

# Marin Independent Journal

## Those controlling the purse strings of the Republican Party

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The paths to political glory have long been strewn with large pots of money — very large.

While it is natural to assume that the foremost contributors have been spawned by incumbents and candidates more than willing to accept the largesse bestowed upon them by holding out the promise of easier access and preferential treatment in return, it is not quite that simple.

Nor has any official report ever been published finding all politicians equally culpable of dispensing favors for political gain.

The lines are drawn in many places, ranging from those who will accept contributions regardless of their size or source to others more inclined to rely on smaller individual and fully disclosed donations.

Regardless, in politics there is one inescapable fact with few exceptions: Without hefty bankrolling, most aspirants cannot hope to get very far.

As the legendary California Assembly Speaker Jesse Unruh put it succinctly nearly 50 years ago, “Money is the mother’s milk of politics.”

Little has changed.

The issue is not so much whether all money can be taken out of politics — a system no Congress or Legislature has ever seemed interested in devising. The fundamental dilemma remains, how much can be ethically accepted, and from whom, before recipients face insurmountable conflicts of interest.

That vexing question is delved into by the prize-winning New Yorker investigative columnist Jane Mayer in her newest book titled, “Dark Money: The Hidden History of Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right.”

If you are of the opinion that the influence of money in politics is greatly exaggerated and that campaigns are not susceptible to manipulation by invisible forces which can dictate election outcomes, this book might lead you to a different conclusion.

Mayer's research unveils a tangled web of highly secretive financial skullduggery designed to amass enormous power for a small contingent of extraordinarily wealthy individuals who could care less about how government might function better or how democracy as we know it could be improved.

Their sole objective is to install and preserve in office individuals who can be counted upon to do their bidding and protect their investments.

Mayer's principal targets are the fabled Kansas billionaires, Charles and David Koch, whose Koch Industries is listed as the second-largest privately owned company in the United States, with revenues as of 2013 of \$115 billion!

Fred Koch, the visionary family patriarch, is credited with jump-starting the family fortune with the proceeds from his development of a cracking method that refined heavy crude oil into gasoline.

The Koch brothers' principal goal, anchored in strict free-market philosophy and libertarian tenets, is moving American politics as far right as possible.

This is the main business of Washington D.C.-based Cato Institute co-founded by Charles Koch, the ultra-conservative George Mason University, the American Enterprise Institute, and numerous institutions the Koches have largely funded.

Mayer has dubbed this giant shadowy network "Kochtopus."

They have flexed their growing political muscle through the Super PAC known as Americans for Prosperity, which contributed millions toward the defeat of Obamacare and climate change legislation, as well as to the Tea Party movement.

Assuming this page-turner is offering up unassailable facts, it is not stretching the truth to say that the Koch brothers and their minions have not merely coopted much of the Republican Party's traditional role, as a key fund-raising arm, it has in essence replaced it.

There is no comparable entity in the Democratic Party, including frontrunner Hillary Clinton's (who I am supporting) Super PACs, which have raised a paltry \$200 million compared to the \$1 billion it is estimated the Koch brothers are prepared to spend to win back the White House.

Ironically, none of these dollars so far have gone to GOP frontrunner Donald Trump, who is paving his path to the Oval Office with his own fortune.

How much the Koches plan on spending in June's critical California GOP primary and for whom is unknown.

But if the burgeoning anti-Trump movement takes on greater momentum, resulting in a desperate effort to find another nominee, you can bet the Koch brothers will be consulted.