

FROM SWITZERLAND WITH CASH: HANSJORG WYSS, THE LEFT'S MOST SECRETIVE MEGA-DONOR

Hansjörg Wyss and his Wyss Foundation have bankrolled the Left's favorite causes for years, always in the shadows.

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He's perhaps the Left's most reclusive mega-donor, rarely appearing in the news and much less in public interviews. Yet year after year Hansjörg Wyss (pronounced "Veese") discreetly funnels tens of millions of dollars into the Left's most aggressive campaigns, advancing the radical "green" agenda and cementing permanent Democratic power in Washington, D.C.

And here's the kicker: He's not even an American citizen. This is the story of how one Swiss billionaire-turned-political financier quietly became one of the largest backers of the most powerful "dark money" network in Washington, trampling campaign finance laws in the process in his mission to drive Democrats ever further to the left.



Aus die Schweiz

Hansjörg Wyss represents everything wrong with "progressive" politics. Born in Bern in 1936, Wyss made his life and substantial fortune (over \$9 billion in 2023) in the United States without pursuing U.S. citizenship. That didn't stop Wyss from illegally donating to numerous Democratic campaigns between

1993 and 2003, something federal law has prohibited since 1966. Yet, so far as anyone can tell, Wyss has never been fined or prosecuted for breaking campaign finance laws. When one right-leaning watchdog, Americans for Public Trust, asked the Federal Election Commission (FEC) to investigate Wyss' political spending in mid-2022, the

allegations were dismissed by two Democratic FEC commissioners, Shana Broussard and Ellen Weintraub, the latter an anti-Trump ideologue married to a former Democratic Senate senior staffer. Being a Democrat means you never have to apologize. Clearly, it pays to support the correct causes. Wyss himself earned his billions in the medical technology industry as head of Synthes USA, an implants and biomaterials manufacturer he built from scratch and sold to Johnson & Johnson in 2012 for some \$20 billion. Synthes' legacy is dubious, to say the least. Under Wyss, the company was charged in 2009 with running illegal clinical trials on humans by injecting them with cement that turns to bone inside the skeleton. Despite a warning from the Food and Drug Administration that the product was unapproved, Synthes proceeded to inject the cement into patients during spine surgeries. Five people died as a result. Four of Synthes' executives went to prison for fraud. As with the FEC, one suspects his liberal billionaire privilege saved Wyss from a similar fate—despite an executive's allegation in court that Wyss “made the initial decision to test the bone cement without proper clinical trials.” Employees feared him as a “hands-on,” “forceful,” “800-pound gorilla” who allowed little dissent in the company's ranks. A grand jury included Wyss as “Person No. 7” in its proceedings. Yet he was never charged with wrongdoing and was reportedly “deliriously happy” that the Justice

Department wouldn't indict him. Then in 2017, a female ex-employee accused Wyss of sexual assault with a “purple vibrator” used “by Wyss as a weapon” while the pair were staying in a New Jersey hotel six years prior. How the lawsuit was resolved remains unknown. The New George Soros Wyss isn't known to give interviews, even to left-wing outlets such as the New York Times when investigative reporter Kenneth P. Vogel inquired after Wyss' residency status in a (surprisingly) searing article in May 2021 that traced the Wyss network's “prominent role in financing the political infrastructure that supports Democrats and their issues,” likening the billionaire to mega-donors George Soros and Tom Steyer. Others have called Wyss the “new George Soros”—and with good reason. Since 2002, Wyss' nonprofits have funneled \$1.2 billion to nonprofits, many of them political groups such as the far-left think tank Demos, pro-illegal immigration group UnidosUS, and liberal Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. This foreign influencer even briefly tried to build his own U.S. media empire in 2021, when he bid \$680 million on Tribune Publishing, the news conglomerate that owns the Chicago Tribune, New York Daily News, Orlando Sentinel, and other major newspapers. The bid (happily) failed. Yet Wyss continues to fund “progressive” news outlets like the Guardian and States Newsroom, a spin-off of the “dark money” Arabella network created to spread partisan news in the states.

Wyss is a substantial contributor to eco-activist groups like the Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council, Nature Conservancy, Wilderness Society (where he's a board member), and League of Conservation Voters (which juices Democratic election turnout). Most of these groups actively oppose so-called fossil fuels, yet the Wyss Foundation's most recent IRS disclosure reveals that the foundation owned shares worth \$1 million in Diamondback Energy, a Texas oil and gas producer specializing in offshore drilling, and \$557,000 in the Columbian crude oil developer Ecopetrol S.A. We've traced 7-figure grants from Wyss' 501(c)(4) Berger Action Fund (likely named for one of his sisters) to Eric Holder's National Redistricting Action Fund (NRAF), a self-described “centralized hub for executing a comprehensive redistricting strategy” to give Democrats an edge in congressional races (i.e. gerrymandering legislative districts). While the group claims it's merely after “fair maps,” its real goal (as stated in IRS filings) is “to build a comprehensive plan to favorably position Democrats for the redistricting process through 2022.” Wyss' Berger Action Fund supplied as much as 40 percent of NRAF's budget in 2017-2018 and nearly a quarter of its budget in 2018-2019. The group's 501(c)(3) arm paid for a lawsuit that upended North Carolina's Republican-drawn maps in 2019—yet lost in every race Holder targeted in 2020.

Shaping the Left Wyss is a member of the Democracy Alliance, a shadowy network of the Left's biggest donors who meet regularly to coordinate their political spending. He also sits on the board of the Center for American Progress (CAP), the Left's leading think tank founded in 2003 by Clinton operative John Podesta to defeat conservatives. Podesta has reportedly advised Wyss on his funding of public policy efforts.

In a 2014 biography of her brother, Wyss' sister Hedi identifies Hansjorg as "one of [CAP's] founding members" and "sponsors" and describes the organization as "largely endorsing the politics of the Democratic Party and that tries to propose and implement progressive ideas in American politics." RealClearPolitics report Philip Wegmann explains:

"Hedi Wyss recalls in the biography a 2011 meeting with her brother that included representatives from CAP to the ACLU, 'and the discussion is centered on the various possibilities for exerting an influence on American jurisdiction, which has been dominated by conservative forces in the past years with alarming consequences for American domestic politics.' 'All agree that it is important that the public be aware of the crucial role played by the Supreme Court and know more about the political affiliations of its members,' she wrote before adding in the same paragraph that 'the assembly agrees on the needs to (re)interpret the American constitution in the light of progressive politics' [emphasis added]."

Even leftists have begun to take notice. In April, the Associated Press called Wyss a "Democratic-aligned mega-donor" who funds political groups that backed "Biden's agenda" and Democrats in the 2022 midterm elections. AP continued:

"After criticizing Republicans for using dark money, Democratic-aligned groups spent more of it in 2020."

In 2021 alone, Wyss' nonprofits poured close to \$63 million into "2 groups that spent big to promote BIDEN's agenda," the Times' Vogel tweeted in April 2023. "FOREIGN MONEY IN US POLITICS . . . Foreigners are barred from donating to candidates or PACs," he continued, "but Wyss says his [money] is only for issue advocacy."

Perhaps that's true. But money is fungible, and funds dedicated to the Left's policy battles free up monies for electing Democrats. Nothing better illustrates this better than Wyss' biggest scheme: the Hub Project. The Hub Project

The story begins in 2015, when the consulting firm Civitas Public Affairs Group—whose clients include the pro-gun control Brady Campaign and Democratic get-out-the-vote group Voter Participation Center—produced a private report for the Wyss Foundation outlining a plan for a "communications hub."

It's unknown exactly how much the foundation paid for the report, but between 2015 and 2018 it paid over \$442,000 to Civitas. In turn, Civitas interviewed rep-

resentatives of 17 leftist groups ranging from Media Matters for America, to the Center for American Progress, to NARAL Pro-Choice America, on the hub's strategy. This "Hub Project" would support the Wyss Foundation's "core issue areas," creating "research-based message frames" to "drive measurable change" and achieve "significant wins," which in turn would "dramatically shift the public debate and policy positions of core decision makers," "leading to implementation of policy solutions at the local, state, and federal level."

In other words, it was created to elect Democrats and achieve policy victories.

In order to "give the foundation appropriate separation from the hub's work" and not jeopardize its tax exemption, consultants recommended the hub be established by the Arabella network—a \$1.7 billion "dark money" network specializing in this sort of attack campaign. Running the Hub Project through Arabella's nonprofits, rather than the Wyss Foundation itself, would "allow the hub to engage in a more robust way than it could if it was based within the foundation." Yet the Wyss Foundation would provide all of its funding and Wyss representatives would secretly run the board.

In other words, the Hub Project was designed to allow the Wyss Foundation to bypass the IRS prohibition on foundations intervening in elections—in order to aid Democrats. As the New York Times admitted in 2021:

“The Hub Project came out of the idea that Democrats should be more effective in conveying their arguments through the news media and directly to voters.”

The Arabella network runs the Hub Project through two in-house nonprofits: New Venture Fund and Sixteen Thirty Fund, using their respective (c)(3) and (c)(4) advantages to maximize fundraising and advocacy. The project doesn't directly fund candidates but rather provides messaging strategies and research to allied partisan groups working on the Left's top issues, like D.C. statehood and abolishing the Senate filibuster. Unsurprisingly, it's staffed by operatives from the Obama administration, Michael Bloomberg's Everytown for Gun Safety, and the Center for American Progress.

In 2017, the Hub Project organized a series of marches to demand President Trump's tax returns. Politico reports the group aided Democrats on “health care, taxes and the economy” in the 2018 midterm elections. The Atlantic credits the Hub Project with doing “remarkable damage” to President Trump's reputation among Wisconsin voters in the lead-up to the 2020 election. In April 2021 the group hired a campaign director whose last job was flipping the Senate in 2020 for a top Democratic PAC.

I've called the Arabella network the most powerful liberal lobbying force in Washington, owing to its extraordinary reach and influence among professional activists and Democratic Party operatives.

Yet Hansjörg Wyss might also be considered the progenitor of the Arabella network, since he's been making grants to it since 2007 and his money accounted for 55 percent of New Venture Fund's budget that year. At least one Wyss Foundation staffer later joined Arabella to run many of its most anti-Trump projects.

Arabella founder Eric Kessler once worked alongside Wyss Foundation president Molly McUsic in the Clinton administration, while McUsic is a former board member of Arabella's Sixteen Thirty Fund. And in 2021 alone Wyss' Berger Action Fund pumped \$42.5 million into the Sixteen Thirty Fund, about one-fifth of the group's revenues that year.

Capital Research Center president Scott Walter explained to Restoration News:

“It's no right-wing ‘conspiracy theory’ to say Hans Wyss laughs at America's laws governing nonprofits and elections, because the claim arises from New York Times' reporting and Federal Election Commission lawyers' conclusions. The Times reports the Hub Project ‘was started by Mr. Wyss's philanthropic network in 2015 as a sort of incubator for groups backing Democrats and their causes,’ and ‘created more than a dozen groups’ that spent tens of millions of dollars attacking Republicans in the 2018 election. The FEC's general counsel office similarly reported that the Hub Project violated federal laws by not registering as a PAC (though the Commission failed to act on this).”

Whither Wyss?

At 87 years old, Wyss is more likely to meet his Maker than weather another election. But like the old George Soros, don't expect to see the end of this Swiss billionaire's influence anytime soon. The Wyss Foundation raked in \$88 million in 2021, proceeds from its substantial endowment. As always, there's no shortage of cash for remaking the nation in the Left's own image.

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