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LETTER: Businessmen spend big to influence gov't

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EDITOR: Charles and David Koch together own Koch Industries, the second-largest private company in the country, with annual revenues estimated at \$100 billion. Its interests include oil refineries and pipelines, paper and lumber. In 1967, each inherited \$300 million. Forbes puts their fortune at \$35 billion.

The company has paid fines of tens of millions of dollars for oil spills, been found guilty of negligence and settled for an undisclosed amount in the death of two teenagers in a pipeline explosion. They've settled in other cases of environmental damage, and their companies produce more than two billion pounds of formaldehyde, a carcinogen, per year.

Not surprisingly, they are vehemently anti-tax, anti-government regulation and anti-programs that help the rest of us.

They launch and fund think tanks including the Cato Institute and the Mercatus Center which produce papers skeptical of climate change, acid rain, financial and health care reform, etc., and supposed grassroots organizations including Americans for Prosperity, Patients United Now, Citizens for the Environment and the tea party, where they train activists, provide materials and organize rallies like "Kill the Bill" that parrot their positions. In their reach and impact they have been called the "Standard Oil of our times."

Between 1998 and 2008, public records alone show they spent over \$200 million on politics. Koch Industries added another \$50 million in lobbying. They plan to spend \$45 million by November defeating "wayward" politicians.

Don't let them own a government.

Carolyn Bronston,

Wausau



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