



Club for Growth Action

January 31, 2020

Club for Growth Action, the super PAC of the conservative Club for Growth, was launched in August 2010. On its website, the organization declares its mission is to “take on any Member of Congress on policy who fails to uphold basic economic conservative principles ... regardless of party.”

The PAC targets some Republican incumbents in primary elections in order to replace them with “pro-growth, limited government conservatives.” Club for Growth Action states on its website that it has been “instrumental” in helping to elect conservatives such as Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas, Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida and Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina.

As of Nov. 30, 2019, the group had raised \$7.6 million in the 2020 election cycle. Club for Growth Action spent more than \$550,000 against Democrat Dan McCready in North Carolina. McCready lost to Republican Dan Bishop in North Carolina’s 9th Congressional District special election in 2019. In the Democratic presidential primaries, the group has so far spent almost \$67,000 against former Vice President Joe Biden, \$59,000 against Sen. Bernie Sanders and a little more than \$34,000 against former Rep. Beto O’Rourke of Texas. O’Rourke dropped out of the Democratic race on Nov. 1.

The bulk of Club for Growth Action’s money thus far in the 2020 cycle has come from three donors. Richard Uihlein, the chief executive officer of Uline, a shipping, packaging and industrial supplies company, gave the PAC \$2.5 million in May. The two other major donors are Jeff Yass, cofounder of the financial firm Susquehanna International, and Virginia James, a conservative investor and former spouse of Club for Growth co-founder and stockbroker Richard Gilder. Each have donated \$1 million to the PAC.

In the 2018 cycle, Club for Growth Action spent \$19.6 million. The PAC spent \$1.2 million in the Texas senatorial race against O’Rourke, who lost in his bid to unseat Cruz. The group also spent more than \$1.1 million to defeat Republican candidate Russell “Russ” Fagg in the Montana Senate Republican primary.

The PAC also focused on special House elections in Georgia and Pennsylvania. During the last election cycle, the group found itself at odds in the Georgia House race with a pro-Trump group called 45Committee. Club for Growth Action endorsed Republican Bob Gray — one of 18 candidates, including 11 Republicans, running in what was known as a “jungle primary.”

45Committee ran TV ads opposing Gray, claiming voters could not “trust him” because he “stands with the Club for Growth.” Gray did not survive the primary. Karen Handel, a Republican, won the special election in a runoff against Democrat Jon Ossoff.

A large chunk of the PAC’s money in the 2018 election cycle came from Uihlein, who has donated to Club for Growth Action since 2010. Uihlein gave the PAC \$6.7 million. Jeff Yass, co-founder of global trading firm Susquehanna International Group, gave the PAC a little over \$3.8 million. Yass also serves on the board of directors at the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank.

In the 2016 cycle, Club for Growth Action spent a little over \$20 million. On the presidential election alone, the group spent nearly \$8 million — including more than \$7 million against Donald Trump during the Republican primary. The group, for example, accused Trump in TV ads of supporting higher taxes. Once in office, Trump signed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which reduced individual and corporate income tax rates, among other things. (See our story, “A Guide to the Tax Changes.”)