



CORPORATE POLITICAL GIVING AND THE BATTLE OVER ABORTION RIGHTS: AN INTERIM REPORT

Sept. 1, 2021

Bills that restrict the rights to obtain reproductive healthcare and vote are passing around the country. The recently concluded Texas legislative session makes clear the extent to which businesses can become enmeshed in today’s most fraught political battles. Companies have long sought to curry favor by supporting politicians where they operate, and relatively modest spending can decide who wins or loses an election. This spending now holds even more potent political risk for companies that must cater to a wide stakeholder base, however, as the Texas abortion ban makes clear.

The Sustainable Investments Institute, which provides impartial information to investors and the public about controversial social and environmental issues affecting companies, has compiled a comprehensive database of all U.S. company-connected political giving for members of the *Fortune* 250. (“Company-connected spending” includes both direct contributions from the company itself, as well as company affiliated-PAC spending.) It begins with the 2020 election cycle, although giving started well before 2020. Company-connected political giving is particularly partisan in the South and Midwest, where abortion rights and other reproductive healthcare services face growing restrictions. Support for politicians who sponsored new restrictions comes from some of the most widely known U.S. brands.

Top corporate contributors to anti-abortion politicians: The top contributors to “anti” candidates in the South include household names with customers and business nationwide, in communications, energy, tobacco, and health care. *(Table at right.)*

Company	Total \$ to “anti” candidates
AT&T	1,300,173
Dominion Energy	1,033,984
Comcast	849,250
Altria Group	798,250
UnitedHealth Group	707,400

Texas: The most restrictive abortion ban in the United States went into effect on Sept. 1 in Texas. Senate Bill 8 (SB8) was sponsored by many legislators who since the start of the 2020 election cycle received substantial campaign contributions from widely known U.S. firms. Health Care and Communications giants gave the most to sponsors of the new law, with collective spending from the two sectors to SB8 sponsors of about \$1.3 million. *(Table 1: sector totals and top contributors.)*

Table 1: Top Contributions to SB8 Sponsors	
Sector/Company	Total \$ to Sponsors
Health Care	\$675,000
UnitedHealth Group	\$113,000
Anthem	\$84,750
CVS Health	\$66,500
Eli Lilly	\$59,000
AbbVie	\$57,750
Centene	\$52,250
Abbott Laboratories	\$51,750
Communication Services	\$605,382
AT&T	\$285,083
Charter Communications	\$215,500

Top recipients: Three Texas Senators who sponsored the law have received more than \$150,000 in contributions from companies in the study. (*Tables 2 and 3.*)

Table 2: Top SB8 Sponsor Recipients, All <i>Fortune</i> 250 Companies	
Top Recipient	Contributions Since 2020 Election Cycle Began
Jane Nelson (Senate District 12)	\$263,750
Larry Taylor (Senate District 11)	\$195,751
Brandon Creighton (Senate District 4)	\$167,001

Table 3: Top Company Supporters for SB8 Sponsors		
Politician/Company	\$ Since 2020 Cycle	
Jane Nelson		Nelson hails from Flower Mound and represents Fort Worth. She is the chair of the Senate Finance Committee and has been a Texas Senator since 1993. Her first elective office was as a member of the State Board of Education in 1988. She co-owns Mayday Manufacturing, an aerospace and defense firm, and was a teacher from 1973 to 1978 in Arlington.
Anthem	\$37,500	
Berkshire Hathaway	\$23,500	
AT&T	\$20,000	
United Parcel Service	\$12,000	
Lockheed Martin	\$11,000	
Comcast	\$11,000	
Raytheon Technologies Charter Communications	\$11,000 \$10,000	
Larry Taylor		Taylor is from Galveston and has been a Texas Senate since 2012; he served in the State House from 2002 and chairs the Education Committee. He owns Truman Taylor Insurance.
Charter Communications	\$20,000	
AT&T	\$15,000	
Allstate Union Pacific	\$13,000 \$10,000	
Brandon Creighton		Creighton , from Monroe (east of Houston), is an attorney and has been a Texas senator since 2014; he was a member of the State House from 2006 to 2014.
Charter Communications	\$20,000	
Exelon Enterprise Products Partners	\$12,500 \$10,000	

Study Findings

- **Overall Spending:** Since the start of the 2020 cycle, companies in the *Fortune* 250 have spent just under \$300 million to influence U.S. elections at the federal and state level. About 60% of this money (\$171 million) went to recipients who oppose reproductive health rights.
- **More extreme partisanship for candidates in the South & Midwest:** While somewhat over half of contributions to federal candidates (55%) went to reproductive health rights opponents, a slightly larger proportion (58%) went to opponents at the state level. Regional candidate giving was extremely partisan, in line with the dominant parties. In the South, 74% of company-connected contributions went to opponents of reproductive rights; in the Midwest, it was 67%.
- **Slanted leadership and party support:** Company-connected money favored national leadership PACs run by reproductive health rights opponents (about \$20 million or 60% of these types of contributions). Companies were more likely to support rights-opposing parties, as well, with \$10.5 million in all (57% of all party giving).

Data Sources

The project has gathered and analyzed data for *Fortune* 250 companies since the start of the 2020 election cycle to build a full political spending footprint from all available data on companies and their political action committees (PACs), in federal and state elections. There are four spending streams:

- Candidates (for the U.S. Congress and all 50 state legislatures).
- “527” Political Committees.
- PAC to PAC and Party contributions. Subsets include:
 - *Leadership PACs* used by politicians to collect and disperse money to their allies;
 - *Outside groups* that include party-affiliated entities such as partisan governors’ associations and committees that aim to elect their party members, and Super PACs;
 - *Parties*, both federal and state; the latter spend to support candidates for state legislatures and Congress.

The National Institute on Money in Politics, which collects state-level data, and the Center for Responsive Politics (CRP) have in the last year merged operations to become Open Secrets. Together, they provide extensive information on political giving and their data is the main source for this report.

Si2 researched the viewpoints of all the recipients of corporate money to determine their stance on reproductive health rights, finding that a clear-cut position could be determined in nearly every instance, based on an analysis of candidate websites, endorsements by groups involved in the reproductive rights debate, and voting. (Just 2% of all contributions when to recipients with unknown/unclear views.) The database documents the source of the attribution conclusion.

Next Steps

The project next will connect state legislative sponsors of all the anti-abortion laws passed in the last year to corporations that supported these politicians.

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More Information

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