

## The Brothers Koch: Rich, Political And Playing To Win



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Andrew H. Walker/Staff/Getty Images

David Koch and Julia Koch attend the opening night celebration of the New York City Ballet at the David H. Koch Theater, Lincoln Center on Nov. 25, 2008 in New York City.

August 26, 2010

text size **A A A**

Chances are you've never heard of Charles and David Koch. The brothers own [Koch Industries](#), a Kansas-based conglomerate that operates oil refineries in several states and is the company behind brands including Brawny paper towels, Dixie cups, Georgia-Pacific lumber, Lycra fibers and Stainmaster carpet. Forbes ranks Koch Industries as the second-largest privately held company in the U.S. — and the Koch brothers themselves? They're worth billions.

And in the past 30 years, they've funneled more than \$100 million into dozens of political organizations, many of which are trying to steer the country in a more libertarian direction. Among

the organizations they've backed are the [Cato Institute](#), a Washington think tank that has recently raised questions about climate change, and the Mercatus Center at George Mason University in Virginia — which one Democratic strategist called "ground zero for deregulation policy in Washington."



The New Yorker

*The Wall Street Journal* nominated Jane Mayer twice for the Pulitzer Prize for feature-writing.

The brothers also have created several neutral-sounding groups like Citizens for a Sound Economy — which staged media events to oppose President Clinton's proposed B.T.U. tax on energy — and Citizens for the Environment, which called many environmental problems, including acid rain, "myths."

David Koch founded the group Americans for Prosperity Foundation, which has been linked to the Tea Party — training hundreds of activists in Texas and hosting talking points for Tea Party activists on their website.

Jane Mayer, a staff writer at *The New Yorker*, profiles the brothers and their political connections in the August 30 issue of the magazine. Her article

["Covert Operations"](#) describes how the brothers' political interests "dovetail with [their] corporate interests."

### Web Resources

[Koch Industries' Rebuttal To Mayer's Profile](#)

On Thursday's *Fresh Air*, Mayer joins Terry Gross for a conversation about the Kochs' funding efforts, particularly what she describes as their broad and vigorous campaigns to manufacture grassroots political opinion. As she notes in the article, "the brothers have funded opposition campaigns against so many Obama administration policies — from health care reform to the economic-stimulus program — that, in political circles, their ideological network is known as the Kochtopus."

Before joining *The New Yorker*, Mayer was the first female White House correspondent for *The Wall*

*Street Journal*. She is also the author of the best-selling 2008 book *The Dark Side: The Inside Story of How The War on Terror Turned Into a War on American Ideals*.

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Recent First



**Sam Stroup (SunnyDaySam)** wrote:

It's funny - when you look into the real funding of these "grass roots" neocon organizations, you always find big oil money. The 'Tea Party' makes more sense now.

Thursday, August 26, 2010 12:43:23 PM

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**Soquel by the Creek (SoquelbytheCreek)** wrote:

An interesting article. I always wondered who was funding Americans for Prosperity (AFP). As someone who swings Libertarian myself, I'm glad that SOMEBODY is funding our point of view.

Personally, I would love for this series to continue. There are plenty of others that influence elections using shadowy organizations. The George Soros and his Open Society Institute is but one example.

<http://www.discoverthenetworks.org/groupProfile.asp?grpid=7476>

Then there are the "heavy hitters" that fund various campaigns, including a variety of corporations, unions, and advocacy groups.

<http://www.opensecrets.org/orgs/list.php?order=A>

Is it a conflict of interest that the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) union, representing federal government employees, is one of the top campaign donors (\$42.8M)?

Who are the people behind ActBlue, #3 on the heavy hitter list, with nearly \$41M in a very

short time? Is it merely a money laundering organization for the Left?

So many questions, so few curious reporters!

Thursday, August 26, 2010 12:42:44 PM

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**Sam Stroup (SunnyDaySam)** wrote:

These guys remind anybody else of the Duke brothers in 'Trading Places'?

Thursday, August 26, 2010 12:41:09 PM

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**Stan Graff (Graffo)** wrote:

Terry, you think Soros is a better person than the Kochs? C'mon...like Soros would really let Ms. Mayer see what his real objectives/motives are.

Thursday, August 26, 2010 12:28:46 PM

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**Edward Hashima (ehashima)** wrote:

I think that Jane Mayer needs to watch her back. These two "gentlemen" sound like the kind of people who would have no compunction about having their enemies killed--and they have enough money and connections to get away with it.

Thursday, August 26, 2010 12:19:10 PM

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