

## Kochs build basis for conservative movement

### Brothers have donated millions to Republican political candidates

By LARRY BIVINS • Gannett Washington Bureau • February 24, 2011

WASHINGTON — For more than two decades, Charles and David Koch have been quietly building the foundation for a conservative movement that critics say is at the center of the dispute between Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker and public employee unions.

A prank [phonecall](#) that spread across the Internet on Wednesday between the governor and the editor of a liberal online newspaper pretending to be David Koch, a key donor to Walker and other Republicans, put a spotlight on the close relationship.

The billionaire owners of Kansas-based Koch Industries, a petroleum empire with seven sites in Wisconsin, are closely linked to [Americans for Prosperity](#), a conservative grassroots group that organized Saturday's "Stand With Walker" rally in Wisconsin in response to union-led demonstrations.

The group is the political arm of the [Americans for Prosperity Foundation](#), which lists David Koch as chairman of the board.

Americans for Prosperity has chapters in 32 states, including Wisconsin. The group announced Tuesday that Matt Seaholm, the former chief of staff and campaign manager for Rep. [Sean Duffy](#), R-Ashland, has been hired to head the Badger State office.

The Koch brothers have provided seed money for several conservative and libertarian think tanks, including the Cato Institute, a Washington-based libertarian group co-founded by Charles Koch, and the Reason Foundation. They host forums in the West twice a year to raise [funds](#) for their causes and strategize over promotion of free-market ideals.

But it is the money the Kochs have pumped into political campaigns that has some watchdog groups alarmed. Individually and through their company's political action committee, the brothers have

[donated](#) millions to mostly Republican political candidates, including \$43,000 from Koch Industries PAC to Walker's gubernatorial campaign.

Koch Industries executives and employees also donated \$10,000 to help Duffy win [retiring](#) Democrat Dave Obey's seat and \$5,000 to Lawrence Republican Reid Ribble's campaign to defeat Democrat Steve Kagen. The PAC gave \$25,400 to Oshkosh businessman Ron Johnson's campaign to oust Democrat Russ Feingold from the Senate and has contributed \$60,000 to Republican Rep. Paul Ryan since 1989.

Over the past two decades, Koch Industries PAC has made \$10.8 million in political contributions nationwide, with nearly nine of every 10 dollars going to Republicans. The company also has spent more than \$50 million on lobbying, mostly on oil- and environment-related issues. Individual contributions from the brothers and their spouses total \$2.58 million.

Rep. Gwen Moore, D-Milwaukee, called the Koch brothers "the poster children of the effort by multinational corporate America to try to redefine the rights and values of American citizens."

#### Advertisement



**Mom Dilemma #36:**  
Your daughter insists on wearing her princess costume to the grocery store. Allow it or not?

YES, at least she's dressed!

NO, I have some rules!

[momslike.com](#)  
where Local moms meet

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™