

Study: Corporate PACs Favor GOP

Decisive Shift From Bipartisan Giving Began in 1995-96

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About nine out of 10 corporate political action committees gave more money to Republicans than to Democrats, according to a study by PoliticalMoneyLine.

While many corporate PACs in the 1970s and 1980s sought to split campaign contributions between candidates of both parties, the new study found that more than a quarter of the large corporate PACs gave at least \$3 to Republican candidates for every \$1 to Democrats.

The Web-based group's findings reflect the growing allegiance of the business community to the GOP, driven by ideological compatibility, respect for majority power and the concerted pressure exerted by Republican congressional leaders and conservative activists.

In its examination of the contribution patterns of the 268 corporate PACs that gave \$100,000 or more from Jan. 1, 2003, through Oct. 13, 2004, PoliticalMoneyLine found that 16 were decisively in the GOP camp, giving at least \$9 of every \$10 to Republicans; 20 years ago, these same PACs were bipartisan in their contributions.

The firmly Republican group included PACs affiliated with Phillips International Inc., Cooper Industries Inc. and Flowers Industries Inc., each of which gave 100 percent of their donations to Republicans. Among the others at the top of the GOP list were Outback Steakhouse Inc., 96 percent; Exxon Mobil Corp., 96 percent; Wendy's International Inc., 93 percent; and Halliburton Co., which was run by Vice President Cheney before he took office, 91 percent.

Kent Cooper, one of the founders of PoliticalMoneyLine, said the company PACs giving the highest percentages to Republicans are likely to be run by officials who are "more responsive to the urging of Capitol Hill people" and likely to be most closely associated with the K Street Project -- the effort by the GOP leadership to pressure the Washington lobbying and interest group community to become loyal supporters of the Republican Party.

Corporate PACs decisively switched to the Republicans starting in the 1995-96 election cycle when the Republican Party won control of the House and the Senate. A similar, but slightly less pronounced, shift to the GOP took place among trade association PACs over the same period.

Since then, such House Republicans as Majority Leader Tom DeLay (Tex.), joined by such conservative advocates as Grover Norquist, have sought to accelerate the shift to the GOP through the K Street Project, named for the street where many corporate lobbyists have offices. DeLay and Norquist have tried to track contribution patterns, with the strong suggestion that companies favoring the Republican Party will have better access than those that do not.

An earlier study by the Federal Election Commission of PAC giving for all of 2003 and the first half of 2004 found that all corporate PACs gave \$14.1 million to Republicans running for the Senate and \$8.3 million to Democrats. In the House, corporate PACs gave \$38 million to Republican candidates and \$18.1 million to Democrats.

Over the past decade, ever since Republicans took control of both the House and the Senate, corporate PAC contributions have shifted to the GOP.

In 1993-94, the last election cycle when Democrats controlled Congress, business PACs gave more to House Democrats, \$23.6 million, than to Republicans, \$19.9 million, according to the FEC. In every election cycle since then, House Republicans have had a decisive advantage. In 2002, they received \$44.6 million, compared with \$23.6 million for House Democrats.

On the Senate side, Republicans had an advantage even before the GOP takeover, but that advantage has grown. In 1994, according to the FEC, Senate Republicans got \$13 million, compared with \$7.8 million for Senate Democrats. In 2002, Senate Republicans received \$16.4 million, while Senate Democrats got \$7 million.

From 1994 to 2002, PACs affiliated with labor unions consistently gave the lion's share of their money to Democrats, with relatively little variance over the years.

The PoliticalMoneyLine study found that although 76 of the corporate PACs gave 75 percent or more of their money to Republicans, only one, Cablevisions Systems Corp., gave that big a share to Democrats.