

# Corporate donations to GOP political groups boosted candidates behind anti-abortion rights laws in the states

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- By [Srijita Datta](#)
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Corporate contributions to three Republican political groups – [Republican State Leadership Committee](#), [Republican Attorneys General Association](#) and the [Republican Governors Association](#) – have helped elect governors and attorneys general who challenged [Roe v. Wade](#), as well as state legislatures that enacted laws restricting abortion access, according to a [Center for Political Accountability](#) analysis.

Corporate PACs of 15 companies contributed over \$1.6 million to federal lawmakers who voted to turn down the [Women's Health Protection Act](#), OpenSecrets previously [reported](#). That increased to \$2 million based on candidate mid-year reports.

Those 15 companies were [among those](#) that publicly committed to covering travel expenses for employees requiring access to reproductive care ahead of or on the day of the SCOTUS decision to [overturn](#) [Roe v. Wade](#).

Through state PACs or directly, 12 of those 15 companies also donated over [\\$648,000](#) to incumbent governors since 2019 – as several of their states [considered and passed](#) trigger laws – OpenSecrets' analysis of state contributions data revealed.

Beneficiaries of these contributions included 23 current state governors, 12 of whom helped advance or pass laws restricting abortion rights in their states. Those sitting governors received a collective total of nearly \$212,000 in 2022 from these company PACs, based on data available with OpenSecrets as of July 25.

## **Party-aligned 527s boosted by corporate giving**

The Center for Political Accountability identified seven major companies that have publicly pledged support for employees to get access to abortion care but funneled money through third-party groups to governors, state attorneys general and the legislators who have supported laws restricting abortion rights.

[Comcast](#) is the biggest contributor, giving millions of dollars to the three 527s since 2018. Including the second quarter data for the current year, the total contribution amount is over \$2.2 million.

[Pfizer](#) – which has not publicly made a statement about abortion rights but manufactures [Plan B](#) – gave nearly \$3 million to the three groups. All seven companies have a history of giving on both sides of the aisle with contributions to the three groups' Democratic counterparts – [Democratic Attorneys General Association](#), [Democratic Governors Association](#) and [Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee](#).

But Pfizer and Comcast continued to give more to the Republican groups in the second quarter. Over the same period, Pfizer contributed \$2.7 million to the Democratic groups, and Comcast gave around \$1.8 million.

[Microsoft](#) was the only company that showed a trend of contributing more to Democratic groups over time – more than \$1 million, while \$800,000 went to the Republican groups.

A spokesperson for Pfizer, Sharon Castillo, told OpenSecrets that the company's decision to contribute to any candidate or committee is based on its support of the biopharmaceutical industry and on healthcare policies related to patient safety, efforts to combat counterfeit medicines and access to medicines or vaccines.

"In no way does our support translate into an endorsement of their position on any social issue, and is completely unrelated to the Supreme Court's decision," Castillo said.

Castillo added that she does not anticipate the SCOTUS ruling to have a dramatic impact on Pfizer's approach.

## **The role of 527s**

The days of companies engaging in business or political spending as usual are over, according to [Bruce F. Freed](#), president of the [Center for Political Accountability](#). "The contributions are in the six figures and have been made with corporate or treasury funds," he said. "That means that top corporate executives bear responsibility for the decisions to give."

Corporations are legally prohibited from giving directly to candidates in many states and subject to limits in several others. But there are no such limits on how much corporations can give to 527s at the state level.

"It is a way for corporations to indirectly exert political influence," Jeanne Hanna, the center's research director, told OpenSecrets.

Corporate PAC filings make it easier to tie the donor to the recipient, and are generally easy to track than contributions to political groups known as 527s — so named after a tax code section that governs their operations. These political groups can move money between several groups or even engage in independent expenditures, often making it difficult to trace from the donor to the ultimate recipient.

Contributing to 527s also allows resources of multiple companies to be pooled together to maximize impact, Freed told OpenSecrets, citing the Center for Political Accountability's [Conflicting Consequences Report](#).

### **GOP political groups' influence in the states**

Money from companies can move through a few different hands before landing with the candidate, and that is where the 527s play the biggest role, Hanna told OpenSecrets.

All three Republican political groups have backed politicians who furthered legislation redistricting abortion rights, [voting rights](#) and [LGBTQ rights](#), among other things.

The [Republican State Leadership Committee](#), which describes itself as the "largest organization of Republican state leaders in the country," has given over [\\$30.2 million](#) to Republican candidates in the last 20 years and around [\\$192,000](#) for the current year.

In Missouri, a [trigger law](#) currently in effect prohibits and criminalizes abortions after eight weeks of pregnancy. The Republican State Leadership Committee spent more than \$47,000 for ads supporting Republicans in 37 House Districts in the state, according to the Center for Political Accountability. Thirty-one of those candidates won, and all them [voted](#) for the anti-abortion measure. The only exception was one lawmaker who was absent during the vote.

Georgia's [trigger ban](#), which recently [came into effect](#) after the Supreme Court ruling, bans abortions as early as six weeks into pregnancy. The Republican State Leadership Committee poured more than \$1 million toward political efforts supporting Republicans or opposing Democrats in Georgia. All of the 36 House Republicans who voted for the anti-abortion bill [won](#) in their respective districts.

In 2020, the group also spent around \$2.8 million supporting [seven](#) lawmakers who co-sponsored the Texas law that was passed the following year. It too bans all abortions six weeks into pregnancy, even in cases of rape or incest, and has narrow exemptions for when the mother's health is at risk.

Other spending by the Republican State Leadership Committee include \$104,000 collectively to four lawmakers who co-introduced Florida's [15-week abortion ban](#) and to Gov. [Ron DeSantis](#), who ultimately [signed](#) it into law this year.

Republicans in Arkansas – Reps. [Howard Beaty Jr.](#), [Ben Gilmore](#) and [David Ray](#) – who co-sponsored the [near-total abortion ban](#) in 2021, collectively received \$14,000 in 2020. And state Sen. [David Bullard](#) (R), who was behind Oklahoma's 2022 [abortion ban](#), received \$5,000 in 2018.

In the last 12 years, the Republican Attorneys General Association spent more than [\\$15.3 million](#) in support of Republican candidates for attorney general – with nearly \$300,000 in 2022.

Following the Supreme Court ruling overturning *Roe v. Wade* on June 24, the Republican Attorneys General Association reached out to its supporters with an urgent plea for more donations. As [reported](#) by *Rolling Stone*, the plea read as – “[E]very donation will help Republican Attorneys General combat the Democrats' pro-abortion agenda and stand tall for life.”

Attorney General [Todd Rokita](#) (R) in Indiana received over \$1 million in contributions from the [RAGA Action Fund](#) federal PAC during his campaign in 2020. He called *Roe*'s overturn a “[historic moment](#)” and recently [announced](#) his intention to personally investigate a physician providing abortion medication to a 10-year-old rape victim in that state.

Texas Attorney General [Ken Paxton](#) (R), who [defended](#) the passing of the Texas trigger law, received \$1.2 million directly from the Republican Attorneys General Association in 2018 and 2020. Alabama Attorney General [Steve Marshall](#) (R) received \$735,000 in 2018, and he [actively enforced](#) the [Human Life Protection Act](#) in Alabama with *Roe*'s overturn.

The Republican Attorneys General Association gave \$44,000 to Arizona Attorney General [Mark Brnovich](#) (R) in 2018, the year he fought abortion providers' [federal lawsuit](#) challenging restrictions to abortion access in the state. A federal judge [blocked](#) the provision that would have banned abortion, but Brnovich recently [asked](#) for a state court to lift the block.

Mississippi Attorney General [Lynn Fitch](#) (R), who [petitioned](#) the Supreme Court to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, received more than \$226,000 from Republican Attorneys General Association's Mississippi state PAC in 2019.

## **Risks of corporate political giving**

Freed and Hanna pointed out how working for companies like [Lyft](#) and [Uber](#) could result in being targeted by [bounty seeking laws](#) of Texas. Both companies [announced](#) setting up legal defenses and paying for the drivers' legal fees if they got sued for simply transporting passengers trying to get an abortion.

Lyft and Uber also contributed hefty amounts to the three Republican 527s. But second quarter data revealed more contributions to Democratic groups on behalf of both companies.

Lyft's last contribution to the Republican Attorneys General Association was December 2020, and for the other two it was Sept. 2019. A company spokesperson confirmed this, but declined to comment further.

Uber did not respond to OpenSecrets' request for comment. The company's contributions to the Republican groups continued through at least March this year.

Pointing to Republican Attorneys General Association's contributions to policymakers like Rokita who have been explicitly vocal about their stance on anti-abortion rights, Hanna said companies may not anticipate the risks that come with donating money in that way.

She emphasized that the companies may not even have the ability to know where their money was spent. "They only knew that they were donating to Republican Attorneys General Association or Republican Governors Association, and I think that Lyft might not be alone in suspending or or permanently halting this type of political funding – it does open them up to a lot of reputational risks," she said.

"And the risks today have increased exponentially," Freed added, reiterating his earlier point. "From what they (companies) are associated with through their spending, and also what it enables."