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American Airlines, other companies resume donations to Republicans who objected to election results

The flow of money is a sign that corporate America's promises were temporary, especially in light of razor-thin Democratic majorities

[American Airlines, Cigna, Aflac, among companies donating to GOP lawmakers who objected to election results, FEC filings show - The Washington Post](#)

By

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More companies that pledged to pause or rethink political donations after the Jan. 6 insurrection are once again donating to Republican lawmakers who voted against certifying President Biden's victory.

The flow of money is a sign that the promises [issued by corporate America](#) were temporary, especially in light of razor-thin Democratic majorities.

American Airlines was among a flock of companies vowing changes after the [deadly assault on the Capitol](#) aimed at reversing Biden's win. The Texas-based airline, the world's largest by fleet size, would pause all donations from its corporate PAC, a spokeswoman, Stacy Day, said in January. "When we resume, we will ensure we focus on a bipartisan array of lawmakers who support U.S. aviation, airline workers and our values, including bringing people together," [she said](#).

Within half a year, American Airlines has not only resumed political giving but also contributed directly to at least one of the 147 Republican lawmakers who opposed certification of the electoral college results. The airline's PAC gave \$2,500 to Rep. Sam Graves (R-Mo.) on June 7, according to a new filing with the Federal Election Commission.

Graves is the top Republican on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. He joined several other House Republicans from Missouri in [issuing a statement](#) in January alleging voting irregularities and insisting that "we feel compelled to object to the electoral count taking place on January 6th."

Day, the American Airlines spokeswoman, told The Washington Post in an email, “While there is no lawmaker with whom we agree about every issue, we are committed to working with members of both parties to advance policies that will positively shape the future of our company, our team members and the communities we serve.”

The company is not alone in resuming political donations after pledging to pause or reevaluate contributions. According to a [June report](#) from the nonprofit Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, more than \$5 million in corporate or industry money has already gone to lawmakers who contested the election results or to aligned party committees.

Reports filed with the FEC this week make clear those donors include multiple corporations that pledged to reform or pause their giving after the insurrection.

Health insurance giant Cigna [vowed](#) after Jan. 6 that it would no longer support elected officials who “hindered the peaceful transition of power.” But Cigna’s PAC gave \$1,000 on June 1 to Rep. Lloyd Smucker (R-Pa.), who opposed certification of Biden’s win, according to his campaign committee’s report covering the second quarter of the year.

Aflac, which [paused its PAC’s donations](#) after Jan. 6, contributed more than \$13,000 in June to four lawmakers who refused to accept the election results, according to an FEC filing this month. The Georgia-based insurance company did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the contributions, which went to Reps. Mike Rogers (R-Ala.), Tom Rice (R-S.C.), Barry Loudermilk (R-Ga.), and Bill Johnson (R-Ohio).

Rep. Byron Donalds (R-Fla.), who voted against certification, netted contributions at the end of June from PACs connected to Lockheed Martin as well as the United Parcel Service, his campaign’s filing for the second quarter of the year shows. Both companies initially halted donations after Jan. 6. General Motors, after suspending political contributions and vowing that “[c]haracter and public integrity aligning with GM’s core values” would figure in decisions about future donations, last month gave \$1,000 to Sen. Cynthia M. Lummis (R-Wyo.).

John Torrisi, a spokesman for Lockheed Martin, said the company had evaluated its “political engagement program” and “will continue to observe long-standing principles of nonpartisan political engagement in support of our business interests.” A UPS spokeswoman, Danielle Cassady, defended the decision to resume political contributions, including to members who challenged the electoral college results, by saying, “Engagement with those with whom we disagree is a critical part of the democratic process and our responsibility in legislative advocacy as a company.” GM’s PAC supports lawmakers “from both sides of the aisle who foster sound business policies, support American workers and understand the importance of a robust domestic auto industry as we pursue an all-electric vehicle future,” said a spokeswoman, Jeannine Ginivan.

Cigna and Aflac did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

“They said pausing; they didn’t stay stop,” said Michael Cornfield, a political scientist at George Washington University. “They left themselves an out.”

Corporate PAC donations come from employee contributions, rather than company money, and are capped at \$10,000 per candidate in an election cycle. The American Airlines PAC spent \$771,000 in the 2020 cycle, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. Of that, \$529,000 went to federal candidates, with 53 percent flowing to Republicans.

While some companies issued blanket promises to pause donations after Jan. 6, others were more specific, saying they would cut off lawmakers who participated in efforts to challenge or overturn the election results. Still, some of these companies, ranging from Walmart to Pfizer, have continued to support Republican committees and PACs controlled by party leaders, filings show. These groups direct money to individual members, without screening for lawmakers who opposed certification.

That method of spending, said Bruce Freed, president of the nonprofit Center for Political Accountability, is among the “indications that these companies are going back to business as usual.”

“They were responding to the moment without recognizing that there are real long-term consequences, including consumer anger, which means people change their buying,” Freed said.

Some companies have been responsive to that anger. Facing an outcry last week over its support for Republican objectors, Toyota [changed course](#), saying it would stop donating to lawmakers who contested the election results.



By Isaac Stanley-Becker

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