



## ALEC's PR Counter-Offensive: SOS Sent Out To Right-Wing Blogosphere

Shortly after issuing a [press release](#) announcing that it was disbanding its "[Public Safety and Elections Task Force](#)" after 30 years, the [American Legislative Exchange Council](#) (ALEC) held a training for the right-wing blogosphere.

Watch [live streaming video](#) from [heritagefoundation](#) at [livestream.com](#)

ALEC Director of External Relations Caitlyn Korb spoke yesterday at a [Heritage Foundation](#) "Bloggers Briefing," begging conservative bloggers for help while prepping "a very aggressive campaign to really spread the word about what we actually do." Korb appears to be a new ALEC employee who recently worked for the [Cato Institute](#). Both ALEC and Cato have received funding from [Koch family foundations](#). The Heritage Foundation is an [ALEC member](#).

The "Bloggers Briefing," which [was started](#) by Heritage's [Rob Bluey](#) and "a dozen conservative online entrepreneurs" six years ago, was broadcast online on "Breitbart TV," a project of the late [Andrew Breitbart](#). [Breitbart's](#) team of bloggers and apparatchiks most recently gained notoriety for getting [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#) official [Shirley Sherrod](#) fired. Breitbart released a clip of a speech given by Sherrod deliberately edited to create the false impression that she was prejudiced against white farmers. Her actual speech was a personal tale rejecting prejudice. Sherrod was later offered reinstatement by USDA Secretary [Tom Vilsack](#), with apologies.

"We Haven't Been the Subject of Many Headlines"

The blogger briefing was in response to an effective campaign by the Center for Media and Democracy (CMD) and allies to convince ALEC corporate funders to drop the organization due to its extreme agenda, an agenda made apparent when CMD published over 800 ALEC cookie cutter "model" bills in the summer of 2011.

Panic in the ALEC camp was evidenced in recent days by a [series](#) of [increasingly](#) defensive [press releases](#), which included whoppers like ALEC supports "transparent, accountable government." (The ALEC origin of bills moving in state legislatures is rarely disclosed.)

Korb briefed the friendly audience by handing out a new ALEC "[Frequently Asked Questions](#)" giving bloggers the ALEC party line. She noted that they might not have heard of ALEC because "we haven't been the subject of many headlines in the last 35 years."

It is not surprising that ALEC has not gotten much ink. ALEC operates behind closed doors and keeps [many members of the press](#) and the public from attending its meetings.

ALEC's new FAQ is riddled with errors, including:

- "The potential solutions discussed at ALEC focus on free markets, limited government and constitutional division of powers between the federal and state governments." It is hard to discern what voter suppression bills, [tax breaks for big tobacco](#), bans on unionization, protections for companies whose products injure or kill, and "[Stand Your Ground/Kill at Will](#)" laws have to do with free markets.
- "The organization respects diversity of thought; it is a non-partisan resource for its members, which include more than 2,000 Republican and Democratic state legislators." Diversity of thought apparently refers to Republicans talking to Republicans. Although touted as "nonpartisan," when CMD launched ALEC Exposed, out of 104 legislators in leadership positions in ALEC, only one was a Democrat. It's hard to believe that ALEC [phone briefs on redistricting](#) are totally nonpartisan.
- "Unlike in many private sector groups that offer model legislation, elected state legislators fully control ALEC's model legislation process." As ALEC's public "[Task Force Operating Procedures](#)" (PDF, p. 8) and other documents reveal, corporate members vote alongside legislators in ALEC task forces.
- "Each state legislator and their constituents then decide which solutions are best for them and their states." For the most part, constituents have no way of knowing that corporations wrote or approved ALEC legislation behind closed doors.

#### ALEC's PR Counter-Offensive

Korb outlined ALEC's PR counter-offensive. She told bloggers that ALEC will launch a website called "I Stand with ALEC" in the next few days. The phrase is familiar to Wisconsinites, as it tracks the [Americans for Prosperity](#) (AFP) campaign on behalf of the embattled governor, whose slogan is "[Stand with Walker](#)." AFP is also an ALEC member.

Korb referenced the coalition-building and outreach being spearheaded by [Americans for Tax Reform](#) (ATR, another [ALEC member](#)) and asked the bloggers for "any and all institutional support."

Korb pleaded for help on social media: "We're getting absolutely killed in social media venues -- Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest (I didn't even know Pinterest was a forum for a lot of political opposition, but now it is) --

so any and all new media support you guys can provide would be so helpful, not just to us but to average people who don't know much about this fight but are seeing us get really heavily attacked with very little opposition."

The use of such Twitter hashtags as [#ALECexposed](#) and, more recently, [#dumpALEC](#), has multiplied exponentially in the last few weeks.

ALEC has a [Facebook page](#) where it posts its news releases and what little favorable press it receives. There is also a new [Pinterest board](#) called "Anti-ALEC Comments" that documents many of the negative comments ALEC staffers delete from its Facebook page. The Facebook pages of corporate members are being swarmed with comments about ALEC.

### Corporate Funders on the Run

ALEC is playing defense due to the fact that, almost every day, another ALEC member corporation and funder decides to quit. With [Blue Cross Blue Shield's](#) announcement yesterday that it was pulling out of ALEC, the number of companies that have decided to cut ties with ALEC grows to 11. The list also includes Mars Inc., Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, Kraft Foods, Intuit, McDonald's, Wendy's, American Traffic Solutions, Reed Elsevier and Arizona Public Service. CMD and other groups are now urging State Farm, Johnson & Johnson and AT&T to reconsider their membership with ALEC.

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