

# THE DAILY SENTINEL

## **Elections laws a bigger threat to democracy than Russians**

Tanya Travis

July 12, 2018

Voters understand that we are often soft targets for good marketers. Although we say we despise negative advertising, we know it works. Once we are convinced of one negative, we don't often take or have the time for a deeper understanding of good governance or appreciate the many individuals that contribute to our orderly civilized life through public services. Although we are busy working and raising families "We the People" are wondering what is happening to our middle-class voice in elections.

We vaguely understand that big money overpowers individual contributions in elections. Koch Industries alone expects to contribute \$300-400 million on our 2018 elections. When a corporation is pressured to make the most profit to please the shareholder, you can understand their political motives. Because of Citizen's United, and further judicial decisions eroding election transparency, eliminating financial oversight and suppressing voter turnout, we have a complex and secretive election process, too often influenced by "dark money."

Koch Industries with a net worth of well over \$90 billion can create think tanks, SuperPACs, and 501c4s that politically operate on their own, outside of regular campaign finance laws, to either support or oppose a candidate for office. In the Koch Industry case, they have the Cato Institute, Americans for Prosperity, Freedom Partners, among others. They have been hedging their bets with both parties and winning big. What do Koch Industries want?

They want significantly lower taxes for their businesses, restrictions on unions, privatization of public services, and no pesky regulatory oversight for their environmental impacts.

Because they are heavily invested in oil and gas development, they have spent millions over a long period of time, vilifying climate scientists and sponsoring groups that deny the reality, severity and human origins of climate change. There are many more stories of dark corporate money, but all of them follow the same route to power.

It may not be Russia that is the biggest threat to a government by the people, but our very own election laws. I urge you, no matter what party affiliation, be skeptical and take the time to understand economical models that work for middle class America. An informed voter is the foundation of democracy.