

POLITICO

Rand Paul super PAC goes dark

One of the three super PACs supporting the Kentucky senator's presidential bid has stopped raising money.

Alex Isenstadt

September 29, 2015

One of the three super PACs supporting Rand Paul's presidential campaign has stopped raising money, dealing a damaging blow to an already cash-starved campaign.

In a Tuesday telephone interview, Ed Crane, who oversees the group, PurplePAC, accused Paul of abandoning his libertarian views -- and suggested it was a primary reason the Kentucky senator had plummeted in the polls.

"I have stopped raising money for him until I see the campaign correct its problems," said Crane, who co-founded the Cato Institute think tank and serves as its president emeritus. "I wasn't going to raise money to spend on a futile crusade."

"I don't see the point in it right now," he added.

PurplePAC has been in existence for around two years, but over the summer Crane transformed it into a Paul-focused vehicle. It joined two other super PACs, America's Liberty and Concerned American Voters, that were expressly designed to support Paul.

In July, PurplePAC announced that it had raised around \$1.2 million - the vast majority of it coming from Jeff Yass, a Philadelphia options trader.

Crane said the organization currently had over \$1 million cash on hand, but no longer wanted to ask for contributions. "I just don't want to do that to my friends," he said.

The libertarian views that catapulted Paul to national prominence had "disappeared," Crane said, leaving many of Paul's longtime backers miffed.

"I want to grab Rand by the lapels and say, 'What are you doing?'" Crane said. "I'm a big fan of Rand Paul. But whatever motivates his campaign, I don't get it."

The decision comes at a perilous time for the Kentucky senator, who has fallen in polls and struggled to raise cash. Paul has raised just \$13 million between his campaign and the three super PACs -- a fraction of many of his rivals. There are also fresh questions about how much

America's Liberty will be able to raise going forward. Last month, Jesse Benton, a longtime Paul aide who helped to oversee the group, was indicted on charges that he concealed payments to an Iowa state senator while working for Paul's father, Ron, on the 2012 presidential race.

Benton, who has taken a leave of absence from America's Liberty, has said he expects to return to the organization once he is exonerated.

Sergio Gor, a Paul spokesman, noted that the two super PACs that were originally set up to help Rand Paul - America's Liberty and Concerned American Voters - "remain active and ongoing."