

Mother Jones

Following the Mystery Money Behind a Super-PAC's Attacks on Tammy Duckworth

By Andy Kroll | Tue Oct. 16, 2012

Earlier this month, *Mother Jones* reported on a curious turn of events in a congressional race in northern Illinois. A super-PAC called Now or Never had poured \$1.7 million into ads bolstering the campaign of Rep. Joe Walsh (R-Ill.), a gaffe-prone tea party favorite, and attacking Democratic challenger Tammy Duckworth. One pundit called Now or Never's pro-Walsh spending "delusional." For months Duckworth has enjoyed a wide lead in the race, which happens to be in a Democratic-leaning district.

Now or Never is somewhat of a mystery itself. The strategists running the super-PAC refuse to identify themselves—spokesman Tyler Harber described them only as "a group of business owners and political operatives who have worked in Washington, DC, and across the Midwest." And at the time of their pro-Walsh spending, Now or Never had yet to disclose who was funding its attacks on Duckworth, an Army reservist and progressive favorite.

On Monday, Now or Never's latest campaign filings came out. The plot thickens.

Every penny received by Now or Never in September, when it launched its Illinois ad blitz, came from a Virginia-based nonprofit called Americans for Limited Government. ALG forked over, in two payments, a whopping \$1.95 million. As a nonprofit, ALG doesn't disclose its donors.

Americans for Limited Government was co-founded in 1996 by real estate investor Howard Rich, who also serves on the boards of the Cato Institute and the Club for Growth. According to *Politico*, ALG has been among the recipients of funding from the extensive donor network established by the billionaire industrialists Charles and David Koch. ALG has also employed Sean Noble, according to *Politico*, who helped to oversee how the Koch donor network's contributions were spent.

Ray Wotring, a spokesman for ALG, refused to say who funds his organization. "We as a practice don't reveal our donors," he says. Wotring also declined to say why ALG contributed to Now or Never. Harber, a spokesman for Now or Never, says in an email that the super-PAC discloses all of its donors. "ALG isn't our first, last, or only donor," Harber notes. "We can't compel them to disclose their donors, but we have done everything we can to be as transparent and accessible as possible."