

# Rolling Stone

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## **What Insurrection? Corporate America Can't Stop Bankrolling the Jan. 6 Sedition Caucus**

**Corporations and powerful lobbying groups condemned the attempt to overthrow Joe Biden's victory — yet they keep donating millions to the Republican 'Sedition Caucus'**

[Corporations, Lobbying Groups Gave Millions to GOP 'Sedition Caucus' - Rolling Stone](#)

*By*

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**Supporters of US President Donald Trump gather across from the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, in Washington, DC. - Demonstrators breached security and entered the Capitol as Congress debated the 2020 presidential election Electoral Vote Certification.**

**ANDREW CABALLERO-REYNOLDS/AFP/Getty Images**

WASHINGTON — For the 147 Republican senators and congressmen who voted against certifying President Joe Biden’s 2020 victory, it looked as if their vote to subvert a free and fair election would hit them where it hurt most: their campaign bank accounts. In the days after the insurrection and the certification vote in Congress, Fortune 500 corporations and powerful industry lobbying groups vowed not to forget the horrific events of **January 6th**. They described the insurrection as **“appalling,”** an **“assault on our democracy,”** and “an attack on all those things that **people cherish and associate with America.**” Mostly, though, brand-name corporations responded to the insurrection and the certification vote by vowing to withhold donations to **members of Congress in the so-called “Sedition Caucus,”** who objected to the certification of Biden’s win even though the Trump administration’s own attorney general, Bill Barr, said there was no evidence of systematic fraud.

But less than a year later, parts of corporate America look ready to forget and forgive. At least that’s the story that emerges from the latest round of federal election filings. Campaign records show that major corporations and trade groups donated nearly \$2.5 million in the three months from July through September, nearly \$640,000 of which went to members of the “Sedition Caucus” in September alone, according to an analysis by the watchdog group Accountable.US, which the group shared exclusively with *Rolling Stone*. Those donors include the political action committees for blue-chip companies such as Pfizer, Boeing, FedEx, Marathon Petroleum, and Chevron. It also includes influential lobbying groups including the American Bankers Association, the Nuclear Energy Institute, and the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, the main lobbying group for the beef industry. In all, big corporations and lobbying groups have donated \$5.8 million in all of 2021 so far to Republican objectors to the 2020 vote count, the latest campaign filings show.

“The deadly assault on the nation’s Capitol forever damaged our democracy, yet many corporations have done more than forgive and forget — they’re rewarding the lawmakers who helped instigate sedition,” Kyle Herring, president of Accountable.US, tells *Rolling Stone* in a statement. “Corporations continuing to donate to members of the Sedition Caucus have made clear nothing trumps their need to hold political influence, not even a healthy democracy for their customers, employers, and shareholders.”

The U.S. Capitol was still smoldering when, on the night of January 6th, members of Congress reemerged from their secure bunkers and barricaded offices to finish the work of certifying Biden’s victory. The congressional certification of a presidential election is a purely ceremonial affair, but the weight of the occasion felt heavier than past elections, heavier perhaps than any other time in modern American history, coming just hours

after insurrectionists had stormed the Capitol, beaten police officers, and vandalized the Senate floor.

But despite what had just transpired, 147 members of the House and Senate, all of them Republicans, formally objected to one or both of the final vote tallies in the states of Pennsylvania and Georgia, which Biden narrowly won on his way to **306 electoral college votes** and the presidency.

The American Bankers Association, the banking industry's main lobbying group, spoke out forcefully in the wake of the insurrection and the Republican fomenting of that violent act. One of the largest donors to the group of 147 lawmakers who tried to halt Biden's certification, the ABA condemned the events of January 6th in the strongest terms possible, **calling** the violent attack "nothing short of an assault on our democracy. We continue to call on all elected officials to do everything in their power to support a peaceful transition of power."

A spokesperson for the ABA **said** it would soon meet with "stakeholders" to review its political giving from the previous election cycle and discuss its future giving plans. "The troubling events of the last week will certainly be a consideration in those discussions," the group said.

But by the fall of this year, the ABA was apparently back to its old ways. New campaign-finance disclosures show that **Bank PAC**, the ABA's political action committee, gave the maximum legal PAC donation to 17 different House Republicans who objected to Biden's certification. In all, the ABA's PAC — which gets its funds and takes direction from the employees of the banks and financial institutions in the ABA — gave \$43,000 in three months to Sedition Caucus members.

One of those recipients, Rep. Jim Banks (R-Indiana), has not only continued to promote the fiction of rampant voter fraud in 2020, but has also opposed new voting-rights legislation and interfered with the work of the select committee created to investigate the insurrection. As *Rolling Stone* recently reported, Banks **claimed** to be the "ranking member" of the select committee in letters sent to government agencies even though he's not on the committee. (The ABA did not immediately respond to a request for comment.)

Pfizer, the pharmaceutical giant raking in money thanks to its Covid-19 vaccine, is another telling example. Soon after the insurrection and certification vote, Pfizer responded by telling its employees it **would not donate** "to any of the 147 Members of Congress who voted against certifying the Electoral College results" for at least six months. Before that six-month window expired, Pfizer made a \$20,000 donation to the

National Republican Senatorial Committee; the company said donating to a party committee didn't violate its pledge, but it also **got no commitment** from the NRSC that its money wouldn't go to support one of the six GOP senators who voted to object.

The new campaign records show that Pfizer saw no need to extend its moratorium. In September, the company's PAC resumed its bankrolling of Republican objectors, giving \$2,500 each to six different members who'd tried to stop Biden's victory. None of those recipients has repudiated former president Trump's baseless claims of widespread fraud or a "stolen election." (Pfizer did not immediately respond to a request for comment.) Chevron, the multinational company, followed a similar trajectory. The company's CEO **said** he was reviewing Chevron's political-donation strategy after January 6th, adding that he had asked his team "to take a look at the events of last week and make sure those are brought into account as we make our decisions going forward." Yet by late September, Chevron's PAC was back to donating big money — \$20,500 to be precise — to Sedition Caucus members even though the Republican Party writ large has yet to repudiate claims of rampant fraud or a stolen election in 2020. (A Chevron spokesman says the company and its employees "support candidates of both parties who represent districts where we have employees or operations, who support markets and free enterprise, and have a track record on issues important to us — including responsible development of oil and natural gas resources, reasonable regulatory regimes, and economic development.")

And finally, there's Boeing, the multibillion-dollar, **scandal-plagued** aerospace company. Soon after the **Capitol insurrection**, Boeing issued not one but two strongly worded statements. First, a company spokesperson **said** Boeing "strongly condemns the violence, lawlessness and destruction" on January 6th and would "carefully evaluate future contributions to ensure that we support those who not only support our company, but also uphold our country's most fundamental principles." Boeing President and CEO David Calhoun also **said** the company respected the "vote of the people" and "the peaceful transition of government."

Of the big corporations to resume bankrolling the Sedition Caucus, Boeing is one of the most active. The company gave \$28,500 in donations to 23 different Republican objectors on the same day in late September. (Boeing declined to comment.) "Boeing and these other contributors who could barely wait a few months before resuming support for those who sought to overthrow the election have shown not only that their word is no good, but also that the consequences for dangerous anti-democratic actions may be short lived," says Ian Bassin, co-founder and executive director of Protect Democracy, a nonpartisan group dedicated to preventing American democracy from sliding into authoritarianism. "What does that say to those who might consider going further to overthrow an election in the future? Companies who believe a

free and open society is better for business and for the nation need to be better corporate citizens if they want to keep one.”

Bruce Freed, president of the Center for Political Accountability, a group that tracks corporate political giving, tells *Rolling Stone* that the surge in corporate donations to members of the Sedition Caucus exposes the hollowness of Corporate America’s response to the insurrection while also subjecting the companies to greater risk for underwriting the political campaigns of lawmakers who tried to subvert a democratic election.

Those companies could face blowback from their shareholders and their employees, Freed says, if they continue to fund the Sedition Caucus thinking that the U.S. political climate will return to some level of normalcy soon. “They think it’s back to business as usual,” he adds, “but our politics today are not business as usual.”