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> Campaign donations

Further, never have so many donors been unidentified before elections. So far, only about one-third of donors have been identified, the Center for Public Integrity study says.

“What this amounts to, say veteran money and politics watchers, is a virtual Wild West, with fewer rules and more cash than ever,” says the study, written by center analyst Peter Stone. Each party’s allies now can cite “10 or so deep-pocketed independent groups with plans to spend \$10 million-plus helping Senate and House candidates by running expensive ads and/or conducting get-out-the-vote efforts.”

Previous elections were waged under rules that limited how much a donor could give. The rules changed this year.

The key reason is January’s 5-4 Supreme Court ruling in the Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission case. It removed curbs on independent expenditures by corporations and unions, freeing them to spend without limit from their own treasuries on campaign ads and advocacy efforts as long as they’re not coordinated with candidate campaigns.

Under tax and campaign-finance laws, most of these independent groups aren’t required to disclose their donors until after the elections.

“Now, if you’re a company that wants to write a \$10 million check to help or hurt a candidate, you can go to town,” said Dave Levinthal, a spokesman for the Center for Responsive Politics.

The spending spree also is rooted in other causes, including:

- This is an unusually competitive year, with control of both houses of Congress up for grabs. Republicans need net gains of 39 seats in the House of Representatives and 10 Senate seats to win majorities.
- GOP donors are reluctant to trust their donations to Republican National Committee Chairman Michael Steele, who has been troubled by

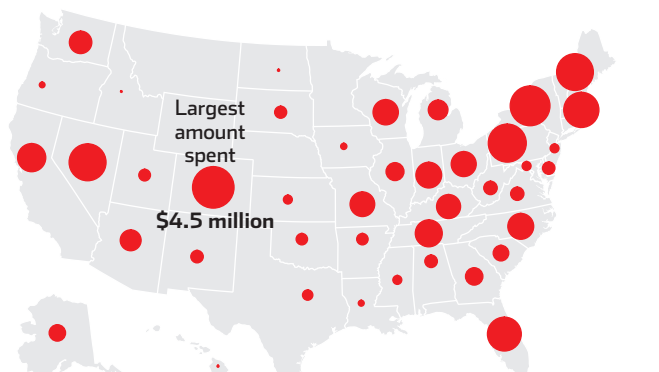
Stealth spending

The 2010 election is drawing more money from interest groups and becoming the most secretive ever. Over half of the money interest groups have spent for House and Senate races has come from donors undisclosed to the public.

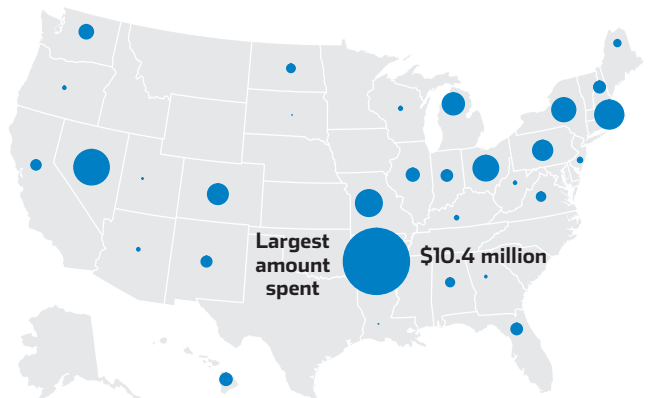
Year	Amount with donor identity not disclosed (millions)	Undisclosed donor amount as a percentage of total
2004	\$8	8%
2006	\$16	6%
2008	\$20	41%
2010	\$44	55%

Money spent on behalf of congressional candidates in the 2010 election

Republican-aligned interest groups have spent more money and become involved in more races than their Democratic rivals, especially in the Northeast. The largest amount has been spent in Colorado’s Senate race.



Democratic groups have matched conservative spending in a handful of races, especially in Nevada, where Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid is threatened. The most money was put into a primary fight between two Democratic Senate candidates in Arkansas.



NOTE: Includes spending on direct election activity and broadcast ads mentioning candidates within 30 days of a primary and 60 days of the general election.

Source: Washington Post analysis of Federal Election Commission filings.

THE WASHINGTON POST

management and fundraising problems, so they’re seeking alternative avenues.

- Many corporate executives

feel battered by the Democrats’ overhauls of the nation’s health care and financial-regulatory systems.

“Some companies in sectors hit hard by new regulations — including financial, energy and health care interests — are grabbing for their checkbooks,” the study says, “and they are actively seeking the anonymity provided by new and older independent groups in the post-Citizens United world.”

Among the new groups eager to collect and spend is American Crossroads, a non-profit, Republican-friendly organization that plans to spend \$52 million this year “to help a few dozen GOP Senate and House candidates with television ads and get-out-the-vote drives,” the study reports.

Among those behind American Crossroads are Karl Rove, the architect of President George W. Bush’s successful presidential campaigns, and former Republican Party Chairman Ed Gillespie.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce alone is expected to spend about \$75 million; historically, the vast majority of chamber spending promotes conservative Republicans. The conservative Americans for Prosperity, linked to billionaire David Koch, is likely to spend \$45 million, while the Commission on Hope, Growth and Opportunity hopes to spend about \$25 million. It’s run by veteran GOP strategist Scott Reed.

Democratic-aligned groups are trying to catch up.

In August, the AFL-CIO said it would join with the Service Employees International Union and United Food and Commercial Workers for a political effort estimated to cost at least \$94 million. The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees intends to spend at least \$50 million, the center’s study reports. America Votes, a coalition of some 400 liberal groups, plans to spend \$8.5 million.

The unions plan to zero in on 26 states, notably swing states such as Nevada, Ohio and Illinois, in which Democrats have done well recently but face trouble this year.

However, the GOP-aligned efforts appear to dwarf their Democratic rivals. From Aug. 1 to Sept. 20, the study found, Republican-leaning interests outspent Democrats by about 5 to 1 on ads.

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> U frats

the Chi Psi house and one the weekend before that at Delta Kappa Epsilon. In addition, two men were beaten and robbed at Delta Kappa Epsilon the same weekend the alleged sexual assault occurred.

Minneapolis police are investigating the cases.

Sgt. Bill Palmer, Minneapolis police spokesman, said Monday that police do not believe the same assailant is at work in the three cases.

Alcohol was a factor in the sexual assaults, he said.

Jerry Rinehart, the university’s vice provost of student affairs, said Monday that authorities “believe the two men involved in the last two assaults are students,” though student affairs “doesn’t know the exact identities,” according to a university spokeswoman.

Palmer said he couldn’t discuss active criminal sexual conduct cases, though he said there have been no arrests.

Delta Kappa Epsilon’s on-campus suspension was for violating council policy, Chorzempa said. He declined to provide details, citing the fraternity’s right to appeal.

The international DKE organization temporarily suspended the U chapter Sept. 26, said executive director Doug Lanpher, out of concern that members weren’t sufficiently controlling access to parties.

Shutting off the taps temporarily will give Greek and university leaders time to re-evaluate policies and procedures, he said.

Chad Ellsworth, coordinator for the university’s Office for Fraternity and Sorority Life, said this is the first time in his six years at the U that the Interfraternity Council has imposed such a drinking ban.

Until the ban is lifted, fraternities can host dry parties, and members who are 21 can drink in the house, Chorzempa said. But if guests are present, nobody can drink, he said.

Enforcement will be up to the council, Chorzempa said. “We anticipate we’ll be able to effectively monitor.”

But some students said Monday that they doubted the policy would make much difference.

Senior Christina Harrison said people will just have parties elsewhere, and that the fraternities’ action misses the point.

“It’s underemphasizing the issue that’s actually at hand, which is why are these women being assaulted?” she said. “And why is it unsafe to go out in Dinkytown, and why are they being treated this way?”

According to University of Minnesota Deputy Police Chief Chuck Miner, “We have very low numbers of reported sexual assaults on and around campus, and most of those are some form of acquaintance sexual assault.”

“It’s unique that we’ve had three instances that we’ve issued alerts for so close together,” Miner said.

The university keeps statistics about the number of forcible sex offenses reported, with the information broken down by location.

One category, “non-campus buildings or properties,” reflects any building owned or controlled by a student organization officially recognized by the university. The majority of residences in the category would belong to fraternities or sororities, Miner said.

There were 22 forcible sex offenses reported in 2009, with none in non-campus buildings. Of the 15 reported in 2008, two occurred in non-campus buildings; and of the 19 reported in 2007, six occurred in non-campus buildings.

Nationally, one in four college women will experience a rape or attempted rape during her college career, said Donna Dunn, executive director of the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault.

In 75 percent of college sex assaults, the offender, the victim or both have been drinking, she said.

Fraternity houses at the U are privately owned, and chapter activities are governed by the Interfraternity Council.

But if they are registered as student groups, their conduct is also subject to the student policy handbook, Ellsworth said.

Sex assaults reported at U frat houses

Minneapolis police are investigating three sexual assaults. The cases are not connected, police say.



1 Sept. 18, about 2 a.m., a woman not affiliated with the U was in a restroom at Delta Kappa Epsilon, 1711 University Ave. SE. A man entered the restroom and sexually assaulted her. The victim escaped the attack and fled. The man also took her cell phone.

2 Sept. 26, 1 to 1:30 a.m., a U student was sexually assaulted at Chi Psi, 1515 University Ave. SE. She was a guest at the house and became intoxicated. She told police she woke up with serious injuries and went to the hospital, but didn’t remember what happened to her.

3 Between 9:30 p.m. Thursday and 2:30 a.m. Friday, a 19-year-old U student was sexually assaulted at Phi Gamma Delta, 1129 University Ave. SE.

Source: University of Minnesota police PIONEER PRESS

“It’s underemphasizing the issue that’s actually at hand, which is why are these women being assaulted? And why is it unsafe to go out in Dinkytown, and why are they being treated this way?”

Christina Harrison, U senior

Phi Gamma Delta is a student group, as is Chi Psi, though it is on probation, Ellsworth said. DKE did not register, which limits the university’s ability to take disciplinary action against the house as a whole, Ellsworth said.

In February, university staff made a list of recommendations for tightening control over fraternity and sorority parties, Ellsworth said. (Nine of the 10 sororities on campus are already dry.)

The recommendations included limiting the amount of alcohol guests bring in, mandating shorter guest lists and banning hard alcohol from chapter property.

Ellsworth said some, but not all, of the recommendations have been adopted by the student groups.

He said administrators support the Interfraternity Council’s ban as a temporary move and will work with the group on longer-term changes.

Chorzempa said the fraternity presidents will reconvene Sunday to discuss further steps, including a campaign to raise awareness of sexual abuse and a future safety conference among fraternity leaders, police and university officials.

As for how long the ban will be in place, “I have no real estimate,” Chorzempa said.

It depends how long it takes to talk with affected groups, review party policies and come up with criteria to ensure safety, he said. “It’s going to be a fairly large conversation.”

He said he is at a loss to explain what’s behind the rash of attacks.

“It is really difficult to pinpoint,” he said. It probably has less to do with an underlying problem than simply “a very unfortunate coincidence of timing,” he said.

He said fraternities have been doing well in recent years ensuring safety at parties, but given the recent attacks, “clearly there are some issues.”

“It’s something that we’re taking seriously,” Chorzempa said. “It’s something we’re moving forward on.”

Kaitlyn Egan contributed to this report, which includes information from the Associated Press. Doug Belden can be reached at dbelden@pioneerpress.com or 651-228-5302. Mara Gottfried can be reached at mgottfried@pioneerpress.com or 651-228-5262.



PIONEER PRESS: RICHARD MARSHALL

Vy Luong didn’t suspect a thing when she returned Sept. 5 with her boyfriend to the site of their first movie date in 2004. Then she saw, in a supposed iPhone commercial, a key date in their relationship and her name.

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> iPhone proposal

The iProposal sequence has become a modest hit on the Internet, logging nearly 300,000 views on YouTube and appearing on the Yahoo, MSN and MSNBC home pages in the past week.

While not quite in the league of the legendary “JK Wedding Entrance Dance Song” (you know the one, also made in Minnesota) with more than 56 million YouTube views and scads of imitators, Clay’s video nails the look and feel of Apple’s iPhone TV spots.

“So you want to write a song for your girlfriend,” the narrator intones. “Start with a drum beat, and then add a little keyboard,” the disembodied male voice (Clay’s) goes on, as relevant music apps appear on the phone screen. The fake commercial then morphs into a music video that professes Clay’s love for Luong using a variety of silly apps, cheesy typefaces and wacky photos of the couple at costume parties.

Clay — a 30-something

GET THE SONG

“Addicted to You” (free MP3): tciti.es/addictedtoyofree

“Addicted to You” (via iTunes): tciti.es/addictedtoyopaid

supernerd who has a background in music composition and who sometimes performs satirically and out of key as “B.B. Bling” — may have outdone himself with his latest ditty, “Addicted to You.” He’s offering the melody as a free MP3 download, though an iTunes Store version will help defray next summer’s wedding costs.

It took Clay about four months to piece together the instrumentals and vocals, which had to be painstakingly synchronized with video footage and slideshow sequences. Then came the hard part: Arranging to have the video shown at a local theater — preferably the Carmike Oakdale 20 complex that is so dear to the St. Paul couple.

Dozens upon dozens of phone calls to Carmike staff got Clay nowhere. Desperate, he broadened his hunt to other local theaters, but struck out

again and again. Determined to make this happen, he renewed his Carmike 20 inquiries. At last, he got through to someone who could help him.

Daniel Skakal, the Carmike chain’s Twin Cities manager, found Clay’s request charming. Watching the video with several colleagues, just to make sure it contained nothing objectionable, he was touched.

“I thought it was great, definitely very original,” Skakal said. “We had the technology to make this happen” for the couple.

Clay delivered a DVD to theater staffers and later lured Luong to the theater under false pretenses (a Hollywood friend would supposedly make an appearance in one of the commercials before the movie). Then, when the real commercials ended, and just before the feature began, someone in the projection room hit “play.”

Luong, at first, did not suspect a thing. She squeezed Clay’s hand and smiled at him during the part about writing a song for a girlfriend — but only to suggest, partly in jest, that he should do the same for her.

Then she saw a key date in their relationship — the day they first met, in a restaurant while dining with mutual friends — and, shortly afterward, her name.

That’s when “the waterworks” started, said Luong, 26, who finally realized what was happening on the big screen.

“I cried practically the whole time,” Luong said. “I couldn’t believe this was really happening.”

At one key point in the video, Clay’s hand taps out a wedding proposal using the iPhone’s text-messaging app. In the theater, Clay’s brother tapped out an identical proposal to Luong so it would be sent in unison with the one on-screen. (The timestamps turned out to be almost identical.)

Luong said her favorite part of the video has the words: “You’re my best friend. I know this will never end.”

Luong said she and Clay look quite different — he is a 6-foot, 4-inch Minnesotan while she is a super-petite Vietnamese — yet are so alike. They are Tetris-playing, coupon-clipping, action-movie-addicted, family-oriented entrepreneurs.

“We’re really twins,” she said.