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Who the hell are the Koch brothers?

By Joseph Curl

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Just kidding. I know who the Koch brothers are. They're the billionaire oil magnates who control 4,000 miles of pipeline and whose corporation, Koch Industries, owns dozens of [companies](#) like Georgia-Pacific lumber, Stainmaster carpet, Brawny paper towels, Angel Soft toilet paper, even Dixie cups. Net sales: \$115 billion. A year.

The brothers are old dudes: David is 73, Charles is 78. They're into the arts, dance, music, medicine ("into" meaning they give hundreds of millions of dollars to support). Their multiple foundations focus on, among other things, [job training](#), education. Another funds cancer research (nearly \$700 million so far); yet another keys on the environment. One lives in Wichita, Kansas. Flyover country.

But this year, the Koch brothers are the prime targets of Democrats in the mid-term elections.

You read that right. The Democrats are putting everything they've got into this single effort: Attack two elderly rich guys. The party's top leaders have concluded that if they can demonize these two geezers, they can hold onto the Senate, and maybe pick up some seats in the House. (If the bros are reading this, sorry about the "geezers" thing, and yes, I would like \$10 million for a project I'd like to start up.)

See, the brothers dabble in politics. David was a Libertarian vice presidential candidate — 34 years ago. He and his running mate won 1.1 percent of the vote. Charles Koch "[funds](#) and supports libertarian and free-market organizations such as the Cato Institute," his wiki page says. Oh, the powerful Cato.

In a 2010 profile, The New Yorker said: "The Kochs are longtime Libertarians who believe in drastically lower personal and corporate taxes, minimal social services for the needy, and much less oversight of industry — especially environmental regulation."

Yes, they're flat-out evil (you can trust The New Yorker). And you can definitely trust Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid. "What is un-American is when shadowy billionaires pour unlimited [money](#) into our democracy to rig the system to benefit themselves and the wealthiest one

percent," he said on the Senate floor. "Based on their actions and policies they promote, the Koch brothers seem to believe in an America where the system is rigged to benefit the very wealthy."

All because the brothers have dropped \$14 million into some Senate races this year? Sure, they dumped millions into races last election cycle, but Democratic donors poured more than \$1 billion into the Obama re-election campaign alone. So why attack two private citizens when 1) they're not politicians, 2) their money had no effect last cycle, and 3) they're not even really Republicans?

The Washington Post's political whiz Chris Cillizza explained the strategy: "Democrats are working hard to raise the profile of the Koch brothers in advance of the midterms in hopes of using the specter of the big-spending billionaires to excite not only the party's activist base, but as importantly, its major donors."

President Obama's campaign group, Organizing for America, has jumped aboard. "The Koch brothers have a lot of money. And they choose to spend it in some of the most disgusting, cynical ways you can dream up," the national director wrote in a plea for [cash](#). Another email said the brothers do "some sick crap."

The strategy seems silly — until you realize just how desperate Democrats are this cycle.

"The question is whether it's going to motivate voters," Alex Bolton, reporter for The Hill, said on [SiriusXM's](#) "Press Pool with Julie Mason."

"Usually what you do is you demonize the other candidates. It's tough to demonize a donor that doesn't have a whole lot of name recognition," he said.

"If it was part of a larger strategy, then I would get it," Mason said. "But it seems for now to be like almost the entire strategy."

Mr. Bolton got to the crux. "What Democrats say is the larger strategy is income inequality. They're running against plutocrats. It was so convenient in 2012 they actually had a plutocrat to run against, Mitt Romney. This year, they don't. And so they're trying to put the Koch brothers in that slot because there is no face to run against."

The Koch brothers. Plutocrats. Desperation. Wonder what Senate *Minority* Leader Reid will say after Election Day 2014.

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