: The Big-Money Assault on Our Judiciary."*



TIME TO END THE NGO GRAVY TRAIN

By Scott Walter

Capital Research is a monthly publication of the Capital Research Center (CRC), a non-partisan education and research organization, classified by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) public charity.

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When Cops Become Robbers

A hard-hitting 90-minute investigative documentary that exposes how civil asset forfeiture allows law enforcement to seize property—cash, cars, even homes—without charging anyone with a crime or proving guilt. Often innocent people are left powerless to recover what was taken.

This practice threatens basic rights and undermines due process. It's a story of abuse and corruption within the American justice



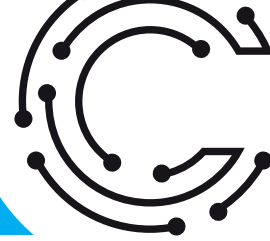
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TIME TO END THE NGO GRAVY TRAIN

By Scott Walter

Every year, billions of American taxpayer dollars fund pseudo-charities that serve as little more than extensions of the Democratic Party. With roughly half of Americans voting as Republicans, many citizens are bankrolling their own political opposition—and the corruption runs deeper than one might imagine.

The Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) is finally exposing this corrupt system. What they're finding should outrage every taxpayer: billions of dollars flowing to organizations that aren't "NGOs"—that's Washington-speak for non-governmental organizations, otherwise known as "nonprofits." No, these groups are really BGOs—basically government organizations.

Consider the Solidarity Center, a group that's been awarded over \$86 million in federal funding since 2008, with \$61 million given during the Biden administration. This union-created outfit gets 99 percent of its revenue from taxpayers while advancing the goals of the AFL-CIO, which gave 86 percent of its political donations to Democrats in the 2024 election. The Solidarity Center doesn't just promote union causes. It champions radical "climate justice" and diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. When DOGE recommended ending its federal gravy train, the group promptly sued the Trump administration.

This is just one example among many similar schemes. For instance, federal agencies give grants to school districts, which pay Planned Parenthood to teach that biological sex is a myth. This is how the CDC funds HIV grants that somehow end up paying for Planned Parenthood gender ideology training. It's money laundering with a charitable facade.

The pattern is clear and ugly: use tax dollars to fund organizations that advocate for bigger government, which helps



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What the Department of Government Efficiency is finding should outrage every taxpayer: billions of dollars flowing to organizations that aren't "NGOs"—that's Washington-speak for non-governmental organizations, otherwise known as "nonprofits."

elect politicians who keep the money flowing. It's a self-perpetuating cycle of cronyism.

Naturally, nonprofit leaders keen to keep the cash coming object to DOGE investigations into this government funding. But nonprofits should not be as reliant on government cash as addicts are on drugs. Most federal greenbacks don't flow to small, community-based nonprofits but to large, government-reliant organizations—groups that may be less effective at serving people, but far more skilled at lobbying for bigger government and filing lawsuits. A colleague found 15 government-funded nonprofits that sued Trump in his

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As Peter Schweizer puts it, [the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund] is likely “the most corrupt slush fund in U.S. history.”

first month of this term. Their collective taxpayer funding? At least \$1.6 billion. Talk about biting the hand that feeds you.

The Environmental Law Institute exemplifies this regulatory capture. While receiving awards from the Environmental Protection Agency and the Homeland Security Department, it operates a “Climate Judiciary Project” that “educates” federal and state judges about climate litigation — the same judges who are hearing cases designed to extract billions from energy companies into the hands of environmentalist groups like the institute. That’s corruption masquerading as education.

Perhaps most corrupt of all was the \$27 billion Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, tucked into the misleadingly named Inflation Reduction Act. As government accountability expert Peter Schweizer puts it, this fund is likely “the most corrupt slush fund in U.S. history.”

When this corruption is exposed, those feeding at the government trough typically respond with efforts at emotional manipulation. Concerned about taxpayer-funded activism?

That’s painted as wanting to take food from orphans. Question grants to radical nonprofits? Suddenly that’s opposition to lifesaving medical treatment.

These sob stories are designed to shut down legitimate oversight of how public tax dollars are spent. Don’t fall for it. It’s possible to support genuine charitable work while opposing the use of tax dollars to fund partisan political operations by either political party.

The deficit-plagued federal government cannot afford to waste billions on political advocacy disguised as charity. Legitimate nonprofits that actually help people—rather than push ideological beliefs—will be stronger when they’re accountable to donors who believe in their mission, rather than to government bureaucrats.

Time to end the gravy train. ■

This article first appeared in the Baltimore Sun on July 12, 2025.

Read previous articles from the Commentary series online at capitalresearch.org/category/commentary/.

By Ken Braun

She stuck with that script throughout the hearing, not even deviating when challenged about the funding agendas of the foundations listed as her “Core Mission Partners” (i.e., donors) at the National Council of Nonprofits. A partial list of her partners includes not just the Ford Foundation, but also the Freedom Together Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, the William & Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Kresge Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, the Marguerite Casey Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, and the David & Lucile Packard Foundation.



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

As Yentel said, it's true that her donors—including Ford—also provide funding for unobjectionable social goods such as food, health care, and shelter. But it's disingenuous (and that's putting it nicely) for her to go before the people's House and pretend her donors haven't also “gone wild” with partisan lefty advocacy.

An analysis of the Ford Foundation's \$20 million-per-month left-wing advocacy spending spree demonstrates what she was dodging.

Just one telling, partisan example is more than \$3.4 million awarded by Ford since April 2024 to the Center for American Progress (CAP). The flagship think tank for the mainstream Democratic Party, CAP has been the premier professional parking place for Clinton Family loyalists waiting for a political campaign or White House to run.

But the Ford Foundation's funding agenda veers far harder to the left than that.

Hammers Against Capitalism

Hammer & Hope, an avowedly communist journal, has received a minimum of \$1.25 million from Ford since January 2024. They are proud to have a name associated with the former Soviet Union's hammer & sickle flag. But the staff of H&H concede that even that may not be crazy enough for a woke era in which—they imply—hammers aren't used by women.

The *H&H* website explains:

The symbol of the hammer has its limits. Its arcane, masculinist imagery makes it an unsuitable representation of a working class that today is concentrated in health care, the service sector, and the apparel industry, and, especially if we count unpaid household labor, is overwhelmingly female.

Another group with a strong radical left agenda is Jews For Racial & Economic Justice Community (JFREJ), recipient of a \$200,000 check from the Ford Foundation in August 2024. The mission of JFREJ Community is to grow the “New York Jewish Left” and the city's “progressive Jewish community.”

JFREJ Action, described by JFREJ Community as its “sister organization,” is a political advocacy nonprofit. Earlier this year, JFREJ Action endorsed socialist Zohran Mamdani in

his ultimately successful campaign to win the New York City Democratic mayoral primary. Among his campaign statements, Mamdani pledged to create free mass transit, open government-run grocery stores, and arrest Benjamin Netanyahu if the Israeli prime minister visited the city.



Mamdani pledged to arrest Benjamin Netanyahu if the Israeli prime minister visited the city.

Although its fortune was earned in the free market by a legendary auto pioneer from Dearborn, Michigan, the Ford Foundation has long since decamped with the loot to a fancy building in New York City. The

Big Apple's sane voters and entrepreneurs may soon regret this relocation.

Similarly, the mission of the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) is to “win transformational progressive change.” A June 2024 IPS essay argued that “U.S. Capitalism is unsustainable,” and proposed replacing it with “economic democracy and public ownership of green energy.”

The Ford Foundation has been comfortable enough with this message to ship at least \$440,000 to IPS since June 2024.

Putting these ideas into practice is the job of the Congressional Progressive Caucus Center (CPCC), an advocacy think tank for those who think congressional Democrats haven't moved far enough to the left. This includes the Ford Foundation, which gave CPCC \$300,000 in February 2024. As with many Ford grantees, the homepage of the Congressional Progressive Caucus Center website features images of demonstrators shaking fists and shouting into megaphones.

Presumably opposed to profits, the commies at *Hammer & Hope* began operating as an independent nonprofit in July 2024. Before that they were incubated as a project within the New Venture Fund.

New Venture is one of seven donor nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) managed by Arabella Advisors, a network that annually rakes in more than \$1 billion from many of the same funding foundations that make up the “Core Mission Partners” for Ms. Yentel's National Council of Nonprofits. In 2022, the Marguerite Casey Foundation, one of those Core Mission Partners, also gave \$750,000 to New Venture for *Hammer & Hope* (then known as the “Black Radical Project.”)

Arabella's role as a huge advocacy hammer for the left is well established. A November 2021 report from *The Atlantic*

referred to it as “The Massive Progressive Dark-Money Group You’ve Never Heard Of.” An April 2021 *New York Times* analysis described Arabella as a “leading vehicle” of “dark money” for the Left “that has funneled hundreds of millions of dollars through a daisy chain of groups supporting Democrats and progressive causes.”

Since January 2024, the Ford Foundation has given at least \$29.3 million combined to three Arabella NGOs: the New Venture Fund, the Hopewell Fund, and the Windward Fund.

For example, in October 2024 Ford gave a \$200,000 grant to New Venture to be used as “Core support to change economic policies and narratives to build public power.”

Placed within the context of Ford’s repeated and documented hostility to free enterprise and capitalism, it’s not hard to imagine what sort of “economic policies” they hope to change and the “public power” they desire to enhance.

Ford granted \$3.5 million to Arabella’s Windward Fund in August 2024, earmarked for Windward’s Heartland Fund. Just as *Hammer & Hope* once was at New Venture, Heartland is currently a fiscally sponsored project of the Windward Fund. Heartland’s “Key Policy Progress” webpage lists the Inflation Reduction Act and the other severely partisan, big government accomplishments of the Biden administration.

Climate Colonialism

Despite the name, the Inflation Reduction Act hiked wind and solar energy subsidies rather than reduced inflation. Since January 2024, the Ford Foundation has sent tens of millions of dollars to support this cause.

A \$300,000 grant was approved in September 2024 for PowerSwitch Action. The Ford grant description reads: “Core support to Green Workers Alliance to elevate workers’ voices in the renewable energy sector.”

Eighty-two percent of total American energy consumption in 2023 was sourced to oil (38.8 percent), natural gas (34.5 percent) or coal (8.9 percent.) The so-called renewables—a public relations euphemism for weather-restricted wind and solar energy—were together good for just 6.8 percent.

Nuclear power is not restricted by weather, nor really anything else. With a 92.3 percent capacity factor, meaning that it runs at full power almost all of the time, a nuclear reactor is the most reliable energy system we have. It is also far safer and cleaner than all of our reliable electricity fuels and emits no greenhouse gas emissions at all.

But PowerSwitch Action and at least eight other recent recipients of Ford funding all oppose nuclear energy. The other eight are Friends of the Earth, 350.org, Sierra Club Foundation, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, League of Conservation Voters Education Fund, Oil Change International, World Resources Institute, and the Rainforest Action Network.

Collectively, those nine strident opponents of nearly limitless, clean, and reliable energy have received nearly \$6 million from the Ford Foundation since 2024.

Similarly, the Sustainable Markets Foundation is both a supporter of the most noxious anti-nuclear NGOs (such as the Nuclear Information and Resource Service) and a major proponent of weather-dependent wind and solar power.

Since July 2024, Sustainable Markets has received at least \$1.4 million from the Ford Foundation. The grants are for such causes as “secure Indigenous Peoples’ rights in the green economy,” “provide popular education on gender and the climate crisis,” and implementing a “just transition” in the energy markets.

The “just transition” language is often lefty code-speak for “push unreliable weather-dependent energy on poor people who can’t fight back.” Since 2024, Ford has used that phrase in the descriptions for grants totaling \$11.5 million.

For example, in April 2024, Ford’s philanthropoids approved a \$500,000 grant to the Natural Resource Governance Institute “for a just energy transition in Colombia and the phasing out of oil in Peru.”

In September and November 2024, respectively, Social and Environmental Entrepreneurs and the International Trade Union Confederation each received separate \$1 million grants from Ford to bring about a “just energy transition in Africa.”

Meddling with Africa’s energy needs was the purpose of more than \$5 million in combined Ford grants since May 2024 to the Africa Centre for Energy Policy and the African Climate Foundation.

Ford’s description on a \$1 million grant for the African Climate Foundation explained that they expected the loot to be used to “leverage a Just Energy Transition in Senegal, Nigeria, and South Africa and support green industrialization.”

According to Our World in Data, those three nations are home to a combined 100 million souls who have less than four hours of access to reliable electricity each day.

Counting all of sub-Saharan Africa, almost 600 million people endure this extreme form of energy poverty. For heat and cooking, they often burn wood and dung—“renewable” energy, to be sure, but at the price of miserable indoor air pollution. They need energy—real energy—not an “energy transition” to weather-restricted high school science projects.

Those have already failed them miserably. And they know it.

Roughly 11 million people in India still live in energy poverty. In 2014, Greenpeace tried to yank them off coal and give them solar panels instead. An October 2015 report in Scientific American explained what happened next:

When the former chief minister of Bihar state visited to inaugurate the grid, villagers lined up to protest, chanting, “We want real electricity, not fake electricity!”

By “real,” they meant power from the central grid, generated mostly using coal. By “fake,” they meant solar.

But the carbon cult didn’t stop there, and by July 2023 the failure had become widespread. According to the Washington Post: “About 4,000 solar mini-grids have been installed in India, of which 3,300 are government financed and owned. . . . Only 5 percent of the government grids are operational.”

And now, Ford is spending millions to inflict a failure on Africa that has already arrived.

“A team of Dutch researchers reported in 2017 that in a sample of 29 solar systems in sub-Saharan Africa, only three were fully working,” reported the *Washington Post*.

Solving such challenges for real—literally bringing light to the impoverished people of the world—is what the National Council of Nonprofits president presumably meant when she claimed her members “feed, heal, shelter, and nurture people.”

Henry Ford chased away poverty for billions when he put the world on wheels. But now a National Council of Nonprofits member foundation bearing his name is using his multi-billion-dollar fortune to impose climate colonialism on people too poor to fight back.

What Is “Multi-Racial Democracy”?

“Sustainable investment” is another one of the babble-speak phrases found in Ford’s grant descriptions used to describe its anti-energy agenda. That term appears in descriptions of at least \$3.5 million in grants sent out by Ford since 2024.

For example, Arabella’s New Venture Fund was awarded an \$850,000 grant in February 2024 “for the US Impact Investing Alliance’s rapid response fund to educate investors, policymakers and the public about sustainable investment.”

The Arabella network isn’t the only giant pass-through funder of left-wing advocacy and projects that have recently raked in multi-millions from Ford.

The Amalgamated Charitable Foundation has been awarded at least \$10.8 million from Ford since March 2024. Now an independent nonprofit, Amalgamated Charitable was spun off from Amalgamated Bank, a subsidiary of the stridently left-wing purple-shirted warriors at the Service Employees International Union (SEIU).

Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors (RPA) has been awarded at least \$24 million from Ford since February 2024. In its most recent annual IRS filing, RPA reported shipping out \$410.5 million in grants. Many of the largest recipients of RPA grants are on the list of the world’s most strident, anti-energy, anti-nuclear advocacy nonprofits. Examples include Oil Change International (\$3.9 million), Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (\$3 million), World Wildlife Fund (\$2.8 million), the Environmental

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When the former chief minister of Bihar state visited to inaugurate the grid, villagers lined up to protest, chanting, “We want real electricity, not fake electricity!”



“In a 2017 sample of 29 solar systems in sub-Saharan Africa, only three were fully working.”—Washington Post.

Defense Fund (\$1.6 million), the Center for International Environmental Law (\$1.6 million), and the Natural Resources Defense Council (\$1.2 million.)

Ford grant officers have awarded NEO Philanthropy at least \$10.1 million since March 2024. One of the largest piles of Ford loot—\$2.3 million—was for NEO’s Four Freedoms Fund. The purpose, according to Ford’s grant description, was “to strengthen the capacity of the immigrant justice movement to **ensure all immigrants, regardless of status,** have dignity, power to shape change, and agency to determine their life, community, and future” (emphasis added).

The Proteus Fund has scooped up at least \$4.5 million from Ford since 2024. Proteus doesn’t hide its partisan-left objectives. A “Strategies for Change” statement on the group’s main page says Proteus exists for “nurturing a progressive ecosystem” and to “promote progressive values.”

With that background, it’s a lot easier to guess what the Proteus mission statement means: “We support movements for justice, equity, and democracy through shared strategies and approaches that lead to legal, social, and cultural sea-changes.”

In November 2024, Ford approved a \$1 million grant to Proteus for the “RISE Together Fund to support Black, African, Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian (BAMEMSA) movements to build a just, inclusive, and multiracial democracy in the U.S.”

What does a “multiracial democracy” look like?

A Pew Research Center analysis of the November 2024 presidential election concluded that Republican Donald Trump “won with a voter coalition that was **more racially and ethnically diverse** than in 2020 or 2016” (original emphasis).

Pew also reported that Hispanic/Latino voters were almost evenly split, going 51 percent for Democrat Kamala Harris and 48 percent for Trump, a big difference from the 61 percent support for Joe Biden in 2020. Trump also nearly doubled his support from Black voters.

This “multiracial” democratic coalition coming together, *but for Republicans*, is not what the political progressives at Proteus and the Ford Foundation had in mind. Nonetheless, “multiracial democracy” and many variants on saving our supposedly embattled democracy figure prominently in recent Ford grant priorities.

Community Change parks the “multi-racial democracy” goal right at the top of their main webpage. The “What We Do” page clarifies how they want the so-called multiracials to vote: “We bridge the worlds of grassroots organizing and **progressive politics** to change the systems that impact our communities” (emphasis added).

Ford has granted at least \$3.3 million to Community Change since April 2024.



“Nonprofits exist to serve the public good, not partisan politics,” claimed National Council of Nonprofits president Diane Yentel in her testimony in June.

Credit: C-SPAN. License: <https://bit.ly/4maEvdr>

In November 2024, Ford approved \$60,000 for Arabella’s New Venture Fund to respond “to rising authoritarian trends and toxic polarization.”

When too much of the multiracial democracy voted the wrong way, the Ford team must have become convinced that American democracy itself was dead. In March 2025 they gave New Venture \$1 million more “to support a pro-democracy movement and strategy in the U.S.”

Similarly, the Tides Center has been approved for at least \$3.1 million in Ford loot since February 2024. The Tides main page boasts of their partnership with the Green New Deal Network. Sponsored by left-wing congressional figures such as Democratic Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York, the Green New Deal was an anti-energy proposal so extreme that former Senate Majority Leader

Mitch McConnell (R-KY) referred to it as a “radical, top-down, socialist makeover of the entire U.S. economy.” Even then-Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) dismissed it as the “green dream or whatever they call it.”

An \$800,000 Ford grant to Tides in March 2024 was to be used to help “social justice advocates committed to a pro-democracy framework.” Another \$100,000 was added in October 2024 for the “Democracy Revival Center.”



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A June 2024 general support grant for \$750,000 went to the Henry Ford Museum, back in Dearborn, Michigan, where the Ford Foundation's money came from in the first place.

Then the “democracy” didn’t put the right people in office. Tides responded with \$250,000 more in December 2024 “to develop strategies and partnerships for a multiracial democracy.”

“Civic Engagement”

“Nonprofits exist to serve the public good, not partisan politics,” claimed National Council of Nonprofits president Diane Yentel in her testimony in June.

It’s fair to say most Americans agree and don’t think altering American political outcomes for “progressive” or any other agendas is appropriate. Charities are, after all, implicitly subsidized by the taxpayers who must pay more in taxes so the *tax-exempt* can pay nothing.

But, as the previously discussed Ford grants demonstrate, the definition of “public good” has been stretched much further than Ms. Yentel lets on. In her testimony, she

elliptically referred to the exemptions in nonprofit law that her members exploit.

“Nonprofits engage in public policy education related specifically to their missions, but may not and do not use federal funding for lobbying federal policymakers,” Yentel told Congress. “Public policy engagement and understanding is essential for nonprofits to address challenges and ensure their communities’ voices are heard in the legislative process. Nonprofits also may promote civic participation in a neutral, nonpartisan manner. Helping citizens understand the electoral process, ensuring they are informed, and promoting civic engagement are fundamental components of a strong, participatory democracy.”

The Ford Foundation organizes its grants into nine program areas. The largest is named “Civic Engagement and Government.” By the overwhelming evidence on its own grant website, the Ford Foundation is heavily invested in this form of “charity.”

Since 2024, at least 568 Ford grants have gone out under this program label. None of the other eight program areas are credited with even 100 grants. Four of the nine have fewer than 10 grants. (In many cases, Ford files individual grants into more than one of the nine headings or none at all.)

One of the largest examples of these recent Civic Engagement and Government program grants was approved in July 2024 for EarthRights International (ERI). The \$2.9 million award to ERI was for “general support.”

What is Ford generally supporting?

ERI supports lawsuits aimed at “climate justice.” An example of what that euphemism means in practice is Earth Rights International’s legal representation for left-wing local governments that are suing Exxon for its history of selling gasoline in Colorado. An ERI news release claims the energy giant “should be held financially responsible for their contributions to the climate crisis.”

Ironically, the Ford Foundation’s entire fortune was created from this supposed offense against the climate. Are the Ford philanthropoids going to begin subsidizing lawsuits against the Ford Motor Company for creating the demand for Exxon’s gasoline?

To be ethically consistent, should the Ford Foundation sue itself on behalf of the Earth?

In addition to placing this ERI grant under its Civic Engagement and Government program listing, the Ford Foundation has dual-posted it to the “Natural Resources and Climate Justice” grant programs. The latter, though not as commonly used as the “civic engagement” tag, was the parking spot for most of the previously mentioned anti-energy grants.

To Ms. Yentel’s point, some Ford’s larger “civic engagement” grants really do go to what the National Nonprofit Network and the rest of us would consider the “public good.”

A June 2024 general support grant for \$750,000 from this program went to the Henry Ford Museum, back in Dearborn, Michigan, where the Ford Foundation’s money came from in the first place. Similarly, a September 2024 grant of \$350,000 went to the Detroit Institute of Arts.

But then there’s the \$700,000 Civic Engagement and Government program grant, also given in September 2024, so the aforementioned NEO Philanthropy’s State Infrastructure Fund (SIF) can “engage historically-underrepresented voters in the democratic process and protect their right to vote.”

NEO claims the purpose of SIF is to “empower underrepresented communities to increase voter awareness, civic participation, and advance voting rights in the United States.”

In practice, SIF is a get-out-the-vote program for the Democratic Party.

A hint of this is found in an after-action report on SIF’s work during the 2020 election. SIF boasts of sending \$56 million to nonprofits in 17 states: Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

At least 13 of the 17 are the plausibly (and often hotly) contested battlegrounds in the presidential and U.S. Senate races over the past dozen years. Equally revealing is the absence of funding for California, New York, Illinois, and the other deep blue states.

Is the “empowerment” of “underrepresented communities” in those safe Democratic-voting states not as important to NEO and Ford?

It is easy to imagine a very political and partisan reason why this might be the case, and it fits comfortably with Ford’s other “progressive” aligned grantees.

Charitably Partisan

But no such imagination is needed. Many other Civic Engagement and Government grants from Ford make the agenda abundantly clear.

The Michigan League for Public Policy is a policy nonprofit dedicated to growing and protecting big government. Since March 2024, Ford has given the Michigan League two general support grants totaling \$460,000, both to “promote progress tax and budget policies” (the typo in both grant descriptions should have been written as “progressive.”)

A June 2024 Ford grant description for Michigan Voices proclaims the \$100,000 award was to be used to “increase civic engagement” by low-income Detroiters. The front page of the Michigan Voices website concedes the supposedly nonpartisan nonprofit’s mission is to “build civic engagement capacity in progressive nonprofit groups that are led by and engage Black, Brown, and Indigenous people in Michigan.”

Presumably the “Black, Brown and Indigenous people in Michigan” who don’t practice their “civic engagement” on the “progressive” side of politics need to find a different

political committee *charity*. Perhaps President Yentel from the National Council of Nonprofits has a suggestion?

The lefty objectives of the Chicago-based Midwest Academy are similarly clear: “Empowering progressive organizers is our mission.” Since March 2024, Midwest Academy has been approved for a cumulative total of at least \$865,000 from the Ford Foundation. Almost half of it is in two “civic engagement” grants in which Ford stipulates unambiguously the money is to “build progressive infrastructure.”

Once known for its “Fight for \$15” minimum wage advocacy a decade ago alongside the stridently left-wing Service Employees International Union, Restaurant Opportunities Centers United was granted a total of \$700,000 from the Ford Foundation in 2024. One grant for \$300,000 is from Ford’s Civic Engagement and Government program.

The People’s Action Institute website has a “Movement Politics” page that forthrightly admits they exist to “shift voters’ perspectives towards progressive, holistic solutions” and boasts of their training candidates who will promote the same. Since May 2024, Ford has given at least two general funding grants totaling \$1.3 million to People’s Action, the most recent was from Ford’s civic engagement bucket.

In November 2024, Deep South Today was approved for \$3 million, with a Ford Foundation grant description that says it was “for civic engagement and public dialog through service journalism.”

Deep South is a consortium for two news websites covering Mississippi and Louisiana. Both frame their stories from a perspective sympathetic to big government. A sample headline from June: “Trump plan to shut down chemical safety watchdog could mean ‘more explosions, more deaths’ in Cancer Alley.”

The executive chair of the board for Deep South is Andrew Lack, who—until 2020—was captain of the regime media ship at NBC News. Other major donors to Deep South have been a “who’s who” of left-wing advocacy philanthropy, such as the MacArthur Foundation, the Hewlett Foundation, and the Marguerite Casey Foundation.

As noted previously, the Marguerite Casey Foundation—along with Ford—is also a major supporter of both National Council of Nonprofits and the New Venture Fund’s overtly communist *Hammer & Hope* media project.

Ford’s recent fueling of left-wing media goes even deeper than that.

Media Matters for America, approved for a \$250,000 Ford grant in November 2024, was founded by Clinton Family



Credit: Athena Torri. License: <https://bit.ly/4m514jC>.

The executive chair of the board for Deep South is Andrew Lack, who—until 2020—was captain of the regime media ship at NBC News.

attack lapdog David Brock. As that history would indicate, Media Matters is the epitome of a rabidly partisan, anti-Republican media platform. The only reason to give them money is to advance the political and policy messaging of Democratic presidents and congressional leadership.

Ford has also forked over millions of dollars to news non-profits that profit off of the intersection of identity politics and actual politics.

19th News is named for the constitutional amendment that gave women the right to vote and has been approved for nearly \$1.4 million in Ford grants since July 2024.

Co-founder and CEO Emily Ramshaw claims the idea for 19th News “was born out of the 2016 election, when Hillary Clinton lost to Donald Trump following a campaign that far too often centered around questions of a woman candidate’s ‘electability’ or ‘likeability.’”

The board of 19th News includes Sunny Hostin, best known as a combatant on ABC TV’s *The View*, who infamously blamed “uneducated white women” for President Donald Trump’s 2024 victory. After the 2016 race, Hillary Clinton also blamed her defeat on weak-willed white women who were supposedly “under tremendous pressure from fathers and husbands and boyfriends and male employers not to vote for ‘the girl.’”

“The 19th Amendment remains unfinished business,” claims the *19th News*. Perhaps the “business” will be completed whenever those insubordinate white women start voting correctly!

Henry Ford’s fortune is there to keep the dream alive.



*19th News Board includes Sunny Hostin who infamously
blamed “uneducated white women” for President
Donald Trump’s 2024 victory.*

The Rest of the World

The *19th News* grants show just part of the Ford Foundation’s commitment to the dying and discredited diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) regime.

For example, National Partnership for Women and Families (NPWF) was approved for a \$4.5 million general support grant from Ford in April 2024. As of July, this is the first message that greets visitors to the NPWF website: “Attacks on diversity, equity, and inclusion are attacks on all working women.”

Except for the aforementioned anti-energy meddling in developing nations, this report on recent Ford grants largely excludes grants for nonprofits operating overseas. It is usually more difficult and time-consuming to prove overseas grantees are left-leaning and even hard-left agitators.

But doesn’t mean it isn’t true.

As one example, the Global Fund for Women was awarded \$2 million that the Ford team said would be used for “a pooled fund mechanism centering justice and feminist economic principles in its learning and funding.”

The Global Fund was also granted \$400,000 “for the Activist-in Residence program, and for a feminist foreign policy convening to strengthen the capacity of the Women’s Funding Network.”

The regimes in many developing nations treat women and girls atrociously. American philanthropy can and sometimes does do wonderful things to alleviate these situations.

But given the funding priorities of the Ford Foundation within the United States, it’s difficult to read grant descrip-

tions about “feminist foreign policy” and “feminist economic principles” and not assume this money is inflicting the same loopy left priorities on people outside our borders as well.

Similarly, many of Ford’s international grants are earmarked for protection or advancement of democracy, a seemingly worthy goal. But when so much of Ford’s domestic “democracy” grants are aimed at attacking democratic choices they oppose, how can we trust that they truly promote actual democracy elsewhere? Does it mean they are funding *Hammer & Hope*-style communist media in poor countries?

If these people are funding so much anti-energy climate colonialism in developing nations with too little electricity, then it’s surely reasonable to assume they could be doing the same with some of those “democracy” grants.

And leaving these suspicious foreign grants out of the tabulation of Ford’s \$20 million-per-month spending spree on lefty and partisan advocacy means the monthly count is probably even higher.

“Defending and supporting [nonprofits] should not divide us along political lines—it should unite us as Americans,” concluded Diane Yentel of the National Council of Nonprofits, in her June remarks to the House of Representatives.

She’s correct. But she should have shared that happy goal a long time ago with her fiercely partisan “Core Mission Partners” at the Ford Foundation. ■

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



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MARCHING TOWARD VIOLENCE

THE DOMESTIC ANTI-ISRAELI PROTEST MOVEMENT

BY: RYAN MAURO

“Over 150 groups involved in the disruptive anti-Israel protests on college campuses and elsewhere in the United States are “pro-terrorism.” The vast majority support Hamas and/or the October 7 terrorist attacks. The movement contains militant elements pushing it toward a wider, more severe campaign focused on property destruction and violence properly described as domestic terrorism.”

Read the full study on [CapitalResearch.org](https://www.CapitalResearch.org).



KENNEDY VS. BIG FOOD: WHO IS FUNDING THE FIGHT AGAINST MAHA?

By Tiffany Gabbay

KEY POINTS

- Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s appointment as secretary of Health and Human Services stunned Washington and sent shockwaves through the boardrooms of the U.S. food and agriculture industries.
- The Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) agenda is a sweeping set of reforms targeting ultra-processed foods, harmful chemical additives, pesticide-heavy farming, and corporate control over public health policy.
- The opposition to MAHA is vast: \$178 million in annual agribusiness lobbying, \$3 billion in non-profit capital, and legacy media shaped by corporate ad dollars.



Credit: Joshua Sukoff. License: Shutterstock.

In January 2025, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. was appointed secretary of Health and Human Services, a move that stunned Washington and sent shockwaves through the boardrooms of the U.S. food and agriculture industries.

In January 2025, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. was appointed secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), a move that stunned Washington and sent shockwaves through the boardrooms of the U.S. food and agriculture industries.

Known for his populist rhetoric and decades-long skepticism toward corporate influence in science and medicine, Kennedy arrived at HHS with an ambitious vision: to upend the entrenched forces behind America's chronic disease crisis through his Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) agenda—a sweeping set of reforms targeting ultra-processed foods, harmful chemical additives, pesticide-heavy farming, and corporate control over public health policy and dietary recommendations.

Unlike past efforts to reform consumer habits or revise dietary labels, MAHA seeks to rewrite the rulebook. Its bedrock is the MAHA Commission Report, released on May 22, 2025, which outlines a comprehensive strategy:

1. Ban additives linked to metabolic syndrome (MetS) and potentially neurobehavioral disorders. MetS includes hyperglycemia, insulin resistance, hypertension, obesity, high cholesterol, diabetes, stroke, cardiovascular, and renal disease.

2. Reform school lunches to prioritize whole, nutrient-rich foods.
3. Overhaul dietary guidelines to remove Big Food industry influence.
4. Dramatically reduce pesticide use.
5. Promote regenerative agriculture that restores soil health and food sovereignty.

The MAHA Report, while a bold challenge to America's industrial food system, has sparked controversy, with critics questioning its scientific rigor. On June 10, the *New York Times* flagged what it characterized as the report's overstated claims linking synthetic dyes to hyperactivity, citing small sample sizes in referenced studies. In a report on May 25, 2025, *Politico* criticized the report for citing selective pesticide risk data, suggesting MAHA cherry-picked evidence to fit its narrative.

Tiffany Gabbay is a writer and communications specialist.

Directionally, the report's audacious call to dismantle a profit-driven, "we've always done it this way" food policy—rooted in \$1.5 trillion corporate interests—remains a vital catalyst for reform, its flaws overshadowed by its urgent push for health and sovereignty (Technavio, 2025).

To anyone rational, the MAHA agenda seems a godsend to a nation besieged by some of the highest rates of obesity and metabolic disorders in the world. However, the agenda directly threatens the trillion-dollar industrial food and agriculture complex, a network of agribusiness conglomerates, processed-food giants, and their allies in philanthropy and policy.

Predictably, the resistance from entrenched interests has been fierce, coordinated, and well-financed.

A powerful coalition of corporations, lobbying groups, nonprofit foundations, and institutional players—including PepsiCo, Bayer, the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR), and the Nature Conservancy—has mobilized to undermine MAHA's reforms in legal, legislative, media, and scientific channels.

This article is not about whether MAHA will succeed. It is about following the money behind those who stand to gain if it fails.

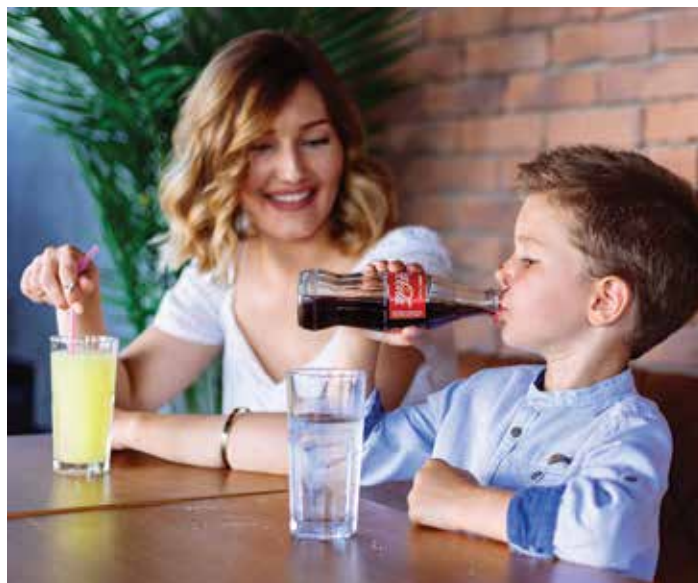
We trace the funding architecture of MAHA's opposition from lobbying disclosures and nonprofit tax filings to overlooked alliances, revealing how Big Food and Big Agriculture have embedded themselves in the institutions that shape America's food and health policies.

By analyzing who funds the resistance—and why—we expose the corporate-state complex that MAHA aims to dismantle, as well as the extraordinary lengths to which it will go to protect its power.

MAHA: A Threat to Billions of Special Interest Dollars

The Make America Healthy Again agenda threatens the Food Industrial Complex by radically reimagining the intersection of food, health, and agriculture in American life. Feeding people is a multi-trillion-dollar global industry, with the U.S. food sector alone accounting for over \$1 trillion in annual revenue.

The industrial food-health-agriculture complex has evolved into a tightly interconnected set of institutions, policies, and corporate interests that shape how food is grown, processed,



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The American Beverage Association, which represents companies such as PepsiCo and Coca-Cola, spent \$1.9 million in 2024 to maintain SNAP funds for soda purchases.

sold, and consumed in the United States, as well as how health outcomes are managed.

Due to its immense size and influence, the food industry possesses significant political and economic power, making reform a challenging endeavor.

The incoming Trump administration established the Make America Healthy Again Commission in February 2025 as an advisory committee to address this issue. In May 2025, the commission released an assessment identifying key drivers behind the childhood chronic disease crisis, broken down into five interlocking pillars:

- **Banning Harmful Additives.** MAHA targets artificial dyes (e.g., red dye 40), high-fructose corn syrup, and industrial seed oils, which studies in *The Lancet* and *Environmental Health Perspectives* have linked to behavioral issues, obesity, and metabolic disorders, such as diabetes. Kennedy's April 2025 announcement to phase out eight artificial colors by 2026 threatens major product lines across the \$1.5 trillion processed-food industry, which is dominated by companies such as PepsiCo, Kraft Heinz, and General Mills.
- **Reforming School Nutrition.** MAHA seeks to replace ultra-processed foods in the National School Lunch Program, which serves 30 million children daily, with whole, nutrient-dense meals. Aligning with the Obama-era Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010,

this pillar builds on efforts to improve nutrition standards, which faced industry pushback. MAHA's focus on local sourcing, inspired by California's 2024 farm-to-school program that cut costs by 10 percent, threatens long-standing contracts held by food service providers.

- **Overhauling Dietary Guidelines.** Kennedy proposes removing industry-affiliated scientists from the federal Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee, which was criticized in a 2015 *BMJ* study for favoring agribusiness interests. MAHA's vision for the 2025–2030 Dietary Guidelines emphasizes whole foods free from ultra-processed products, challenging the influence of companies like Nestlé and Coca-Cola.
- **Reducing Pesticide Use.** MAHA calls for stricter limits on chlorpyrifos and atrazine, pesticides linked to neurodevelopmental and endocrine disorders and banned in multiple countries. The 2021 EPA ban on chlorpyrifos for food crops, reversed after \$14 million in lobbying by Dow Chemical and CropLife America, exemplifies the industry's resistance to MAHA.
- **Promoting Regenerative Agriculture.** MAHA supports soil-health-centric farming to reduce chemical inputs, enhance biodiversity, and increase food sovereignty. Studies from the Rodale Institute show that regenerative methods can sequester carbon and reduce reliance on pesticides, threatening the chemical seed-fertilizer-pesticide triad that sustains agribusiness giants like Bayer and Cargill.

Over the next four years, the ultra-processed-food market is projected to grow from \$630 billion in 2025 to \$856.6 billion by 2029. Making America Healthy Again will involve pushing back against Big Food and Big Agriculture, disrupting the profit models of multinational corporations that rely on cheap inputs, government subsidies, and lenient regulations.

Companies manufacturing processed foods and those producing pesticide-heavy commodity crops are particularly vulnerable. Unsurprisingly, industry leaders are threatened and are mobilizing a sophisticated counteroffensive to protect their revenue streams.

The Coordinated Opposition

It's no surprise that major food corporations have come to rely on cheap, ultra-processed ingredients to maximize profits and streamline production. Over the past several decades, chemically engineered substitutes—such as high-fructose corn syrup, industrial seed oils, and artificial dyes—have

largely replaced whole, nutrient-rich foods in many packaged products. These ingredients were not introduced by accident: They extend shelf life, reduce production costs, and create addictive flavors and textures that keep consumers coming back. In other words, they're highly profitable—even if they harm public health.

However, synthetic ingredients are just one piece of a broader system. Genetically modified crops, often grown with heavy pesticide use and depleted of essential nutrients, have become the foundation of industrial animal feed. This has led to the production of meat, dairy, and eggs under conditions that compromise both nutritional quality and environmental integrity. Companies that rely on this model—such as PepsiCo, Coca-Cola, Kraft Heinz, and Bayer—have built empires on low-cost, high-margin products. The MAHA agenda, which seeks to overhaul the industrial food chain in favor of health, sustainability, and equity, directly challenges this business model and threatens to upend billions in revenue.



Big Food was concerned about Kennedy's agenda and its potential impact on their revenue stream.

In 2023, PepsiCo and Bayer invested \$4.1 million and \$7.45 million in federal lobbying to influence agricultural policy, food labeling, and pesticide laws (OpenSecrets, 2023). In 2024, PepsiCo increased its lobbying spending to \$4.8 million to oppose bans on additives like red dye 40.

These companies are not the only ones getting rich by harming Americans. Their lobbyists make a substantial amount of money advocating for the use of harmful additives and pesticides. The lobbying firm Invariant, which began as Heather Podesta and Partners, has grown to over 169 clients and a dozen or so staff members assisting the agricultural lobby.

Today, they bring in over \$39 million in client fees. PepsiCo and the Corn Refiners Association rely on the leadership of Invariant lobbyist Danielle Beck, who held strategy sessions in late 2024 in an attempt to thwart Kennedy's potential impact if confirmed as HHS Secretary.

Big Food was concerned about Kennedy's agenda and its potential impact on their revenue stream. The lobbying team worked to secure exemptions for important and lucrative food additives during Senate confirmation hear-

ings and limit Kennedy's regulatory authority through congressional appropriations.

Cola companies were justifiably concerned, given what we have seen of MAHA's desire to eliminate soda from the allowable foods funded by food stamps. Coca-Cola invested \$3.9 million in 2024 to maintain subsidies for high-fructose corn syrup, which are estimated to save the industry \$4 billion a year.

The industry was not just concerned about the impact on the food stamp programs. To combat MAHA's demands for more stringent dietary guidelines and school lunch reforms that could jeopardize its \$10 billion processed-food portfolio, Nestlé increased its lobbying spending from \$848,000 in 2023 to \$1.2 million in 2024.

Kraft Heinz stood to lose if MAHA's school lunch reforms were enacted. It spent \$1.1 million on lobbying in 2024 to protect its \$3 billion in government contracts for processed foods

Once Kennedy's confirmation looked likely, Coca-Cola and Kraft Heinz partnered with the American Beverage Association to finance a \$10 million campaign to lobby senators from farm states, highlighting the potential for MAHA to increase food prices and interfere with agricultural supply chains.

Bayer, meanwhile, paid \$8.2 million to defend products like atrazine and glyphosate, industrial herbicides, and known carcinogens, which are essential to its \$14 billion in agrochemical revenue.

On the fast food front, McDonald's and the National Restaurant Association invested \$2.3 million in 2023 and \$2.7 million in 2024 to counteract nutrition reforms, especially MAHA's initiatives to ban ultra-processed ingredients from fast food.

That same year, the National Restaurant Association, representing more than 500,000 businesses, contributed \$5.1 million to oppose sugar and sodium restrictions and influence Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) policies.

What is most striking is how even corporate competitors lobby toward the same overall goals, their collective interest outweighing individual ones. As a result, these overlapping initiatives demonstrate the industry's unified resolve to safeguard a \$1.5 trillion market that depends on inexpensive, processed ingredients and chemical inputs.

Unusual Suspects: Nonprofit Organization Financing Fueling the Industrial Food System

While corporate lobbying firms may be the public face of MAHA's opposition, nonprofit organizations wield quiet yet profound influence over Big Food and Big Agriculture by crafting the research, policy, and narratives that shape our food system. While often perceived as neutral, these organizations are anything but, aligning the industry interests under the pretext of public health and sustainability.

These are just a few of the key players and their respective stakes in the Food Industrial Complex:

Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research. The 2014 Farm Bill established the FFAR, allocating an initial \$200 million in federal seed funding and requiring private or nonfederal contributions to match this funding.

Over time, FFAR has forged public-private partnerships that include major agribusiness interests—such as the previously mentioned Bayer, PepsiCo, and Nestlé—as well as additional players, including Cargill, Syngenta, and Mars, effectively linking corporate priorities to federally supported agricultural research.

This arrangement empowers Big Food and Big Ag to shape research agendas, maintaining industrialized systems—



Over time, the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research has forged public-private partnerships that include major agribusiness interests, effectively linking corporate priorities to federally supported agricultural research.

Credit: Stephanie Miles. License: <https://bit.ly/4kZ6njQ>.

such as genetically modified organism (GMO) crops, pesticide-dependent practices, and processed-food technologies—rather than promoting public health, environmental sustainability, or equity.

By reinforcing the existing industrial model through influence over research funding, FFAR arguably deepened food system vulnerabilities—such as nutrient-poor diets and environmental degradation—which have intensified the diet-related health and sustainability crises that the MAHA initiative now aims to confront.

In addition to this matching structure, FFAR’s Board of Directors, though technically independent, includes representatives directly related to the chemical agriculture industry. Additionally, FFAR’s research grants overwhelmingly support biotechnology, pesticide efficiency, and precision agriculture—technologies that reinforce, rather than reform, the industrial model that MAHA opposes.

Additionally, the requirement for FFARs to match federal and private funding facilitates corporate control over public research. FFAR actively seeks funding partnerships from agribusinesses, food companies, private foundations, universities, and research institutions to achieve the required match.

Each of these partnerships allows an industry player to influence FFAR. This influence is best demonstrated by Bayer’s yearly contributions (up to \$249,999) and PepsiCo’s \$6 million AgMission investment, which support regenerative agriculture but prioritize scalable GMO and pesticide solutions.

FFAR’s 2022 tax filing reports \$97,514,243 in contributions, of which \$88,325,887 came from federal grants and \$7,129,113 from private donors such as Corteva Agriscience, General Mills, Mars, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Once FFAR secures federal and matching private funds, it awards competitive research grants to academic institutions, nonprofits, independent researchers, and public-private partnerships. These grants often focus on agricultural productivity, soil health, sustainable livestock, food security, and nutrition science. Although these topics appear broad, many projects align closely with industrial agriculture and food processing priorities rather than systemic reform.

In 2024 alone, FFAR awarded 68 grants totaling \$150.6 million. Since 2016, it has distributed \$366 million across 275 grants and held \$400 million in assets as of 2023. A significant share of this funding supports precision agriculture, biotechnology, and pesticide efficiency approaches that

directly conflict with MAHA’s goals of reducing pesticide use, banning harmful additives, and promoting regenerative, chemical-free farming. Further raising concerns, FFAR’s board has included executives from major agribusiness corporations such as Bayer and Monsanto.

FFAR’s grantmaking history reveals a clear pattern. For example, it awarded \$2 million to a maize genetics project and \$7.6 million to a crop management study at Kansas State University, co-funded by Bayer. While MAHA emphasizes reducing pesticide reliance, FFAR funded a \$1 million honeybee health study with Syngenta, despite the known role of pesticides in pollinator decline.

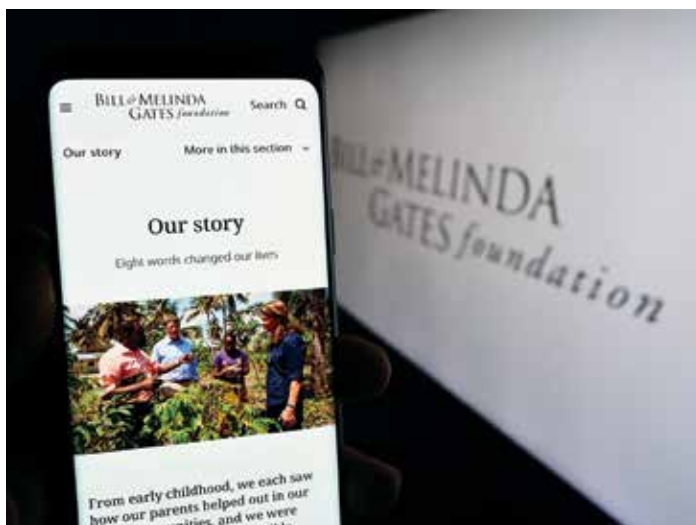
Additionally, FFAR’s \$10.3 million Eco-Harvest initiative, supported by Corteva Agriscience, promotes corporate-controlled carbon markets rather than truly sustainable practices.

Kennedy’s vision for a decentralized, health-driven food system is undermined by FFAR’s funding and governance, which are inextricably tied to this \$200 billion corporate food and agrochemical revenue machine. FFAR, therefore, is positioned as a significant opponent of MAHA, directing public and private funds into research that supports the very additives and processes it claims to champion against.

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, with an endowment of \$75.2 billion in 2024, wields immense financial influence to advance industrial agriculture, prioritizing scalability and profitability in ways that clash with MAHA’s vision for small-scale, chemical-free farming. Its agricultural program, once led by a former Monsanto deputy director, has invested over \$100 million since 2010 in biotech initiatives, including \$15 million for GMO seed breeding through the FFAR and \$20 million to Corteva Agriscience and Bayer for “climate-resilient” seeds.

These funds support the \$50 billion GMO market, which relies on patented seeds that require farmers to buy specific chemicals and fertilizers year after year. This system ensures steady profits for agribusiness giants, contributing to an industry worth over \$200 billion.

For example, FFAR contributed \$7 million in 2022 and partnered with PepsiCo in 2023 on a \$5 million precision agriculture initiative. These efforts promote high-input farming systems, including the use of glyphosate-resistant crops. Glyphosate is a widely used herbicide designed to kill weeds without harming genetically modified crops. However, it is controversial due to its links to environmental damage and potential health risks. These high-efficiency systems are built for large-scale monoculture farms but directly



Credit: T. Schneider. License: Shutterstock

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation wields immense financial influence to advance industrial agriculture, prioritizing scalability and profitability in ways that clash with MAHA's vision for small-scale, chemical-free farming.

oppose MAHA's goals of eliminating harmful pesticides like chlorpyrifos and atrazine.

For example, FFAR's \$10.3 million Eco-Harvest program, backed by Corteva, rewards large-scale producers with corporate-controlled carbon credits, sidelining the 7,000 U.S. community-supported agriculture operations MAHA champions.

MAHA advocates for organic, open-pollinated seeds, which are supported by Rodale Institute studies showing they can achieve comparable yields while reducing chemical input costs. In contrast, the Gates Foundation promotes GMO seeds and precision agriculture tools—an approach that deepens farmer reliance on Bayer's \$14 billion pesticide portfolio and Corteva's \$17 billion seed business.

Critics, including MAHA supporters, contend that while the foundation frames its investments as efforts to combat global hunger, its strategies ultimately prioritize corporate profits over ecological sustainability and food sovereignty.

By channeling resources into large-scale, high-tech farming models, the Gates Foundation reinforces the interests of the \$1.5 trillion industrial food system. This alignment presents a significant obstacle to MAHA's vision and Kennedy's proposal to redirect \$20 billion in commodity subsidies toward sustainable, community-based agriculture.

Nature Conservancy. The Nature Conservancy, a global environmental nonprofit with \$1.8 billion in assets and \$1.1 billion in revenue for 2023, champions “climate-smart”

farming initiatives that conflict with MAHA's objectives of reducing chemical inputs and promoting food sovereignty.

Its \$10 million partnership with Cargill, \$6 million from McDonald's and the Walmart Foundation for regenerative grazing, and ties to Bayer and Dow Chemical—members of its Business Council—promote precision pesticide application and corporate-controlled carbon markets, aligning with a \$100 billion agrochemical market rather than MAHA's chemical-free, decentralized vision.

The Nature Conservancy's ties to Dow, which donated to funds linked to pesticide deregulation, and Bayer's \$8.2 million 2024 lobbying to defend the harmful herbicide glyphosate fuel accusations of greenwashing, as its “climate-smart” rhetoric often masks corporate profit motives.

While it supports regenerative agriculture, the Nature Conservancy prioritizes favoring large-scale producers over the 7,000 small-scale community-supported agriculture operations MAHA champions, undermining local food systems.

Backed by \$200 billion in agribusiness revenue, these efforts entrench a \$1.5 trillion industrial food system, obstructing Kennedy's goal of redirecting \$20 billion in commodity subsidies toward sustainable farming.

Aspen Institute. In 2023, the Aspen Institute's Food & Society Program received \$10 million in corporate donations—including \$500,000 from General Mills—as well as contributions from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Walmart Foundation. While the program promotes “food equity,” it simultaneously reinforces the industrial food system that MAHA aims to dismantle.

The program's Food Leaders Fellowship, which includes fellows from General Mills and Walmart, is funded by major corporations like Walmart and PepsiCo. These partnerships help amplify corporate narratives in policy discussions where MAHA advocates are notably absent.

Aspen's emphasis on centralized food distribution further contrasts with MAHA's push for decentralized, locally sourced systems. This is evident in the \$5 million in 2024 grants awarded to “equity-focused” food access initiatives, many of which involve collaborations with Amazon's food retail division.

Amazon's partnership highlights the corporate direction of Aspen's food initiatives. Supported in part by Aspen's grants, Amazon utilizes its expansive logistics network to distribute food, often including ultra-processed products from corporate donors like General Mills, which contributed \$500,000 in 2023.

Ultimately, these funding decisions prioritize large-scale suppliers and undermine the small, local farms MAHA supports. With only 1.3 percent of U.S. farms certified organic, these small-scale producers face significant systemic barriers.

Behind Closed Doors: How Trade Groups Protect Big Food from Reform

Beneath the polished marble of Capitol Hill, an intricate web of influence quietly protects one of America's most powerful industries. Trade associations—the political arm of Big Food and Big Agriculture—spend millions to defend a \$1.5 trillion industrial food system from reform efforts, such as MAHA, a movement advocating for tighter regulations on nutrition, pesticides, and food additives.

These industry-backed groups, funded by some of the world's largest food and chemical corporations, have mastered the art of persuasion. Through lobbying, campaign contributions, and science-for-hire studies, they shape policy behind the scenes—often in ways the public never sees. Their mission is to ensure that proposed bans on controversial additives and stricter food labeling laws never make it out of committee.

At the center of this resistance is the Consumer Brands Association (CBA), which represents major players such as General Mills, Nestlé, and Kellogg. In 2023, CBA spent \$2.1 million lobbying lawmakers on issues ranging from SNAP policy to food safety rules. By 2024, as MAHA gained momentum, that figure rose to \$2.4 million.

Much of this effort was aimed at the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry. In March 2025, CBA CEO David Chavern met with Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA), armed with a commissioned report predicting \$12 billion in supply chain disruptions if MAHA's proposed bans on red dye 40 and high-fructose corn syrup were enacted.

The stakes are enormous. The ultra-processed-food market in the U.S. is valued at \$630 billion, and nearly 70 percent of General Mills' \$20 billion in annual revenue depends on products containing controversial additives.

Behind polished language about “consumer freedom” and “regulatory overreach” lies a far more straightforward truth:



These industry-backed groups, funded by some of the world's largest food and chemical corporations, have mastered the art of persuasion.

For these companies, blocking reform is about protecting profits and preserving a food system built on ingredients that reformers say are contributing to the health problems of Americans.

CropLife America, the voice of pesticide giants such as Bayer and Syngenta, matches the financial fervor, spending \$1.5 million in 2023 and \$1.7 million in 2024 to defend a \$100 billion agrochemical industry.

Framing MAHA's push to reinstate bans on chlorpyrifos and atrazine as “unscientific,” CropLife's CEO Chris Novak, a former Grassley aide, leveraged 1,200 congressional meetings in 2023 to push “science-based” regulations.

In 2024, a \$500,000 “Pesticide Discussion” campaign trained allies to address public concerns about chemical inputs, safeguarding Bayer's \$14 billion pesticide portfolio in a nation where 98 percent of cropland relies on them.

The American Farm Bureau Federation, cloaked in the mythos of family farmers, wields even greater clout. From 2019 to 2024, it spent \$15.7 million to block MAHA's GMO and pesticide restrictions.

Despite its image as a grassroots voice for American farmers, the American Farm Bureau Federation operates more like a corporate-aligned lobbying powerhouse. It collects at least \$5 million annually from agribusiness giants like Monsanto and Cargill, raising questions about whose interests it truly represents. Its influence is further inflated by a membership base that includes millions of non-farmers, many of whom are customers of Farm Bureau-affiliated insurance companies. These insurance arms—technically separate but deeply intertwined—generate billions in revenue, often steering organizational priorities toward protecting insurance profits over advocating for small farmers.

In practice, this means that policy stances can reflect the needs of insurers and agribusiness donors, rather than those of the independent or regenerative farmers the group claims to represent.

In early 2025, the Farm Bureau joined forces with the National Corn Growers Association to launch the \$1 million Modern Ag Alliance campaign, which labeled MAHA's proposals for regenerative agriculture as “economically disastrous.” The opposition was framed around the potential impact on



License: Public domain.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr., center left, posted a photo on social media of himself with, from left, Kraft Heinz Co. CEO Carlos Abrams-Rivera, Consumer Brands Association CEO Melissa Hockstad, PepsiCo North America CEO Steven Williams, General Mills CEO Jeff Harmening, Tyson Foods CEO Donnie King, Kelloggs, US CEO Gary Pilnick and Smuckers CEO Mark Smucker.

the roughly 2 million U.S. farmers who rely on \$20 billion in federal commodity subsidies—a system that disproportionately benefits large-scale, industrial operations.

Critics argue that the Farm Bureau's resistance to MAHA reveals a deeper alignment with agribusiness interests and a prioritization of federal subsidies over sustainable practices and long-term farmer resilience.

Other players pile on. The American Beverage Association, which represents companies such as PepsiCo and Coca-Cola, spent \$1.9 million in 2024 to maintain SNAP funds for soda purchases.

The National Confectioners Association, which represents a \$44 billion candy industry, spent \$800,000 to oppose sugar restrictions. In coalitions like the Modern Ag Alliance, fueled by \$2 million from CropLife and the Farm Bureau, these groups blanketed farm states with ads warning of MAHA's "rural devastation."

In 2023, these associations collectively spent \$178 million on lobbying—a 22 percent increase from 2019—dwarfing the \$10 million spent by sustainable agriculture advocates. This chasm reveals a pay-to-play system in which corporate

dollars, channeled through trade groups, influence policy to prioritize profit over public health. As MAHA fights to redirect subsidies and ban harmful inputs, the lobbying leviathan stands firm, its influence a testament to the enduring power of the industrial food empire.

Courts, Congress, and the Corporate Shield

While the MAHA movement gains traction in the court of public opinion, it faces powerful, coordinated opposition in courtrooms, congressional backrooms, cable newsrooms, and university classrooms. In these places, Big Food and Big Ag are executing a multipronged campaign to stall, discredit, and ultimately defeat MAHA's reform agenda.

Legal and Legislative Countermeasures. The opposition's efforts begin in the courts. In early 2025, the Flavor and Extract Manufacturers Association (FEMA)—representing companies like PepsiCo and Kraft Heinz—filed suit to block the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) from implementing its proposed ban on synthetic dyes such as red no. 3 and yellow no. 5. The lawsuit challenges the agency's use of the

Delaney Clause, which prohibits carcinogenic additives, calling it an overreach of federal authority.

FEMA's \$3 million legal fund, backed by companies with billions at stake in additive-heavy products, is emblematic of a broader strategy: use litigation to delay reform while maintaining the appearance of scientific legitimacy.

Capitol Hill lobbying groups apply pressure with equal force. The Consumer Brands Association, representing General Mills and Nestlé, spent \$2.4 million lobbying Congress in 2024. They and the National Confectioners Association helped insert language into the 2025 Agriculture Appropriations Bill to restrict HHS's authority to enforce additive bans without congressional approval—an amendment backed by 79 lawmakers who collectively received over \$12 million in campaign contributions from agribusiness.

Messaging Wars and Media Manipulation. MAHA opposition has perfected the one-two punch. While legal and legislative efforts slow regulatory momentum, industry groups flood the airwaves with carefully crafted messaging. In 2024, CBA launched a \$25 million “Science of Safety” campaign, funded by General Mills and PepsiCo, to counter MAHA's push to eliminate synthetic dyes and high-fructose corn syrup. Full-page newspaper ads, paid academic endorsements, and targeted social media content promoted these additives as harmless, despite mounting evidence of their health risks.

The American Beverage Association added its own \$1.9 million “Freedom to Choose” campaign, casting MAHA's proposed soda and dye restrictions as an assault on personal liberty and working-class autonomy. CropLife America, with backing from pesticide giants like Bayer, revived its “Chlorpyrifos Protects” campaign, framing MAHA's pesticide bans as a direct threat to American farmers and national food security.

Major media outlets often amplify these narratives. A May 2025 *Washington Post* editorial dismissed MAHA as a “nutritionist's fantasy,” while *The Guardian* painted Kennedy's HHS leadership as a “dangerous experiment,” conflating his food policies with unrelated controversies. These narratives are reinforced by \$4.7 billion in 2023 food industry advertising that shapes editorial priorities and limits dissenting viewpoints.

Regulatory Capture and Industry Influence. Despite all this ammunition, the opposition's most effective weapon may be its grip on the regulatory battlefield. Corporations have mastered the revolving door between government agencies and industry lobbying firms.

This system ensures that policy remains aligned with the priorities of wealthy corporations. Former USDA employee Ken Barbic now lobbies on behalf of PepsiCo and the Corn Refiners Association at lobbying powerhouse Invariant.

It is not just former federal employees who turn into lobbyists. Michael Taylor is a former Monsanto executive who later served as FDA deputy commissioner. When the influence shifted in this direction, Big Food and Big Ag successfully established favorable regulations, such as those he enacted, which still shape agency norms today.

Sometimes, having the right person on the inside ensures the wheels of progress do not spin too quickly. FOIA-obtained memos from 2024 reveal that FDA officials delayed efforts to reclassify synthetic dyes like red no. 3 and yellow no. 5, despite clear links to behavioral disorders in children. At the USDA, school meal standards rely heavily on highly processed foods, despite data linking them to the nation's obesity epidemic. MAHA's reforms directly challenge this status quo.

This regulatory stagnation is no accident. It is fueled by the \$178 million agribusiness lobbying effort reported in 2023, which ensures that federal policy prioritizes commercial interests over public health.

A Fortress Built to Last. Together, these legal, legislative, and media forces form a coordinated resistance—a billion-dollar fortress built to protect the profits and policies of an entrenched food system. With \$200 billion in annual revenue tied to additives and agrochemicals and with narrative control stretching from Capitol Hill to university labs, MAHA's most significant obstacle may not be scientific controversy or public confusion. The system is engineered to reject reform regardless of how urgent the need may be.

As MAHA fights to ban toxic ingredients and reallocate \$20 billion in commodity subsidies, the outcome may depend less on facts than on whether truth can break through the layers of influence shielding the status quo.

MAHA's Rebellion: From the Ground Up

What began as a reform effort is evolving into a full-fledged MAHA rebellion—built not in boardrooms but in town-halls, farmers markets, and digital feeds.

MAHA's strength lies in its logic and ability to form unlikely alliances. Supporters of the MAHA agenda include libertarian contrarians, conservative wellness advocates, and progressive food justice organizers—groups that rarely share a common goal—but who unite in their desire for sovereignty.



What began as a reform effort is evolving into a full-fledged MAHA rebellion in townhalls, farmers markets, and digital feeds.

Senator Ron Johnson (R-WI) backs MAHA's pesticide bans, while watchdogs like Food & Water Watch cautiously support its regenerative ambitions. The movement's populist edge pulses through townhalls and X threads, fueled by a growing distrust of corporate science and government indifference.

Support for MAHA is also growing among the over 7,000 community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs, including West Virginia's 2025 CSA initiative. MAHA-backed pilots bring organic produce to low-income families, chipping away at SNAP's dominance of processed foods. Across rural towns, small-scale canneries and mobile food hubs are quietly rebuilding the infrastructure for a decentralized food future.

Online, MAHA promotes raw, resonant messaging. Influencers like Vani Hari and Dr. Mark Hyman reach millions, and independent podcasts carry the movement's message far beyond traditional media filters.

A MAHA-branded podcast network and documentary series are in the works—tools to sustain momentum and challenge corporate spin long-term. In addition, states such as Maine and Indiana have adopted MAHA-aligned rules, ranging from limits on perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) pesticide to soda restrictions in SNAP programs.

MAHA is also partnering with the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition to push for a historic reallocation of \$20 billion in federal subsidies—from industrial agriculture to organic and regenerative farms.

Framing food reform as a fight for freedom—freedom from toxins, corporate monopolies, and rigged science—MAHA is fusing rural growers, urban consumers, and wellness rebels into a rare bipartisan front.

The Future of Food

What is unfolding is a fight over additives in school lunches and a reckoning over who controls America's food supply. The opposition is vast: \$178 million in annual agribusiness lobbying, \$3 billion in nonprofit capital, and legacy media shaped by corporate ad dollars. It is a network built to outlast reform, disguise intent, and dilute urgency.

MAHA's insurgency exposes this machinery. It challenges a system where 98 percent of farms are industrially tethered, and just 1.3 percent are organic, primarily due to structural barriers and policy neglect. It highlights the dyes, pesticides, and subsidies that have quietly impacted children's health and family dinners.

The question now is whether this groundswell can grow fast enough, loud enough, and coordinated enough to push back against the seemingly insurmountable, multi-million-dollar effort focused on financing a fractured food industry. Our future depends on Americans understanding that it is not just about what ends up on America's plate but also about who gets to decide.

As the nation stands at this fork in the road, one thing is clear: The future of food will not be chosen by default. It will be won—or lost—by who shows up, speaks out, and refuses to be fed the status quo. ■

Citations were omitted due to limited space. The online version will include full citations.

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DEEP POCKETS FOR THE DEEP STATE

By Fred Lucas

KEY POINTS

- The new “Resistance” to Donald Trump in the second term is more sophisticated and better funded than in the first term when Trump’s victory was a surprise.
- The Left’s legal titans Marc Elias and Norm Eisen are leading figures in the new Resistance.
- Major public employee unions—under the pretext of defending the civil service—have also joined the legal onslaught.
- In late May, the Supreme Court gave President Donald Trump a significant victory over the Deep State, with a decision shocking only in Washington: The elected leader of the executive branch can fire unelected employees in the executive branch.
- It wasn’t the first case and certainly will not be the last for the entrenched bureaucracy, but was significant even if the “independent agencies” were not so big. It also left the questions over extreme protections for the career government bureaucrats for another day.
- The Supreme Court can take only a limited number of cases each year, so the Left’s Lawfare 2.0’s barrage of lawsuits and forum shopping will inevitably obstruct the 47th president’s agenda.

Trump’s return to the White House in 2025, a once unthinkable prospect for the Left, unfolded with a strange and unsettling smoothness. His victory had been hard-fought—surviving four criminal indictments, a battery of civil lawsuits, and even two assassination attempts—but by Inauguration Day, the machinery of government appeared to be functioning as usual.

The protests, while loud, were not paralyzing. For the first time since 1989, not a single Democrat in Congress objected to certifying the victory of a Republican president-elect. To the casual observer, the transition of power proceeded without the bitter chaos of 2016, when Democrats



Credit: Hadrian. License: Shutterstock.

Donald Trump’s return to the White House in 2025, a once unthinkable prospect for the Left, unfolded with a strange and unsettling smoothness.

claimed the Russian government hacked the election to install Trump and then spent the next four years proclaiming he was illegitimate.

Yet beneath the surface, a different kind of Resistance was taking shape.

Unlike in Trump’s first term, when Democrats were blindsided by his unexpected victory and were left scrambling for legal and political avenues to challenge his legitimacy, this time the opposition forces had prepared in advance. The response was less about street protests and more about institutional entrenchment.

On December 19, 2024, a month before Trump’s return to office a coalition of federal employee unions and left-wing progressive nonprofits announced the formation of Civil Service Strong, as a combined resource for the Deep State.

Fred Lucas is the chief news correspondent and manager of the Investigative Reporting Project for the Daily Signal, and the author of The Myth of Voter Suppression: The Left’s Assault on Clean Elections (Post Hill Press, 2022).

The Civil Service Strong coalition is primarily a project of the left-wing advocacy and litigation group Democracy Forward. It also includes major public-sector unions like the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) and the National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE), as well as advocacy groups such as the Government Accountability Project and Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW).

Coalition members' financial backers included some of the most influential players in progressive philanthropy: the Sandler Foundation; the New Venture Fund (part of the powerful Arabella Advisors network); the Democracy Fund, founded by billionaire Pierre Omidyar; and even the George Soros-backed Open Society Foundations.

Some of the personalities behind the effort are familiar names, such as Marc Elias and Norm Eisen, both left-leaning activist lawyers.

The stated mission was to protect the integrity of the federal workforce—2.3 million career employees, most of whom are shielded from dismissal by decades-old civil service protections. But beyond the rhetoric of “good governance,” the group’s implicit purpose was unmistakable: to create a fortified network of government employees resistant to Trump’s policies.

In theory, the bureaucracy functions as the steady, apolitical engine of governance, immune to the ideological swings of electoral politics. In practice, however, this ideal has never been entirely realized. The Trump years saw an emboldened bureaucracy that, at times, acted as a counterweight to the elected head of the executive branch.

While Democrats and the media spend much time alleging Trump is a threat to democracy, it’s impossible to imagine what is democratic about unelected bureaucrats who can’t be fired for obstructing the agenda of the elected leader of the executive branch.

Trump and billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk, who headed up the Department of Government Efficiency, set a goal of reducing the work force by 12 percent.

The threat itself has rattled about 260,000 federal workers, causing them to quit by the end of the fiscal year, either through buyouts or other incentives, Reuters reported.

Trump previously also unveiled an unprecedented offer: a voluntary buyout program allowing career federal employees to resign in exchange for full pay and benefits through the end of the fiscal year, a generous deal the White House says more than 75,000 federal workers gladly accepted.

Still, others were not as eager to give up power accumulated over time in various silos, and the assorted left-wing groups aligned to represent the vast majority who hung on.

Rob Shriver, managing director of Civil Service Strong, bemoaned the public’s attitude toward government employees in a May 16 op-ed published in *Roll Call*.

“Not since the spoils system of the 1880s has public service been so demonized by the government, nor have civil servants been so cruelly treated,” wrote Shriver, who was President Joe Biden’s acting director of the Office of Personnel Management. “Through firings, forced resignations, and hollowing out of agencies, the Trump administration, led by Elon Musk and his so-called ‘DOGE,’ is dismantling the federal government’s ability to deliver services essential to local communities.”

The Civil Service Strong coalition pledged to provide federal employees with legal assistance, union representation, and a “response network” for those facing firing or reassignment under the new administration. They also vowed to track what they called “ongoing attacks on the civil service,” including potential efforts to shrink the federal workforce.

Trump’s administration wasted no time in reviving Schedule F, an executive order he had introduced late in his first term but which was swiftly rescinded by President Biden. The policy sought to reclassify tens of thousands of career employees as political appointees, effectively stripping them of civil service protections. By some estimates, this would affect anywhere from 50,000 to 100,000 federal workers—a fraction of the bureaucracy but enough, in theory, to weaken its institutional resistance.

The Deep State abused Trump in his first term. This time, he was fighting back.

Deep State’s Unions

President Donald Trump signed an executive order instructing 18 federal agencies to end collective bargaining. That’s barely a ripple in the federal workforce, but it’s a start.

As might be expected, unions representing federal employees sued.

“The right of federal employees to join a union is protected by the Constitution and has been supported by presidents of both parties for decades,” Randy Erwin, president of the National Federation of Federal Employees said.

“We believe the Trump administration is blatantly violating both the Constitution and federal law in a misguided



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(President Javier Milei of Argentina in background) Elon Musk, who headed up the Department of Government Efficiency, set a goal of reducing the work force by 12 percent.

attempt to bust federal unions,” Erwin continued. “In our view, this is the most anti-worker and anti-union action this country has ever seen.”

The NFFE, a member of the Civil Service Strong coalition, traces its founding to 1917, and the union has long positioned itself as the guardian of government employees.

The NFFE became affiliated with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers and has long prided itself on being the first union to represent civil service employees—predating even some of the federal protections it now defends. It claims that only postal workers have had an organized presence in government longer.

Over the decades, the union has framed itself as a progressive force within the federal workforce. From its founding, it included women in leadership, and in 1963, it actively pushed for the passage of the Equal Pay Act. By 1986, it had established the Federal Employees Education and Assistance Fund, designed to provide emergency financial relief and scholarships to government workers and their families.

Today, with 110,000 members spread across 200 locals nationwide, NFFE’s influence spans multiple federal agencies. Its strongest footholds lie within the Department of Defense, the Forest Service, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the General Services Administration—agencies with sprawling bureaucracies and workforces that, in many cases, view Trump’s proposals with apprehension. The U.S.

Park Service, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development also count large contingents of NFFE members.

If any organization seems a natural fit for a coalition dedicated to defending the federal bureaucracy, it is the American Federation of Government Employees, the largest union representing federal workers, with a presence in nearly every major agency.

In late April, AFGE was the lead plaintiff in a coalition of unions, nonprofits, and local governments—with counsel from Democracy Forward—in a lawsuit against the Trump administration to stop DOGE’s efforts to reorganize government.

With more than 320,000 dues-paying members, AFGE’s influence extends deep into the workings of the federal government, particularly within the Department of Justice, the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Social Security Administration. Internally, the union employs about 400 staffers.

The organization and its political action committee (PAC) are funded through dues-paying federal employees.

The AFGE was founded in 1932, the year President Franklin Roosevelt was elected. Yet Roosevelt said, “the process of collective bargaining, as usually understood, cannot be transplanted into the public service.”

However, three decades later, another Democratic president had a different ideal.

President John F. Kennedy’s Executive Order 10988—signed in 1962—solidified the AFGE’s power. JFK is generally viewed as a more conservative president than FDR. But with this executive order, he granted federal workers the right to collectively bargain with government agencies. That order, which institutionalized public-sector unionization at the federal level, remains one of the most consequential victories for organized labor in Washington.

AFGE has never hidden its political leanings. In 2024, AFGE PAC contributed 96.39 percent of its \$891,433 in political contributions to Democratic candidates, according

to Open Secrets. In 2020, the PAC contributed 95.9 percent of its \$1.1 million in donations to Democrats. The spent \$1.3 million supporting Democratic candidates in 2016, compared to just \$102,000 for Republicans. This financial alignment reflects a broader reality: While public-sector unions technically represent workers regardless of party affiliation, their institutional interests have traditionally aligned them with Democrats.

In 2017, data from the Department of Labor showed that 60 percent of all corruption cases within federal-sector unions involved the AFGE. Just the year before, 10 AFGE officials were either convicted

or pleaded guilty to a range of crimes, including embezzlement, wire fraud, bank fraud, and making false statements. These cases painted a picture of a union that, while positioning itself as a defender of federal integrity, was struggling with its own ethical lapses.

Perhaps even more damning was AFGE's connection to the Department of Veterans Affairs waiting list scandal. The controversy erupted when it was revealed that VA hospitals had manipulated wait times, concealing delays that left veterans without critical health care. Some AFGE employees, rather than focusing on patient care, were working full-time on union business under a provision known as "official time."

This allowed them to conduct union-related activities while being paid by the federal government. Among their tasks was compiling what became known as a "management hit list"—a document targeting three dozen VA managers the union wanted removed.

For an organization that claims to stand as a bulwark against corruption and political interference, such episodes raise questions.

Lawfare Arms of the Resistance

In a less-than-compelling means of proving just how even-handed and nonpartisan they were, in April five former Justice Department attorneys went to work for Democracy Forward. Another four followed suit in May.

If there was ever a legal entity designed for the express purpose of countering a Trump presidency, it might

be Democracy Forward. The organization, a 501(c)(4) litigation and advocacy group, along with its affiliated educational arm, the Democracy Forward Foundation, emerged in 2017 as a direct response to Trump's first administration. It was the brainchild of high-level Democratic operatives who saw the courts as a battlefield to obstruct and constrain the president's agenda at every possible turn.

The chairman of the board of directors of Democracy Forward is Marc Elias, an election lawyer who represented Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign. Elias became synonymous with the party's most consequential legal battles,

from contesting election integrity laws to leading post-election litigation efforts.

Under his guidance, Democracy Forward took a litigious approach to Trump's presidency, launching a barrage of ethics complaints and lawsuits. Some cases tackled policy disputes, while others veered into the seemingly trivial—such as an allegation that Ivanka Trump had illegally promoted her fashion line by wearing its apparel at official government events.

As the 2024 election cycle unfolded, the group showed no sign of slowing down. By June, *The New York Times* and *National Review* had reported that Democracy Forward was already drafting lawsuits in anticipation of a second Trump administration, preparing to challenge executive orders, agency decisions, and personnel policies before they could even take effect.

In 2023, the largest donor to the Democracy Forward Foundation was the Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund, which gave \$4.5 million. Fidelity is the nation's largest public charity and has disbursed funds across the ideological spectrum.

Another major contributor was the Sandler Foundation, which provided \$2.5 million. Founded by billionaire banking couple Herbert and Marion Sandler, the foundation has long funneled money into some of the most influential left-wing organizations in the country, including the Center for American Progress, the American Civil Liberties Union, and ProPublica.

A third key donor was the Susan Thomas Buffett Foundation, which gave \$2.14 million to Democracy

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With more than 320,000 dues-paying members, AFGE's influence extends deep into the workings of the federal government.



Credit: Jewish Democratic Council of America. License: <https://bit.ly/31Agxkd>.

The chairman of the board of directors of Democracy Forward is Marc Elias, an election lawyer who represented Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign.

Forward in 2023. Established in 1964 by Warren Buffett and named after his late first wife, the foundation is widely regarded as the world's largest private funder of reproductive health initiatives, particularly abortion. Its support for Democracy Forward aligned with a broader Democratic strategy—one that views Trump's presidency not just as a political setback, but as an existential threat requiring constant legal resistance.

If Democracy Forward's first iteration was about resistance, its second act is shaping up to be one of relentless litigation, aimed at curbing the power of a presidency.

Few liberal watchdog groups have wielded their influence as aggressively as Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, better known as CREW. At its inception in 2001, the organization was envisioned as a liberal counterweight to Judicial Watch, the conservative group that

had spent years dogging the Clinton administration with lawsuits and Freedom of Information Act requests.

Over time, CREW has evolved beyond its initial mission of government accountability, positioning itself as a legal battering ram against Republican officials, with a particular fixation on Donald Trump.

From the start, CREW's DNA bore the imprint of the Democratic operative class. David Brock—once conservative journalist turned liberal attack dog—wove the organization into his sprawling network, which included Media Matters for America, devoted to targeting conservative media, and American Bridge, a super PAC that meticulously compiled opposition research on Republican candidates.

One of CREW's early architects, Norm Eisen, would later serve as President Barack Obama's ethics czar before resurfacing in 2023 as the chair of another Civil Service Strong partner, States Defending Democracy Action.

In November 2022, CREW President Noah Bookbinder issued a stark public warning to Donald Trump: If the former president attempted to return to office, CREW would pursue every legal avenue to block him from the ballot under Section 3 of the 14th Amendment—the rarely invoked provision barring anyone who has “engaged in insurrection or rebellion” from holding public office.

“The evidence that Trump engaged in insurrection is overwhelming,” Bookbinder declared. Yet for all its supposed clarity, no court had convicted Trump of insurrection, nor had he even been criminally charged. His 2021 impeachment in the House ended in acquittal in the Senate.

CREW pressed forward with its 14th Amendment litigation, ultimately securing a big win in December 2023 when the Colorado Supreme Court ruled in its favor, ordering Trump removed from the state's primary ballot. The decision sent tremors through the legal and political world, raising the prospect of a fragmented presidential ballot where Trump could be blocked state by state. But the victory was short-lived. In March 2024, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously overturned the ruling.

As with many advocacy groups, CREW's funding is an amalgam of contributions from deep-pocketed donors on the left. George Soros's Open Society Institute has been



From the start, CREW's DNA bore the imprint of the Democratic operative class.



Credit: Brookings Institution. License: <https://bit.ly/4IGFO3V>

Norm Eisen's résumé is a case study in the modern Democratic operative's evolution from policy advisor to legal warrior.

a backer, as have major progressive grantmakers such as the Arca Foundation, the David Geffen Foundation, Democracy Alliance, the Tides Foundation, and the Wallace Global Fund.

More recently, the New Venture Fund, a behemoth in the Arabella Advisors network, contributed \$350,000 to CREW in 2023—the same year CREW was pressing its ballot litigation against Trump. That same year, the Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund, which has a history of giving across the ideological spectrum, chipped in \$315,708.

The California-based Shared Ascent Fund, which describes itself as a champion of “diversity, equity, and inclusion” and an opponent of “elitism, racism, sexism, ageism, and other forms of oppression,” added another \$250,000 to CREW's coffers.

For all its positioning as a nonpartisan ethics watchdog, its most consequential efforts have been aimed at Republican figures, particularly Trump and his allies.

In 2004, CREW helped circulate a letter in the House of Representatives targeting Republican Majority Leader Tom DeLay. CREW later helped push for the Travis County District Attorney's office to bring criminal charges and convict Delay. The conviction was later reversed by the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals.

Among the constellation of organizations arrayed against Donald Trump and his allies, the State Democracy Defenders Fund is the newest, yet its leadership and mission suggest it was born fully formed, arriving not as a fledgling upstart but as a battle-ready participant in the ongoing anti-Trump legal and political struggle.

Founded in 2024, the organization primarily operates as a legal advocacy group, filing amicus briefs in election law and voting rights cases. Its creation reflects a broader trend on the left: a growing reliance on legal mechanisms—not just political campaigns—to counteract what its architects view as existential threats to democracy.

At the helm of this effort is Norm Eisen, a name familiar to anyone who has followed the Democratic Party's legal battles over the past decade. Eisen's résumé is a case study in the modern Democratic operative's evolution from policy advisor to legal warrior.

During a February interview on MSNBC, Eisen declared, “The lawsuits we're bringing, I'm planning 100 this year, 100.”

An ethics lawyer in the Barack Obama White House, Eisen later served as Obama's ambassador to the Czech Republic before returning to Washington's front lines as special counsel to the House Judiciary Committee during Trump's first impeachment in 2019. Eisen's role in crafting the case against Trump over a phone call with Ukraine's president further cemented his reputation as one of the administration's most persistent legal antagonists.

But Eisen's campaign against Trump has not been confined to the courtroom or the halls of Congress. He has taken his case to the court of public opinion, authoring or editing three books that serve as a kind of chronicle of the anti-Trump legal resistance. In *A Case for the American People: The United States v. Donald J. Trump* (2020), he laid out the argument for impeachment. *Overcoming Trumpery: How to Restore Ethics, the Rule of Law, and Democracy* (2022), sought to map a post-Trump recovery plan. And in *Trying Trump: A Guide to His First Election Interference Criminal Trial* (2024), Eisen positioned himself as a kind of public legal interpreter, explaining the stakes of Trump's ongoing criminal cases to a broader audience.

Yet Eisen is not the only high-profile name attached to the State Democracy Defenders Fund. The board of directors includes former Maryland Attorney General Brian Frosh, a Democrat with a history of litigating against Republican administrations, and Bill Kristol, the former *Weekly Standard* editor who has become one of the most prominent formerly conservative voices in the anti-Trump camp.

The advocacy arm of the organization, State Democracy Defenders Action, is expected to take a more direct role in shaping policy.

Protect Democracy, formerly the Protect Democracy Project, was established during Trump's first term to oppose his administration's policies. It has a partner 501(c)(4) group, United to Protect Democracy. Ian Bassin, a former associate White House counsel in the Obama administration, is the founder and executive director of Protect Democracy, which he started in 2017.

During the first Trump administration, the organization set up a petition signed by several cable news legal analysts calling for Trump's attorney general, William Barr, to resign after he made a revised sentencing recommendation for the Roger Stone case in the Russia investigation.

After Protect Democracy's founding, the left-leaning Hewlett Foundation gave the organization \$100,000 in 2018.

In 2023, the Vanguard Charitable Endowment Program gave \$5 million to Protect Democracy. Vanguard is "cause neutral," and is the fourth largest donor-advised fund in the United States.

The Silicon Valley Community Foundation, a left-of-center grant maker, contributed \$3 million to Protect Democracy in 2023. The organization has donated to far-left organizations such as the Southern Poverty Law Center, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the Brennan Center for Justice. The Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund contributed \$2.9 million in 2023.

Whistleblower Advocates

Whistleblowers frequently have played a key role in undermining the worst excesses of the Deep State, as we saw during the Biden administration. So, it's a little disappointing that the Project on Government Oversight (POGO), and the Government Accountability Project (GAP) joined the Civil Service Strong coalition.

GAP and POGO are for the most part center-left organizations that advocate for government whistleblowers. Though, it might well have come from the view that whistleblower protection is among civil service protections.

At its core, the Government Accountability Project brands itself as a champion of whistleblowers, a nonpartisan sentinel guarding against corruption in both the public and private sectors. Its advocacy has often extended beyond the realm of government oversight, aligning it with causes on the Left.

While GAP has long fought to protect those who expose misconduct, it has also embraced broader policy battles. It has been an outspoken proponent of transitioning the

U.S. energy system entirely to renewables, a stance that has even led it to oppose zero-carbon nuclear power. The organization has taken credit for halting the construction of nuclear plants in the United States.

To further its environmental mission, GAP established Climate Science & Policy Watch

as a subsidiary dedicated to scrutinizing energy companies and their role in climate change.

GAP's funding reflects its ideological leanings. GAP's donor roster has included some of the most influential players on the left: the Open Society Foundations, backed by billionaire philanthropist George Soros; the Rockefeller Family Fund, a longstanding pillar of progressive activism; and Democracy Fund, the brainchild of eBay founder Pierre Omidyar. The Democracy Fund frequently supports left-leaning organizations such as Rock the Vote, Common Cause Education Fund, and the Campaign Legal Center, though it has also contributed to right-of-center groups like the Ethics and Public Policy Center.

In 2023, GAP's most significant financial backers included the Columbus Foundation, an Ohio-based community development organization, that contributed \$600,000, making it the year's largest donor. The Marty and Dorothy Silverman Foundation, a New York grantmaker known for its support of Planned Parenthood, People for the American Way, and Earth Justice, followed with \$480,000. Another major benefactor was the CS Fund and Warsh-Mott Legacy, a pair of closely aligned nonprofits, which gave \$200,000. CS Fund has poured money into progressive outfits such as the American Constitution Society for Law and Policy, Friends of the Earth, and Ceres.

Together, these contributions underscored GAP's position within a broader network of left-leaning institutions, many of which see government whistleblowing not just as a transparency issue, but as a tool in the fight for progressive policy goals.

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*Whistleblowers frequently have
played a key role in undermining
the worst excesses of the Deep State.*

The Project on Government Oversight, better known as POGO, fashions itself as a nonpartisan watchdog and has spent decades scrutinizing federal agencies with a focus on rooting out waste, corruption, and abuse.

POGO's early notoriety came from its almost theatrical exposés of Pentagon spending. Few in Washington could forget its revelations of a \$435 hammer or a \$7,600 coffee maker buried in the Department of Defense's procurement budget. Although it was also interesting that POGO chose to highlight one of only a handful of federal agencies that Left doesn't support.

Beyond its work on military spending, POGO has taken on some of the most controversial national security debates of the past two decades.

Similar to GAP, POGO also defended National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden's leaking of classified material about government spying. Snowden leaked classified documents exposing government surveillance programs, and POGO was among the groups that came to his defense, arguing that his disclosures were in the public interest. Years earlier, during the Obama administration, it pushed for the declassification of CIA interrogation methods used on terrorism suspects.

A 2016 report by the *Washington Free Beacon* even revealed a memo from George Soros's Open Society Foundations outlining how POGO and other advocacy groups could be mobilized to challenge those interrogation policies.

Like many watchdog organizations, POGO's funding has come from an array of ideologically diverse donors, though the balance tilts left. The Open Society Foundations has backed it, as has Pierre Omidyar's Omidyar Network Fund, and the Fund for Constitutional Government—all entities that have a history of supporting progressive causes.

In 2021, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation gave \$900,000 to POGO.

However, POGO's appeal has also extended to libertarian-leaning organizations, particularly those skeptical of government overreach. The Frederick E. and Julia G. Nonneman Foundation, an Ohio-based grant maker, contributed \$2 million in 2021. The foundation's giving history is eclectic, including donations to conservative-leaning organizations such as the Cato Institute, the Goldwater Institute, and the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation.

Other major donors include the Democracy Fund—the Omidyar-founded group—which gave \$950,000 to POGO in 2022. Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund

contributed \$629,391 in 2023, in keeping with its practice of spreading funds across the ideological spectrum.

Although often aligned with progressive interests, its advocacy against unchecked government power has occasionally found common cause with libertarians and conservatives skeptical of bureaucratic overreach. Yet, as debates over the administrative state intensify, POGO seems to have perplexingly planted its flag on the side of the administrative state.

Nonfederal Unions

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) is long known for its president and consistent Democratic Party surrogate Randi Weingarten. It's also out of place in the Civil Service Strong coalition, since none of its 1.5 million members are federal employees.

Weingarten blasted Trump's "draconian" budget proposal in May, asserting,

President Trump's skinny budget cuts much of what helps poor, working-class and middle-class Americans, seemingly to pay for tax cuts for the rich. You can't make this up. ... Our concern when the president started dismantling the Department of Education was not the bureaucracy but the funding.

The AFT is the nation's second-largest public school teachers' union behind the National Education Association, which at least thus far hasn't joined the Civil Service Strong coalition.

The AFT was a key player in continuing the closures of public schools long after the COVID-19 pandemic had subsided. The union promotes tenure policies, opposes most education reforms, and opposes any pension reforms.

Local AFT chapters have been embroiled in financial and political scandals, including chapters in Washington, DC; New York City; Chicago; Dade County, Florida; and Broward County, Florida.

The union played a leading role in opposing state reforms made by Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker and tried to remove him from office through a failed recall effort in 2012.

AFT also contributed \$500,000 to the Clinton Foundation and Clinton Global Initiative before backing Hillary Clinton in the 2016 Democratic presidential primary and general election.

In February 2021, the AFT lobbied and created policies implemented by the Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention (CDC) for guidelines in reopening schools, as the *New York Post* first reported. The newspaper obtained emails between CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky and AFT officials through the Freedom of Information Act. The *Wall Street Journal* editorial board asserted the AFT's role was a "non-scientific political intervention," and claimed that "the Biden Administration is letting a powerful Democratic interest group dictate virus guidelines."

In 2024, the AFT PAC contributed \$3 million to the Senate Majority PAC, for Democrats; \$1.95 million to the House Majority PAC for Democratic candidates; \$1.5 million to Friends of Brandon Johnson, the Chicago mayor; and \$500,000 to the Democratic Governors Association. During the 2020 election cycle, the AFT spent about \$20 million supporting Democratic Party candidates. In 2016, it spent \$28.6 million backing Democrats.

The AFT has been part of the Democracy Alliance, a group of progressive donors, the *Washington Free Beacon* reported.

The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) is the largest government workers union in the United States, yet its role in this coalition seems unusual since it doesn't represent any federal workers—as evident from the name.

AFSCME represents 1.3 million state and local government employees and 188,000 retirees, with 3,400 local union chapters across 46 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. So it's easy to see how it's the largest member of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO). AFSCME has advocated for government-run health care, higher taxes, an expanded welfare state, and amnesty for illegal immigrants.

The union's PAC spent \$19.7 million on elections in 2024. This included \$500,000 to the Senate Majority PAC, a Democratic group; \$330,000 to the House Majority PAC, another Democratic group, and \$300,000 to the Democratic National Committee.

The union has backed left-wing nonprofits such as the Center for American Progress; Al Sharpton's National Action Network; the Arabella-sponsored pass-through entity Sixteen Thirty Fund; and liberal judicial policy groups American Constitution Society and Alliance for Justice.

Defending the Ruling Class

The Civil Service Strong coalition of organizations rallying under the banner of "defending democracy" is little more than a network of entrenched bureaucrats, activist litigators, union bullies, and well-funded advocacy groups working to preserve their own power and the status quo.

While cloaking their efforts in the language of civil service protections and constitutional principles, their real objective is clear: to shield the federal

workforce from accountability and insulate the administrative state from elected oversight.

The attitude has been that presidents come and go, but bureaucrats are in Washington for as long as they wish to be.

From litigation campaigns aimed at shaping election rules to whistleblower advocacy selectively applied to advance partisan

goals, these groups are operating with a singular purpose—to resist political change, particularly when it threatens their influence.

Their financial backers, a predictable mix of left-wing foundations and donor-advised funds, ensure that this machinery remains well-oiled and ready for battle, whether against a second Trump administration or any future reform efforts. This is not a defense of democracy—it is a defense of an unelected, unaccountable ruling class. ■



The Wall Street Journal claimed that "the Biden Administration is letting a powerful Democratic interest group dictate virus guidelines."

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KALI FONTANILLA

Serving as CRC's Senior Fellow for Education, Kali Fontanilla focuses on topics related to K-12 public education and teachers unions. With 15 years of experience as a credentialed educator working in public and Christian schools, she brings hands-on classroom and teachers' union experience. She authored a guide to counter Critical Race Theory in the classroom and is the founder of the Exodus Institute, a fully accredited K-12 grade online school seeking to redefine education by joining technology with traditional values. She has been featured in newspapers across the country including the Washington Post, Epoch Times, Associated Press, and the Boston Globe.





HOW TEACHERS UNIONS AND BUREAUCRACY OFTEN FAIL TO PROTECT STUDENTS

By Kali Fontanilla

KEY POINTS

- Sexual misconduct by educators in public schools is becoming disturbingly more common.
- The National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) claim to defend educators' rights, but they often end up shielding abusers from consequences.
- In a deeply alarming shift in public education, abusive behavior is now being masked by so-called "inclusive" policies.

My first year teaching middle school was in Gonzales, California, a rural farm town known for its high winds and great Mexican food. I was attending a two-day conference in Los Angeles and had arranged for one of our regular substitute teachers to cover my classes. Subs who are willing to take on middle school students are hard to come by, so I was glad to have "Mr. Raul." When I returned from the conference, three of my sixth-grade girls, who were my classroom TAs, pulled me aside. They were visibly disturbed and told me that Mr. Raul had pornography displayed on his laptop, and some students could see it. They also said this wasn't the first time they had seen this happen in classrooms where he was subbing.

I immediately called the vice principal, who removed the girls from class. Later that day, my vice principal informed me I was not allowed to speak with the students further because there was still an open investigation. She also said she believed the girls had made it up. Just a week earlier, another teacher in the district had been accused of letting fifth-grade girls sit on his lap. The district clearly did not want more controversy.

From that point on, it was out of my hands. It was also out of the parents' hands. The district alone would decide whether Mr. Raul was guilty. I never heard another word about it, except that the girls were told they weren't allowed to hang out together in class anymore, and Mr. Raul continued teaching at our school. I didn't believe the girls were



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According to the nonprofit Stop Educator Sexual Abuse, Misconduct and Exploitation (SESAME), an estimated one in 10 students will experience sexual misconduct by a school employee before graduation.

lying. They had told their parents first, the behavior had happened more than once, and the district had every reason to suppress another scandal.

This is just one story among many. In another district where I worked, a coach was given a 30-year prison sentence for sexually assaulting three underage girls. In the same district, a well-liked school counselor hid a video camera in his office and secretly recorded sexual acts between students. Police

Kali Fontanilla is a former public school teacher of 15 years. Her rebuttal statement to Proposition 16 in California helped to stop the push for legal reverse racism and a new extreme version of affirmative action in 2020. She is the co-founder of Exodus Institute, a K-12 online school with a nationally accredited program: Thinkexodus.org.

later found 13 videos involving 11 students. At this point, it's rare to find a school district that hasn't dealt with at least one teacher found guilty of sexual misconduct.

Common Misconduct

Sexual misconduct by educators in public schools is becoming disturbingly more common. A U.S.

Department of Education report showed that incidents of sexual violence in K–12 schools rose by over 50 percent in just two years, from 9,649 in 2015–16 to nearly 15,000 by 2017–18. In 2022 alone, 269 educators were arrested on child sex-related charges, including grooming, exploitation, and assault, and the year wasn't even finished when this was reported. And according to the nonprofit Stop Educator Sexual Abuse, Misconduct and Exploitation (SESAME), an estimated one in 10 students will experience sexual misconduct by a school employee before graduation.

It's important to note that the last comprehensive study on this was done in 2004. It's time for an update. These aren't isolated scandals; they are symptoms of a systemwide failure. Too often, schools delay action, dismiss complaints, or downplay abuse to protect their reputations. As the numbers climb, it's clear this crisis isn't just growing; it's being tolerated.

One recent shocking example was the case of Jacqueline Ma, a sixth-grade teacher in California who was previously named teacher of the year. In 2023, she was arrested for engaging in a sexual relationship with a 12-year-old student. She was convicted and sentenced this year to 30 years in prison. What's even more disturbing is that during sentencing, the judge noted Ma's accolades may have "shielded her from scrutiny" and allowed her abuse to go undetected for longer. The fact that someone so highly praised and publicly celebrated could carry out this kind of abuse is a grim reminder that titles and awards often blind school systems to

serious red flags. It also raises the question: How many other abusers are protected by the reputation they have carefully built within their districts?

According to the *San Francisco Standard*, at least 19 teachers accused of sexual misconduct in the San Francisco Unified School District were allowed to resign or retire quietly rather than face public termination. Among them was a

high school athletic director who repeatedly pulled girls from their classes using fake hall passes to abuse them sexually. This behavior continued unchecked for over four years, even though complaints were being raised. Instead of firing the employee or alerting law enforcement, the district shielded itself from scandal, allowing abuse to persist and more children to be victimized. This practice, sometimes dubbed "passing the trash," allows bad actors to transfer to new schools, new districts, and new unsuspecting students. And it's happening far beyond California.

A 2016 *USA Today* investigation revealed that school districts across the country routinely let accused sexual predators resign quietly, often providing glowing letters of recommendation. They would do this instead of going through the costly, time-consuming process of termination. One case cited in the investigation out of Texas shows just how broken the

system is. Kip McFarlin was allowed to quietly resign from Orangefield ISD after making inappropriate comments to students. Instead of reporting the incident, district officials followed their attorney's advice to give him a "neutral or positive recommendation." When Port Arthur ISD hired McFarlin, administrators there were told he was simply leaving due to "a divorce in the family." Within weeks, he sexually assaulted a 16-year-old student. McFarlin was convicted and sentenced to eight years in prison, but the administrators who covered for him faced no penalties.

Why does this keep happening? One significant reason is that teachers unions often negotiate contracts that require school districts to keep a teacher employed during an inves-



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tigation, and the process of firing a teacher can be lengthy, bureaucratic, and expensive. Because of this, districts often negotiate separation agreements with accused teachers. These agreements often include nondisclosure clauses and do not involve a formal finding of wrongdoing or criminal investigations. These agreements tend to shield the institution from embarrassment and liability. In doing so, they also feed a system that recycles predators and silences victims.

The Union Shield

Teachers unions, including the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), claim to defend educators' rights. But in practice, they often end up shielding abusers from consequences. As I mentioned before, union contracts in many districts make it very difficult to fire even teachers credibly accused of abuse.

In New York City, the infamous “rubber rooms” exposed just how broken the teacher disciplinary system could be. Teachers accused of misconduct, including sexual abuse, were reassigned to these centers and collected full salaries and benefits while doing no actual work. Some remained in these rubber rooms for months or even years as their cases dragged on, protected by union contracts and bureaucratic red tape. These reassignment centers became an expensive symbol of a system that prioritized adult job security over student safety and accountability. Eventually, the public outcry and publicity of these rooms led to teachers being reassigned to administrative tasks that included no contact with students during these lengthy proceedings. They may not all be reading newspapers in a room together while on the clock, but taxpayers are still paying them to sit outside the classroom.

The use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) also helps shield bad actors. In some cases, when a teacher is accused of serious misconduct, school districts will settle the matter quietly, sometimes under pressure from union lawyers. The teacher agrees to resign or retire, often with a clean record, and in return both sides sign an NDA. This legally binds the district not to disclose the details of the misconduct to future employers or the public. And because unions are involved in negotiating many of these exit agreements, they effectively become complicit in keeping parents and future schools in the dark.



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One of the most damning examples of school officials protecting predators comes from Loudoun County, Virginia, where a male student wearing a skirt sexually assaulted a female student in a girls' bathroom at Stone Bridge High School in May 2021.

Bureaucratic Roadblocks

It is not just unions; the bureaucratic maze of district human resources departments and credentialing boards also shares the blame. Many states fail to report teacher misconduct to national databases. The National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) runs the Educator Identification Clearinghouse, which tracks educator disciplinary actions across states. But NASDTEC is a nonprofit membership organization, not a government agency, participation in the database is voluntary, and reporting is wildly inconsistent. In fact, NASDTEC has acknowledged that thousands of serious cases have gone unreported. That means a teacher who resigns under suspicion in one state can easily move to another, apply for a license, and start teaching again. Background checks would raise no red flags if their allegations and abuses were handled internally and not tried criminally.

Victims Left Behind

While the system bends over backward to protect the accused, the students are often silenced or pushed aside. Schools frequently try to keep things “in-house” to avoid bad press. Some parents are even pressured to stay quiet.

One of the most damning examples of school officials protecting predators comes from Loudoun County, Virginia, where a male student wearing a skirt sexually assaulted a

female student in a girls' bathroom at Stone Bridge High School in May 2021. The district never reported the attack to the public and instead quietly transferred the student to Broad Run High School, where he sexually assaulted another girl just months later. A special grand jury report revealed that school administrators downplayed or ignored warning signs and failed to document the initial assault properly. Worse, the victim's father was arrested and publicly villainized after he confronted the school board about the cover-up.

The school board, meanwhile, claimed ignorance even though emails showed they had been informed about the incident. Superintendent Scott Ziegler not only denied during a public meeting that the assault occurred but was later indicted and fired for his role in concealing the attacks.

In the grand jury report, Loudoun County Public Schools showed a "lack of transparency, accountability, and urgency," prioritizing left-leaning narratives about trans students using restrooms that align with their chosen gender identity over student safety. This case is not just about one predator, but also about an entire system that enabled him.

While many public schools claim they're too underfunded to fix leaky ceilings or hire more counselors, there always seems to be room in the budget to quietly settle with victims of sexual abuse. In district after district, millions of taxpayer dollars are being shelled out to keep misconduct out of the headlines and away from voters.

For example, the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) in a 2018 investigation revealed that the district repeatedly failed to protect students from sexual abuse by teachers in the district and by other students. The report, triggered by dozens of allegations, exposed that CPS often ignored or mishandled abuse complaints, allowing predators to remain in classrooms. At the time, they also had "more pending federal sexual violence investigations than any other K-12 school district in the country." The fallout was so severe that CPS lost millions in state funding and was forced to overhaul its entire system for handling abuse claims.



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"'Grooming Grounds': How a Statewide Network Seeks to Sexualize Students," a Texas Scorecard report, exposed how some Gender and Sexuality Alliance clubs operate under a veil of secrecy using confidentiality agreements and pushing explicit "queer sex" discussions, even in elementary school settings.

In Los Angeles Unified (LAUSD), one of the largest school districts in the country, officials failed to remove a teacher who had been repeatedly reported for disturbing behavior. Mark Berndt, a third-grade teacher at Miramonte Elementary, was accused of molesting dozens of students over a span of years. There were clear red flags, including complaints from fellow staff members and parents, as well as photo lab employees alerting police to Berndt's disturbing images. Despite this, district officials allowed him to remain in the classroom. Berndt was eventually convicted on 23 counts of lewd conduct involving students as young as seven. LAUSD ultimately paid out a staggering \$170 million in legal settlements to victims and their families. This was not a case from the 1980s or some pre-background-check era. This criminal case wrapped up in 2013, and the settlements were finalized just a few years later. District leaders didn't just drop the ball, they actively ignored it, proving once again that the real priority was avoiding bad press, not protecting children.

I wish these were rare exceptions, but they are the inevitable result of a system that prioritizes institutional reputation over child safety. Instead of firing predators and sounding the alarm, schools write checks and issue PR statements. At the same time, unions protect their own interests, and the cycle repeats itself.

Grooming Disguised as Inclusivity

In a deeply alarming shift in public education, abusive behavior is now being masked by so-called “inclusive” policies. Under the banner of diversity and gender affirmation, many schools have adopted rules that deliberately sideline parents from vital conversations. This is definitely a loophole that predators can and will exploit. In California, the secrecy around gender identity in schools is no longer just unofficial—it is now policy. California legislation makes it clear that school staff should not inform parents if a student identifies as transgender or uses different pronouns unless the student gives explicit permission. Teachers are told to use a student’s preferred name and pronouns at school but to switch back to the student’s legal name and biological sex whenever communicating with parents. This creates a disturbing system that intentionally excludes parents from critical conversations about their own children. According to a CalMatters report, state officials have doubled down on this guidance, even as local school districts face lawsuits or recall efforts for adopting parental notification policies. What this really creates is a pipeline of secrecy that gives activist teachers privileged emotional access to children behind their parents’ backs.

And who’s backing these policies? Teachers unions. Both the NEA and AFT have publicly supported guidelines that keep parents in the dark under the guise of protecting student privacy. These are the same unions that claim to advocate for student safety while fighting tooth and nail to keep schools closed, lower academic standards, and now shield school staff from transparency.

A report titled “*Grooming Grounds: How a Statewide Network Seeks to Sexualize Students*” from Texas Scorecard exposed how some Gender and Sexuality Alliance clubs operate under a veil of secrecy using confidentiality agreements and pushing explicit “queer sex” discussions, even in elementary school settings. These clubs are marketed as “safe spaces,” but the report warns that they can also serve as grooming grounds. Grooming is not always physical. It often starts with emotional manipulation and isolating kids from their parents and with these clubs in particular reframing identity as oppression that only these untrained adult advisors feel entitled to handle. Without accountability, these clubs become prime environments for inappropriate influence masked as inclusion.

This is not an argument against LGBTQ students and their right to feel safe like all students. It’s a call to stop using inclusivity as a smokescreen for violating boundaries, undermining parental rights, and giving cover to potential

predators. There’s a difference between supporting students and encouraging secrecy, and abusers know exactly where that line blurs.

Solutions

There are real solutions that could stop this cycle, but they face powerful resistance. First, districts must be legally required to report substantiated misconduct to a national, mandatory database, regardless of whether the teacher has been tried criminally or not. The practice of quietly moving abusers from school to school must end. Reforming union contracts is also essential. Teachers credibly accused of serious wrongdoing should not be shielded by endless appeals or protected through arbitration that drags on for years. Mandatory reporting laws need to be strengthened so that all school staff are required to report suspected abuse directly to law enforcement. Schools should also be required to install cameras in classrooms where abuse is harder to detect. While controversial, classroom cameras can provide a much-needed measure of accountability. They help verify or disprove allegations, protect good teachers from false accusations, and deter misconduct. Parents already expect this level of oversight in daycares, school buses, and police departments. So why not classrooms?

But efforts like these are routinely blocked by teachers unions. Both the NEA and AFT have fought legislation aimed at increasing transparency around teacher misconduct, claiming it would violate educators’ due process rights. The NEA has even labeled classroom cameras as “Big Brother” surveillance and a threat to teacher privacy.

Protecting teachers’ rights matters, but not at the expense of student safety. In my own classroom, I witnessed how quickly a serious allegation was minimized and ultimately ignored. The three sixth-grade girls who spoke up were silenced. I was silenced, while the accused substitute continued teaching. In Jacqueline Ma’s case, the judge himself acknowledged that her title as “Teacher of the Year” may have shielded her from scrutiny, allowing her abuse to go unnoticed.

This is not just a policy failure; it’s a moral failure. The current system of bureaucratic delays, union interference, and administrative fear enables predators to remain in the classroom far too long. Most teachers are good people trying to do the right thing. However, even one predator protected by these flawed systems is one too many. ■

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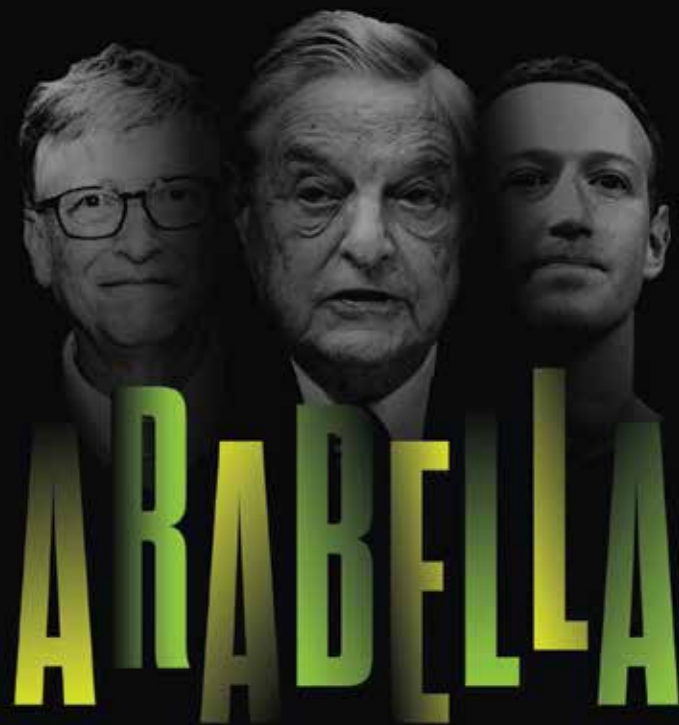
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BY SCOTT WALTER

**REVISED AND
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THE DARK MONEY NETWORK OF LEFTIST BILLIONAIRES TRANSFORMING AMERICA

While figures like George Soros, Bill Gates, and Mark Zuckerberg are known for their hefty political donations, few Americans have heard of Arabella Advisors. More powerful than these standalone billionaires, Arabella is a secretive “dark money” operation that channels megadonor cash into leftist political causes via pop-up groups designed to look like innocent grassroots outfits. A staggering quantity of money flows through Arabella. In the 2022 cycle, the firm’s fundraising rose to \$3 billion.

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