

Pollutocrat David Koch refuses to answer questions about Citizens United secret right-wing meetings

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By Lee Fang, in a TP [cross-post](#).

Last week, ThinkProgress conducted an impromptu interview with David Koch — one of the richest men in America, co-owner of the conglomerate Koch Industries, and a top financier of right-wing front groups — after we found him [leaving](#) the swearing-in ceremony for Speaker John Boehner (R-OH). In the first part of the interview, Koch said that he “admire[s]” the Tea Party movement, and that “the rank and file are [just normal people](#) like us.” In the second part, Koch denied the existence of climate change and [shrugged](#) when asked if carbon pollution causes global warming. Koch Industries, which owns a coal shipping company, several of the country’s largest oil refineries and pipeline networks, and several fertilizer plants and factories, is a major contributor to climate change and [funds much](#) of the climate change-denying propaganda machine.

Throughout the interview, Tim Phillips — an “[astroturf](#)” lobbyist who is now president of Koch’s Americans for Prosperity front group — tried to [push](#) ThinkProgress’ Scott Keyes away and yelled into the camera Keyes was holding. Phillips also continually yelled and tried to physically block us, even though Koch himself never objected to speaking with us.

Regardless of Phillips’ interference, we asked Koch about the *Citizens United* Supreme Court decision, the landmark case that eliminated one hundred years of campaign finance law by allowing unlimited corporate money in elections. The subject appeared to cause discomfort with Koch, who looked down once he realized what we were talking about. He later walked away when asked about his secret election planning meeting held last June with other corporate and right-wing leaders to plan the 2010 election:

FANG: What do you think of Citizens United? **Has it helped your influence?**

KOCH: Citizens United?

FANG: **The Supreme Court decision.**

KOCH: **Oh.. Hm...** [...]

FANG: I know you had a meeting last summer with Glenn Beck and several other conservatives. Could you tell the public what you discussed at that meeting?

Watch it:

Koch has long sought to expand his influence and the influence of other right-wing plutocrats by funding groups that have chipped away at campaign finance laws and disclosure laws for decades. When the Supreme Court took up the *Citizens United* case, Koch-funded front groups filed a series of amicus briefs arguing that unlimited corporate money in politics is protected by the First Amendment. For example, the Cato Institute, founded and financed by the Koch brothers, [submitted](#) a brief that called for “unfettered” corporate “speech” and the Institute for Justice, founded and financed by David’s brother Charles, [submitted](#) a brief claiming that campaign finance laws prohibiting unlimited corporate money “trump the First Amendment.” Koch-funded groups [later lobbied](#) aggressively to oppose efforts to provide transparency for the new tidal wave of corporate spending.

As ThinkProgress has covered [extensively](#), the *Citizens United* case opened the floodgates for corporate money.

Corporations funneled hundreds of millions of dollars into nonprofit groups to anonymously run attack ads against Democrats last fall. Koch's own Americans for Prosperity group ran \$40 million dollars in direct attacks, but also hired over 80 operatives to orchestrate pro-Republican Tea Parties across the country.

The Koch-elected Republican Congress and Koch-orchestrated Tea Party is well documented, but Koch's relationship with the Supreme Court is more mysterious. As ThinkProgress [reported](#), the Koch brothers have convened secret meetings for years with corporate leaders and right-wing partisans. We [obtained](#) a memo detailing the last meeting, in June of 2010, which was attended by executives from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Glenn Beck, and a large group of businessmen (including major hedge fund managers, the CEO of Bechtel, oil billionaire Phil Anschutz, and others). The memo also [indicated](#) that Justices Clarence Thomas and Antonin Scalia have been featured at Koch meetings in the past. Scalia and Thomas, who maintains a close working relationship with Koch-funded front groups, of course supported the *Citizens United* decision.

In the first interview we published with Koch, he was excited about doing more political work. "We're [going to do more](#) too in the next couple of years," he boasted about Americans for Prosperity. Americans for Prosperity has [led the way](#) in [whipping](#) up paranoid right-wing Tea Parties and [purchasing](#) partisan attack ads on television. If the post-*Citizens United* midterm elections were any indication of the future, Koch's influence will only grow.

This is a ThinkProgress [repost](#) by Lee Fang.