The Guardian

Top US firms that backed Voting Rights Act donate to groups working to undermine it

Watchdog data shared with Guardian shows contributions to Republican Attorneys General Association and others

Top US firms that backed Voting Rights Act donate to groups working to undermine it | US politics | The Guardian

Lauren Aratani

Mon 24 Aug 2026

Over a dozen US companies that signed a 2021 letter urging Congress to strengthen the Voting Rights Act continue to contribute to state political groups that are actively working to undermine the legislation, according to a campaign finance watchdog.

Researchers at the Center for Political Accountability (CPA), a nonpartisan organization that tracks financial disclosures, found that companies – including Airbnb, DoorDash, Target and Zillow – that signed the letter are contributing to groups known as 527 organizations that prop up key state races, according to data provided exclusively to the Guardian.

Four longtime donors to these groups, Amazon, Google, Meta and Microsoft, had either stopped contributing entirely or lowered their contributions to Republican and Democratic groups for the 2022 midterms, but have resumed contributions for the current election cycle.

The January 6 insurrection created a brief reckoning among corporate leaders, many of whom criticized Donald Trump's role in inciting the violence. The Republican Attorneys General Association (Raga), a 527 organization, was under scrutiny after reports revealed the group sent out robocalls to people encouraging them to attend a "Stop the Steal" rally in front of Congress on January 6 2021 – which preceded the insurrection. Raga leaders later said they had no knowledge of the robocalls.

But the companies have resumed their donations to Raga and, in some cases, have become new contributors to the group. Google's contribution went from $100,400 in the 2018 election down to $50,000 in 2022. So far this election, the company has donated $325,000 to Raga.

Tech company contributions to Republican attorneys general races

Google

Amazon

Meta

Microsoft

2014202020202600100k100k200k200k$300k$300k201420202026201420202026201420202026

Guardian graphicSource: Center for Political Accountability Notes: Only includes 527 organization donations to RAGA

The donations reflect a broader U-turn trend seen among many in corporate America who were publicly critical of Trump and Republicans after the January 6 insurrection and then did an about-face as soon as he was elected back into office.

The 527 organizations are classified as tax-exempt political groups overseen by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). They often fly under the radar compared to political action committees (Pacs) that are overseen by the Federal Election Commission (FEC), but political experts say these 527 groups have enormous influence on the state level by supporting key swing races – and public corporations tend to be their dominant funders.

Compared to their counterparts in Washington, who are often stalled in gridlock, state leaders and legislators often have greater impact in advancing policies that ultimately have a national impact.

State attorneys general have been key in fighting cases in front of the US supreme court that overturn decades of precedent. The court gave a Republican attorney general from Alabama a huge victory when it ruled in her favor in Dobbs v Jackson Women's Health Organization – the case that overturned Roe v Wade and gave states the power to legislate abortion access.

Earlier this summer, the court gave a win to a Republican Louisiana attorney general when it ruled in her favor in Louisiana v Callais that overturned key components of the Voting Rights Act.

Raga praised the ruling, saying in a May statement that “no group of elected officials make a bigger impact than Republican AGs”.

For groups largely operating at the state level, what may be considered a small amount of cash in a federal campaign can make a major impact in key state races.

“A $100,000 contribution that ends up impacting a handful of state races can flip a state legislature, can flip an AG’s office,” said Jeanne Hanna, CPA’s vice-president of research. “It’s a trickle-up effect on state, and then federal policy, for a much smaller price tag. So while the numbers may not be as big and as flashy, the impact can be even more significant.”

Overall, Republican 527 groups are outraising their Democratic counterparts this election cycle, with a large chunk of their donations coming from public companies. Major Republican state groups have raised $240m in the 2026 election cycle so far while Democratic groups have raised $197m.

These groups include Raga and the Republican Governors Association (RGA) that have been key in supporting figures including former Texas attorney general Ken Paxton, Texas governor Greg Abbott and Georgia governor Brian Kemp.

A third powerful group, the Republican State Leadership Committee (RSLC), which focuses on competitive legislative races, has raised a total of $55m this election cycle so far. It is unclear how much of that comes from corporate contributions as the organization has not filed specific contributor data for part of this election cycle, according to CPA.

LINK TO GRAPHIC

https://interactive.guim.co.uk/uploader/embed/2026/08/archive-zip/giv-32554KeWpYg246FLz/01-parties-inArticle_620.png

Since 2010, public corporations and trade associations have contributed $1bn out of the $2.5bn raised by the 527 organizations that assist governor, attorneys general and legislative races, according to the CPA. Historically, 62% of all corporate contributions go to Republican groups, while 38% go to Democratic groups.

For the 2026 election cycle so far, corporation contributions made up 39% of all of Raga’s fundraising and 33% of RGA fundraising, totaling $63m to the two groups so far. In comparison, corporate contributions to their Democratic counterparts totaled $54m and made up about a third of total fundraising.

Overall contributions to Republican and Democratic groups are already surpassing fundraising that was seen at this point of the election cycle in 2022, with Republicans overall raising 33% more and Democrats raising 22% more than the last midterm election.

This tracks with the boost in corporate political contributions to Super Pacs that largely focus on congressional races. Corporate support for Super Pacs has totaled $517m so far this year, accounting for nearly a third of all corporate political spending since 2010, according to Public Citizen.

Hanna said corporate contributions to these political groups continue to be routine, even though their influence on policy has changed over the last decade.

“These groups have been around for a long time, and they were electing officeholders who were not nearly as political, not nearly as partisan as they are now,” Hanna said. “The role of the state AGs, even the role of state legislatures in some ways, has changed really dramatically in a pretty short span of time in recent years. The sort of reflexive giving that companies are engaged in for access and sort of elbow rubbing is having a different kind of impact.”

Hanna said it’s possible that some companies may be concerned that scaling back political donations could lead to retaliation in the future. But the donations are not as risk-free as companies may believe them to be.

The groups are helping to elect officials “who are undermining not only the broader environment that companies need to be successful, but also the commitments that these companies are making to their employees, to their consumer base, to their investors”, said Bruce Freed, president and co-founder of CPA. “You need to have consistency. There has to be an alignment between company policies, where their contributions go and what they enable.”

In a research primer released by CPA and the Wharton School earlier this month, corporate ethics experts said corporate boards should have more active oversight over political spending. Companies should also adopt policies that require regular reporting of political spending and ensure that the political groups are disclosing how they intend to use their raised funds.

“We’re pretty agnostic about whether or not companies spend,” Hanna said. “All we ask is that they increase their due diligence, to have more awareness of where the money actually ends up and ensure it aligns with their values.”