



# Campaign Finance: What About the Liberal One Percent?

by [Roger Pilon](#)

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**2paragraphs:** *The campaign finance issue—especially post-Citizens United—really galvanizes the left, whose concerns about income inequality include nightmare scenarios of an American oligarchy run primarily by conservatives like the Koch brothers. Yet the left has its own one-percenters, who seek to influence policy at least as much as the conservative side does. Is there a way to cut through the hypocrisy on both sides—and make influence transparent?*

**Roger Pilon:** The hypocrisy is not on both sides. The left would have us believe that the Koch brothers and other big-money contributors to conservative and libertarian campaigns and causes are threatening to take over politics in America. But as Kenneth P. Vogel reported [in POLITICO](#) last week, big-money liberals, who met secretly in Chicago earlier in the week, are as numerous and active as any donors on the right. What's more, their effort to paint themselves as morally superior is errant nonsense. ("The people who are giving money into politics here are interested in changing the system," said one Chicago donor. "They're not interested in getting return on investment.") Anyone who believes that the Koch brothers contribute to political campaigns in order to increase their wealth should be kept at some distance.

But that posture of moral superiority, [as I myself wrote](#) last week, is central to the class-warfare that Progressives began waging when they first teamed up with Populists at the end of the 19th century. It's not enough to rebut your opponent's arguments. You've got to vilify him as well—to indulge the politics of personal destruction—which is especially important when you can't rebut his arguments. And in no area of our public life today do we find this politics practiced more zealously than campaign finance—for good reason. Credulous about government and suspicious of the private sector, Progressives tend to support the incumbents who've given them the government they crave. And who writes the restrictions on private campaign contributions? Why it's the very incumbents who start every campaign with all the advantages of incumbency. That's an inequality that seems to have escaped liberals' notice.

--[Roger Pilon](#) is the founder and director of the Center for Constitutional Studies at the [Cato Institute](#). He is the publisher of the [Cato Supreme Court Review](#) and is an adjunct professor of government at Georgetown University. Pilon held five senior posts in the Reagan administration, including at State and Justice, and was a National Fellow at Stanford's Hoover Institution.