

Tells the Facts and Names the Names CounterPunch

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Over the summer a new beltway watchdog group, Contributions Watch, released a report on the amount of money trial lawyers have donated to federal candidates. The study received big coverage, including a story in *The Wall Street Journal* and a long cover article in Rupert Murdoch's *Weekly Standard*. The latter, written by Carolyn Lochhead, Washington correspondent for *The San Francisco Chronicle*, called the report from the "non-profit" Contributions Watch a "major breakthrough" that revealed trial lawyers to be the "most powerful special interest group in the US".

But this study was no disinterested piece of research and Contributions Watch is not an "independent, national research organization committed to examining the amount of special interest money that flows to candidates", as it claimed in the introduction to the trial lawyer report. Here at *CounterPunch* we have documents that reveal Contributions Watch to be a fraud, created and controlled by the State Affairs Company, a powerful beltway lobby shop. The "independent" study on trial lawyers was bought and paid for by Philip Morris and the tobacco industry as part of the unceasing campaign for "tort reform" — a code phrase for the corporate campaign to shield companies from product liability lawsuits stemming from their manufacture and sale of defective or inherently unsafe products. State Affairs billed Philip Morris for planting the reports in the *Journal* and the *Standard*.

Contributions Watch marks a new step in the debasement of the political system by the Fortune 500. Corporations have moved beyond inventing bogus

"grass-roots" organizations to back their legislative goals. Now they're establishing their own "watchdog" groups.

State Affairs is a pr operation staffed with players from the beltway's bi-partisan political establishment. The firm's partners include:

- David McCloud, former chief-of-staff to Virginia Senator Charles Robb and a past senior vice president of Burson Marsteller.
- Bobby Watson, a former advisor to Robb, ex-chief operating officer for the Democratic National Committee, and a member of the Clinton/Gore "rapid response team" during the 1992 campaign.
- Charles Francis, formerly at Burson Marsteller, Hill & Knowlton and Chase Manhattan Bank, where he was a speech writer for David Rockefeller.
- John Davis, a Republican who has worked as a campaign adviser to Bob Dole and to former Tennessee Senator Howard Baker.
- William Timmons, who has worked for the Republican National Committee and the National Republican Senatorial Committee.

These are not only heavy hitters but notoriously dirty hitters as well. McCloud and Watson both resigned from Robb's staff after pleading guilty to charges involving an illegal wiretap of Virginia Governor Douglas Wilder, one of Robb's political enemies. To collect information on the trial lawyers for State Affairs, McCloud's son, Patrick, infiltrated the Association of Trial Lawyers of America by posing as a law student.

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The Bob Kerrey Show!

Goldplaters of 1996

Nebbraska's Bob Kerrey assumed the chairmanship of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee in the wake of the 1994 Republican congressional landslide and swiftly announced his strategy for winning back the upper chamber: recruitment of rich, right-of-center "New Democrats" like himself as candidates for 1996. Kerrey was true to his promise. In eight of the dozen Senate races in which the Democrats stand to pick up a seat — either by taking open seats or ousting weak Republicans — the party's candidate is a conservative millionaire.

In Oregon, the Democratic candidate is Tom Bruggere, whose fortune comes from a software firm he founded, Mentor Graphics. Bruggere's company operated like a typical software pirate, outsourcing

many jobs to low-paid workers in Pacific Rim countries.

After selling his company, Bruggere had nothing to do and cast his eyes upon a senatorial seat. His ample millions made him a Kerrey poster boy. A fiscal conservative and fervent supporter of the death penalty, Bruggere also has expressed support for the Republican welfare abolition bill signed by President Clinton.

In this green-conscious state, Bruggere has flip-flopped on key environmental issues, including two ballot initiatives — one to protect spawning salmon, the other to strengthen the state's bottle bill — which he first supported and now opposes. He is running even in the polls with his GOP opponent, Gordon Smith, the wealthy former state senator who was defeated by Democrat Ron Wyden last year in the race to replace the disgraced Bob Packwood.

In Idaho, Kerrey recruited Walter Minnick, a former Nixon White House aide who boasts of having been the first to resign in the Watergate scandal. His resignation came as Nixon was already sinking; the earlier resignations of officials following the bombing of Cambodia and Laos left Minnick apparently unmoved.

Minnick is a lawyer but his money comes from TJ International, a \$500 million-a-year lumber company of which he was owner and CEO. Minnick sold his company — a polluter that turns smaller cut trees into a kind of toxic soup used to make fiberboard — to the largest timber company in Canada, MacMillan-Blodel, on whose board Minnick still serves. MacMillan-Blodel's environmentally predatory policies have been the target of numerous boycotts, especially its spoliation of Clayoquot Sound on the west coast of Vancouver Island, whose inlets provide homing grounds for whales and are surrounded by land claimed by Indians under traditional use statutes.

Invited to Clinton's April, 1993 logging conference as an "environmentalist" — at the time, Minnick was on the board of the Wilderness Society — he served as a mole for the timber industry, his pro-busi-

ness interventions helping to give Clinton the excuse for concessions to corporations that have continued logging their way through America's national forests. Despite his ardently proclaimed fiscal conservatism, Minnick — who has put half a million dollars of his own money into his campaign — is trailing his GOP opponent, arch-reactionary Larry Craig, who cultivates a folksy image as one of the "Singing Senators" in Trent Lott's barber shop quartet.

Another lumber profiteer is the Alabama Senatorial candidate, Roger Bed-

In Idaho, Kerrey recruited Walter Minnick, a former Nixon White House aide and CEO of a rape-and-pillage timber company.

ford. A rich kid incubated in the law firm headed by his father and uncle, Bedford made further piles through real estate speculations and through a company he owns, Valley Lumber. A staunch supporter of welfare abolition, Bedford has been campaigning fiercely against abortion, gun control and gays in the military. He is in a tight race with Alabama's GOP attorney general, Jeff Sessions.

In Kansas, the latest polls show Democrat Jill Docking within striking distance of her conservative Republican opponent, Congressman Sam Brownback. Docking did well on Wall Street as stockbroker, and together with her lawyer husband has considerable oil and gas holdings. Her candidacy has been named as one of the top five priorities by the right-wing Democratic Leadership Council and Council leader Joe Lieberman hails her as the "Democratic Nancy Kassebaum". (Docking's father was a Kansas governor who, as head of his state's delegation to the 1960 Democratic convention, is said to have received a briefcase full of Joe Kennedy's cash in return for blocking the Draft Adlai Stevenson boon let by switching to JFK).

The Democratic Senatorial candidate in Colorado, Tom Strickland, made \$900,000 a year as a lobbyist for busi-

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