

Club For Growth billionaires finance fascist Republican politicians

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A recent study by the Center for Responsive Politics, reported by the *Guardian*, reveals that 42 Republican lawmakers who voted to overturn the January 6 election results received a combined \$20 million in funding from the Club for Growth (CFG). The CFG is a billionaire-backed conservative consortium dedicated to advancing the interests of the financial oligarchy by backing anti-tax, anti-regulation and pro-charter school politicians.

In his bid to overturn the results of the 2020 election and install himself as president-dictator, Donald Trump had the backing of substantial sections of the Republican Party, including many recipients of CFG donations over the years.

Within the last two weeks, two Republican representatives, freshman Colorado Congresswoman and QAnon adherent Lauren Boebert and Maryland Representative Andy Harris, were stopped by Capitol Police trying to enter the floor of the House, each with a gun on their person. Both voted to reject the Electoral College vote on January 6, hours after pro-Trump fascists had overrun the Capitol in a bid to stop the official counting of the votes, and both have received hundreds of thousands of dollars in support from the Club for Growth. Boebert set off a newly installed metal detector outside the House chamber on January 12, while Harris is under investigation by Capitol police after trying to enter the House floor with a pistol on January 21.

The CFG has been the primary financial backer of Harris since his election in 2010, giving his campaign roughly \$345,000 over that time. As of October 6, Federal Election Commission Reports revealed that Club for Growth's Super PAC, Club for Growth Action, had spent \$706,000 on ads and pamphlets attacking Boebert's opponent.

The current head of the CFG is former Indiana Republican Representative David McIntosh, who has led the organization since 2014. CFG money has been

instrumental in electing leading Republican senators over the last decade, including Ted Cruz (Texas), Marco Rubio (Florida), Ben Sasse (Nebraska), Josh Hawley (Missouri), Ron Johnson (Wisconsin) and Pat Toomey (Pennsylvania).

In 2018, the CFG spent millions on negative ads targeting the opponents of Cruz and Hawley while giving generously to their respective campaigns, with Cruz receiving \$234,832 while Hawley received \$299,301. The CFG spent \$3 million on attack ads against Hawley's Democratic opponent, Claire McCaskill, while in Texas, it helped Cruz fend off a challenge by Beto O' Rourke, spending \$1.2 million on negative ads against the Democratic challenger. Cruz and Hawley led the Republican campaign in the Senate to reject the Electoral College vote as submitted by the various states, and both voted against accepting the results of the election in the hours following the attempted fascist takeover of Congress.

In the 2016 presidential campaign, the CFG initially opposed the candidacy of Trump, donating millions to his opponents, but after Trump bested Rubio, Cruz and Kentucky Senator Rand Paul in the primaries, the organization quickly shifted to supporting Trump. As McIntosh recalled in a 2019 interview with the *Daily Beast*, "it was critical for the survival of the Club for Growth to pivot from having opposed Trump in the presidential primaries to being affirmatively supportive of Trump in the policy battles." McIntosh added, "If they're a Never Trumper, we're not going to support them."

This pivot to Trump and the fascistic politics he embodies is representative not only of the fascistic turn of the Republican party, but of substantial sections of the ruling financial oligarchy, which are turning toward fascism to defend their wealth in the face of growing militancy and anti-capitalist sentiment in the working class.

The Club for Growth was founded in 1999 by Stephen Moore, former *Wall Street Journal* writer, Heritage Foundation economist and adviser to Trump. Moore founded the CFG along with Thomas Rhodes, Harlan Crow and Richard Gilder. Since its founding, the CFG has played an outsized role in US politics, donating millions of dollars primarily to Republican candidates, while running negative advertisements against their opponents.

As of 2018, the latest data available, the CFG's board of directors includes:

- * Kenneth Blackwell, a former Ohio secretary of state and member of the anti-LGBTQ Family Research Center.

- * Howard Rich, co-founder of Americans for Limited Government. Rich donated \$225,000 to a super PAC that bought ads promoting the candidacy of another QAnon fascist, freshman Georgia Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene.

- * Virginia James, the widow of Club for Growth co-founder Richard Gilder. James has donated millions of dollars to far-right causes, including \$250,000 in 2020 to the Charles Koch-aligned Americans for Prosperity.

Since 2005, the CFG has released an annual scorecard that ranks politicians on their adherence to the CFG's goals and announces a "Defender of Economic Freedom" award to those who score above 90 percent. For the 2018 congressional cycle, the CFG awarded 25 Republican politicians with scores above 90 percent, while four US senators and three representatives received perfect scores.

Those who received perfect scores from the CFG included two Arizona representatives, Andy Biggs and Paul Gosar, both of whom voted to overturn the election results and were instrumental in leading and organizing "Stop the Steal" rallies in Arizona following Trump's electoral defeat, as well as the rally outside the White House on January 6. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, Biggs received over \$55,000 from the CFG between 2015 and 2020.

The biggest donors to the CFG are billionaires Richard and Liz Uihlein, owners of Uline Packaging, and billionaire Jeffery Yass, who co-founded the Susquehanna International Group, an options trading company. The Center for Responsive Politics revealed that Richard Uihlein donated \$27 million to the CFG in 2020 and \$6.7 million in 2018, while Yass donated \$20.7 million to the CFG in 2020 and \$3.8 million in 2018.

The Uihleins have played a leading role in mobilizing and organizing politically disoriented and fascistic elements against coronavirus-induced lockdowns. In April, the Uihleins, along with Stephen Moore, secretly

organized an unsuccessful recall campaign against Wisconsin's Democratic Governor Tony Evers, along with multiple protests at the state Capitol against any restrictions to stop the spread of the virus.

WBEZ in Illinois revealed on January 12 that Richard Uihlein gave nearly \$4.3 million to the political action committee of the Tea Party Patriots, including \$800,000 this past October. The marchtosaveamerica.com website, before it was taken down after the January 6 coup attempt, listed the Tea Party Patriots as one of the 11 groups "participating in the March to Save America," as part of the "#StopTheSteal coalition."

The Uihleins also funneled \$800,000 into two Midwest Senate races, supporting Republicans John James in Michigan and Joni Ernst in Iowa. Ernst has fought against any restrictions on business to halt the spread of the virus, labeling it a "hoax." *Salon* reported last October that James, along with Vice President Mike Pence, was photographed with the head of the American Patriot Council, Grand Rapids resident Ryan D. Kelley.

Kelley, who gave thousands to James's 2018 and 2020 campaigns, organized the "Well-Regulated Militia" American Patriot Council rally on June 27 in Lansing to protest coronavirus restrictions and "government tyranny." One of the attendees at the rally was Adam Fox, the alleged leader of the Wolverine Watchmen, which, according to the FBI, was planning to kidnap and assassinate Michigan governor Gretchen Whitmer. FBI affidavits allege that Fox used the rally to recruit accomplices.



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