

# OK, lobbyists: Google spends millions to sway politicians, think tanks

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Google has reeled in more and more revenue over the years. Turns out it's been spending more and more on lobbying, too — more than one might realize.

The tech giant shelled out \$18.2 million for that purpose in 2012, beating out all companies except one — GE — according to a report today from the *Washington Post* about Google's increasing influence in the nation's capital. That's a remarkably large amount, considering that in 2003, the company had spent just \$101,000 on lobbying.

In 2012, Google laid out \$885,000 in federal campaign contributions. It didn't allocate a single dollar for that purpose as recently as 2004, according to the *Post's* numbers.

It's not surprising to see Google become an increasingly prominent player in Washington, just as it has grown into a technology powerhouse in the past decade and a half and entered one market after another. Even so, the company's reach is surprisingly extensive.

Google acknowledges that its NetPAC political-action committee has donated to funds for Democrats like Sen. Barbara Boxer, Republicans like Rep. Greg Walden, and at least one independent.

Google has won backing from conservative groups like the Heritage Foundation, despite executive chairman Eric Schmidt's connection with President Obama. It has received favorable treatment at academic events after sinking money into programs like George Mason University's Law & Economics Center. And it happens to have funded a group seeking to change federal policy on search warrants, even though that group, Digital 4th, doesn't disclose that financial support.

At times Google has employed unconventional tactics. For example, it gave \$480,000 worth of Google AdWords online-advertising credits to the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, the *Post* reported.

Such expenditures might not appear as necessary as the gigantic data centers that services like Google Drive, Google Compute Engine, and good old Google search depend on. But given

Google's rising lobbying spend, it seems that influence on regulation and political figureheads is increasing a raw material to keep Google ticking.