

ARABELLA: THE LEFT'S “DARK MONEY” MONSTER

In this report we dive into the Arabella network, the Left's greatest “dark money” machine. Arabella's billions and “pop-up” advocacy campaigns have helped Democrats win for years. It's time for the Right to beat them at their own game.



Credit: Capital Research Center

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The most powerful “dark money” force in the world works entirely in the shadows.

Cycle after cycle, this machine quietly pumps hundreds of millions of dollars into activist groups each year under the cover of “philanthropy”—manipulating our politics, electing Democrats, and turning America blue. Even when Republicans took control of the White House, this secret weapon ran sophisticated astroturf campaigns

to destroy the Trump administration... without ever exposing its identity.

Conservatives have nothing like it. And all of this went unnoticed by our “watchdog” media for nearly 15 years—until I exposed the scheme in 2018. This is Arabella Advisors, the Left's best-kept secret.

“Arabella” isn't one organization, but six. At the top of the hierarchy is Arabella Advisors LLC, a for-profit company formed in 2005 by ex-Clinton White House appointee Eric Kessler to offer consulting services for left-leaning foundations. What sets it apart is

the company's hidden ace: A set of five in-house nonprofits, all established by senior Arabella officials, that “hire” the company to run their operations, for a hefty fee: \$46.6 million in 2021. In total, Arabella Advisors has earned \$230 million from its groups since 2008.

The network is designed to help liberal donors bankroll political causes while shielding them from public scrutiny. Instead of directly funding activism, “respectable” philanthropies like the Ford, Gates, and Buffett Foundations cut their checks to Arabella's nonprofits, which pass the funds along—conveniently laundering the donors' identities in the process.

From a journalist's point of view, all we see is money entering the pot, and money exiting it—but not *who* funded *what*.

The scale of this system is immense. Across the 2019-2020 election cycle, this network collected \$2.4 billion, nearly twice as much as the Republican and Democratic National Committees *combined*.

Revenues		Annual % Increase
2021	\$1,595,120,820	-8%
2020	\$1,742,759,993	136%
2019	\$739,891,324	16%
2018	\$635,250,073	9%
2017	\$581,691,093	41%
2016	\$411,204,026	24%
2015	\$332,214,536	70%
2014	\$195,948,680	66%
2013	\$118,212,285	122%
2012	\$53,331,599	46%
2011	\$36,635,948	118%
2010	\$16,813,261	-47%
2009	\$31,640,567	426%
2008	\$6,011,782	261%
2007	\$1,663,363	205%
2006	\$545,100	-
\$6,498,934,450		

Expenditures		Annual % Increase
2021	\$989,297,025	-25%
2020	\$1,315,586,432	102%
2019	\$649,895,920	7%
2018	\$606,096,862	46%
2017	\$416,545,127	39%
2016	\$299,478,631	34%
2015	\$223,909,900	54%
2014	\$145,368,245	87%
2013	\$77,703,623	95%
2012	\$39,927,884	61%
2011	\$24,815,963	62%
2010	\$15,340,784	-16%
2009	\$18,227,751	358%
2008	\$3,983,417	203%
2007	\$1,315,615	3157%
2006	\$40,399	-
\$4,827,533,578		

Fees paid to Arabella Advisors LLC		Annual % Increase
2021	\$46,634,663	0.15%
2020	\$46,566,421	38%
2019	\$33,742,537	24%
2018	\$27,204,759	22%
2017	\$22,232,745	43%
2016	\$15,504,703	14%
2015	\$13,577,899	57%
2014	\$8,641,432	50%
2013	\$5,771,438	36%
2012	\$4,246,022	69%
2011	\$2,505,465	101%
2010	\$1,246,232	-17%
2009	\$1,507,658	171%
2008	\$555,931	-
\$229,937,905		

In just 2021, Arabella’s nonprofits raked in \$1.6 billion—that’s \$6.5 billion since 2006—virtually all of which went to political causes. Were these groups combined into a single charity, according to data from Forbes, it’d be the seventh-largest nonprofit in America, ahead of the YMCA and Goodwill. It’s a mockery of charity.

Simply put, the Arabella network is one of the biggest pipelines for moving money into politics, but not the way most conservatives understand it.

Besides acting as a conduit this network runs its own insider campaigns with generic names like Arizonans For Responsible Government, Fix Our Senate, Rocky Mountain Values, North Carolinians for a Fair Economy, the Hub Project, and Floridians for a Fair Shake. We call them “pop-up” groups for a reason: They’re little more than websites designed to look like fully independent, grassroots advocacy groups; yet they can be unplugged the minute a campaign wraps up.

These pop-up groups don’t file IRS disclosures, nor do they reveal their staff, boards, or budget. They often solicit donations from unsuspecting liberals, some of whom might be bothered to realize they’re in fact supporting the biggest “dark money” monster in politics and *not* a grassroots group.

For all intents and purposes, pop-ups aren’t real groups. Yet the political damage they cause to Republicans is very real indeed.

No one on the Right knows exactly

how many such astroturf campaigns the network has spawned over the years, but estimates put it at well over 500 groups since 2006—all of them run from Arabella Advisors’ cushy office in downtown Washington, D.C.

This network cloaks its activism in euphemisms: Consulting services for foundations and donors who want to engage in “impact investing” through “advocacy strategies,” launching “new initiatives,” and “augment[ing] their combined impact.”

In practice, Arabella’s empire shows the power of professional progressivism: Mega-donors and foundations pour limitless funds into the company’s nonprofit fleet, which each hire Arabella operatives to run slick attack campaigns on everything from packing the Supreme Court, to granting D.C. statehood, to smearing the character of Trump cabinet officials—without revealing the funders’ identities or threatening loss of tax exemption.

In a nutshell, this scheme lets progressive “philanthropoids” quietly bankroll radical activism without trading their Armani suits for Birkenstocks. It’s further evidence that nonprofits—a sector created to encourage *charity*, remember—now run our country’s politics, not the two parties.

There’s a truism every conservative must learn: You can’t shame the Left.

Above all else, “progressives” desire power and they’ll do anything to get it. All the exposés and media coverage in the world

won't shrink the Arabella network or embarrass them into surrendering on "dark money." History shows that the best way to beat the Left is to outplay them—and that may mean building a right-leaning Arabella-style network, one which obeys IRS nonprofit laws and uses the Left's best tactics against them.

But consider that Congress has ultimate authority to subpoena tax-exempt nonprofits, and there's plenty of reason to believe that the Arabella network is abusing the law. A Republican House majority has oversight over the IRS; a Republican president has the power to constrain political nonprofits.

Their goal should be clear: Strangle the Arabella network by cracking down on the abuse of nonprofits for partisan gain. In this report, Restoration of America provides the ammunition and strategy conservatives need to fight and win lasting victories. But it's up to patriots to fire for effect.

Behind the Curtain

Perhaps the most amazing thing about the Arabella network is that it managed to remain so well-hidden for so long.

In 2018 I was reporting on the activist groups attempting to block the Senate confirmation of Justice Brett Kavanaugh. Standing outside the Supreme Court amidst a sea of garish, pre-printed picket signs, one group's name stood out: Demand Justice. It didn't show up in IRS archives. But the website privacy policy connected Demand Justice to an address on Connecticut Avenue—one that happened to be shared by dozens of other organizations, including the Arabella nonprofit I soon learned was running the anti-Kavanaugh charade, Sixteen Thirty Fund.

I spent the next four or so years mapping every inch of this empire, from its origins and board connections to its lobbying and donors. When I began this project, conservatives were losing the battle on "dark money." Within a year we'd changed that narrative from defeat to victory by making Arabella Advisors—not the Koch brothers or Bradley Foundation—the *true* poster child for "dark money."

Even the legacy media was forced to acknowledge that the Left has outraised and outspent the Right

using "dark money" by nearly 2-to-1 in recent years.

"The system of political financing, which often obscures the identities of donors, is known as dark money," wrote the *New York Times* in 2021, "and Arabella's network is a leading vehicle for it on the left." Politico agrees, labeling the Sixteen Thirty Fund a "dark-money behemoth." *The Washington Post* believes (wrongheadedly) the fund is reason enough for Congress to enact forced donor disclosure laws.

The *Atlantic* has called Arabella "the massive progressive dark-money group you've never heard of" and "the indisputable heavyweight of Democratic dark money." That was in a 2021 interview with then-Arabella CEO Sampri Ganguli, who tried to pass off the firm as a "relatively small business-services organization that does HR, legal compliance, etc."

To her great credit, the *Atlantic* reporter would have none of it. By the end of the interview, Ganguli had to admit that Arabella's "the left's equivalent of the Koch brothers." In short, the Right won that battle—now we must plan our counterattack.

Eric Kessler's Excellent Adventure

The man at the top of the Arabella pyramid is Eric Kessler. Kessler's career began over 30 years ago, not in philanthropy but in grubby eco-activism. Thanks to the work of the stellar Montana investigative journalist Dave Skinner—perhaps the first reporter to encounter Arabella's earliest pop-ups, fifteen years ago—we know how.



Credit: Capital Research Center

In 1990, Kessler met famed greenie David Brower, a population control devotee who transformed the Sierra Club into a top advocacy group in the 1960s. Brower (with the help of a few martinis) convinced the young Kessler to hitchhike from his Colorado university to San Francisco to serve as a water conservation volunteer for one of Brower's groups, the Earth Island Institute.

In 1993, Kessler became national field director for another of Brower's creations: the powerful environmentalist group League of Conservation Voters, which pours tens of millions of dollars into Democratic turnout each cycle. In 1996, he was appointed to President Clinton's Interior Department under Sec. Bruce Babbitt, himself the former head of the League of Conservation Voters and a hardcore regulator.

Then came a turning point in 1998, when the Kessler family sold its fifth-generation auto parts

manufacturer in Chicago, Fel-Pro, for a reported \$750 million. Now a wealthy man at 26 years old, Eric Kessler entered philanthropy and in 2005 established Arabella Advisors.

His influence has only grown. Fast forward to May 2023, when it was revealed that Kessler has access to the top echelon of the Biden administration and "plays an intimate role in shaping [the] administration's agenda" as an unofficial—perhaps illegal—lobbyist. Kessler, a known foodie, was the *only* non-USDA individual on an email chain led by Agriculture Department Sec. Tom Vilsack discussing how to "transform" the U.S. food system and crack down on high meat prices. Arabella Advisors LLC also owns the "Good Food" initiative, which critics note is "poised to benefit from Kessler's wide-open access to USDA."

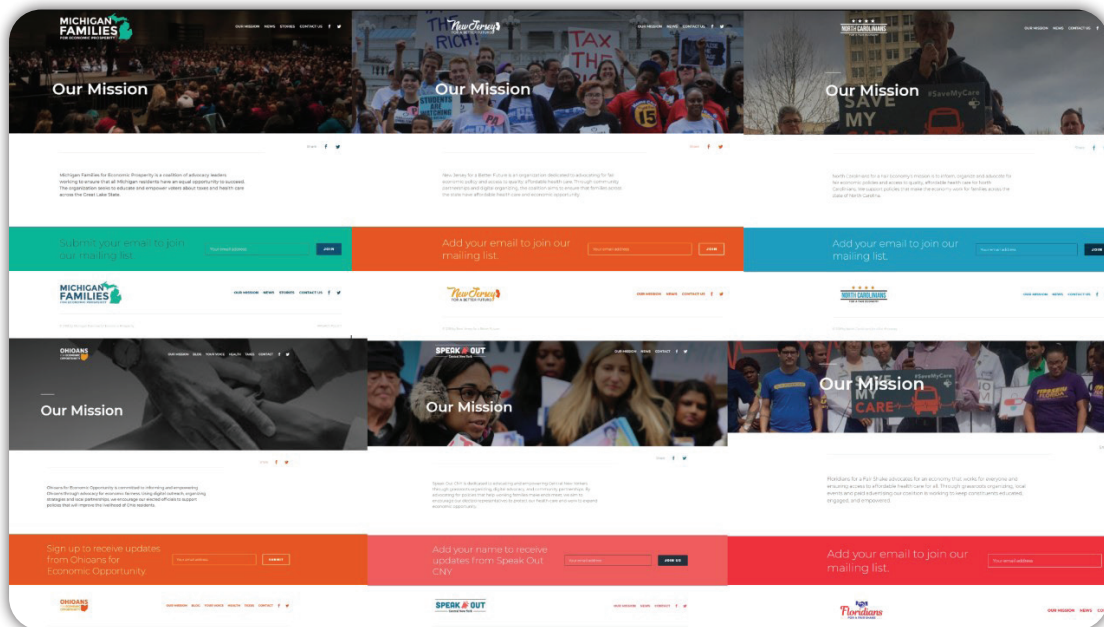
"The President was extremely appreciative of your effort," Vilsack told Kessler.

Passing Through

Kessler's model is an evolution of the pass-through grantmaker dating back to the mid-1970s, when it was pioneered by Drummond Pike's Tides Foundation, which both "launders" donor grants to political groups and fiscally sponsors new organizations. (The idea for Tides reportedly came to Pike after he helped a wealthy New Mexico couple route funds through his nonprofit to a political group, thus avoiding the spotlight.)

There's one key difference: the groups that Tides sponsors usually spin off into independent groups, such as People for the American Way. Arabella's pop-up groups, however, never leave the nest. Even exceptions like Demand Justice, which became a separate nonprofit in 2021, probably did so to distance Arabella Advisors from its spawn (a rare victory for the Right).

Examples of Arabella's pro-Obamacare, cookie-cutter pop-up websites.



Credit: Capital Research Center

And this simple but innovative model was present at the beginning. Early filings show that almost immediately after creating the company Kessler formed the 501(c)(3) New Venture Fund—then called the “Arabella Legacy Fund”—now the largest nonprofit in the network. Since then, Kessler and Co. have added four more spokes: the 501(c)(3) Hopewell Fund and Windward Fund; and the 501(c)(4) Sixteen Thirty Fund and North Fund.

All share Arabella’s address (North Fund excepted), were founded by senior Arabella officials, pay the firm impressive management fees, and promote left-wing causes. Recall, too, that Arabella Advisors LLC makes its money from foundation clients and fees for managing its nonprofit fleet. It’s the only company in the world that *created its own clients*.

A graphic obtained from a confidential donor presentation reveals the advantages in using both 501(c)(3)—whose contributions are tax-deductible—and (c)(4) groups,

which may spend significantly more on lobbying and may aid candidates.

Why run so many separate funds? There’s an advantage in having multiple pots to direct donor funds to ... and they help throw off nosy journalists. An outside contribution to an Arabella group can potentially be routed through as many as three nonprofits before exiting the system, further obscuring the network’s activities. In 2021 alone, Arabella’s nonprofits shuffled over \$98 million between themselves in exactly this fashion—money that will never be traced to its original donors.

As to the source of these funds, only private foundations must publicly report their donors. IRS Form 990 disclosures reveal these nonprofits’ budgets and lobbying sums as well as any grants they pay out—\$930 million across the network in 2020, up 134 percent from 2019, an off-cycle year—but there’s no requirement to disclose the pop-up websites.

And each group plays a slightly different, if fuzzy, role in the system. New Venture Fund acts as a paymaster for its “sister” nonprofits and is the biggest (c)(3) grantmaker. Sixteen Thirty Fund, the oldest 501(c)(4), was created with seed capital from ACORN and the Sierra Club to run Arabella’s most politically hot campaigns or pass money to other (c)(4) groups. In 2019 it seeded North Fund, which focuses on state ballot measures and runs even more extreme pop-ups like 51 for 51, Arabella’s push for D.C. statehood. Hopewell Fund runs many of the pro-abortion campaigns, while Windward Fund specializes in “green” causes.





The best evidence of the network’s bias comes from its top grant recipients.

Between 2019 and 2021, Arabella’s Sixteen Thirty Fund granted \$138 million to America Votes, the self-described “coordination hub of the progressive community” and one of the Left’s top get-out-the-vote machines.

Donor presentation showing pop-up groups run by Arabella’s top 501(c)(3), New Venture Fund, and top 501(c)(4), Sixteen Thirty Fund.

Affiliated 501(c)(3)-501(c)(4)s

- 501(c)(3)s can set up separately incorporated 501(c)(4)s
 - Together these are considered “affiliated organizations” or “joint projects/campaigns”
 - Set up properly, can maximize educational and lobbying activities out of the 501(c)(3), laying foundation for targeted lobbying and political activity out of the 501(c)(4)

(c)3/(c)4 Campaign Profile

Health Care for America Now Education Fund (New Venture Fund)	Health Care for America Now (Sixteen Thirty Fund)
Funded 501(c)3 capacity building and education field work as part of Health Care for America Now Education Fund’s overall coordinated campaign	Funded 501(c)4 field work in targeted states and districts that successfully pushed back regressive repeal legislation as part of HICAN’s coordinated legislative advocacy campaign
In 2017, Health Care for America Now Education Fund groups reached over 1.8 million people through on the ground public education efforts in over 30 states.	Organized and led weekly grassroots coalition calls to share information, provide communication guidance, and mobilize key constituency field operations to push back against regressive legislation in a strategic and coordinated manner.
Executed a joint New Venture Fund and Sixteen Thirty Fund contract with Berlin Rosen, allowing the projects to provide cohesive C3/C4 messaging	

Credit: Capital Research Center

The fund gave \$26 million in that span to Kessler’s old outfit, the League of Conservation Voters, and another \$10.5 million to Bill Kristol’s NeverTrump group Defending Democracy Together.

Who’s New Venture Fund’s top recipient? The Sixteen Thirty Fund, at \$147 million since 2019. Number two: America Votes at \$54 million, followed by Arabella’s North Fund at \$24 million.

The Big Money Behind “Our Network”

When dealing with outsiders, Arabella is careful to maintain the illusion that its nonprofits are wholly independent organizations which “hired” the firm for its premier services (and legally speaking, that’s true). Arabella Advisors, we’re told in fluent legalese, merely provides “administrative and operational support services” to its nonprofits and “neither controls nor directs” spending by these “clients.”

But secret emails dated to 2017 reveal New Venture Fund president Lee Bodner selling its services to then-Gov. Jay Inslee (D-WA) while treating Arabella Advisors as one and the same:

“I’m attaching a memo which outlines ways that the New Venture Fund and Arabella Advisors might support you and the other governors’ offices with the US Climate Alliance, and some background on our work. I’m also copying my colleagues Bruce Boyd [Arabella senior managing director and a New Venture Fund advisor] and Ryan Strode [then-Arabella senior director] from Arabella. They lead our collective work on climate policy and advocacy.”

“In these ways, we could make sure that you are connected both within and beyond our network to help marshal the resources you need to make this successful,” Bodner concludes.

Despite this secrecy, we’ve dug up mountains of data on the network’s donors.

This data is difficult to find, even with IRS disclosures. There is no central database of grants; everything must be pieced together by hand from numerous sources. In all, we’ve accounted for 45 percent of the network’s \$6.4 billion in total revenues between 2013 and 2021, or \$2.8 billion, across nearly 2,500 grants. (The difference between each nonprofit’s *total* revenues and revenues from *contributions* is negligible; each nonprofit routinely collects 99 percent of its revenues from contributions.)

That’s an average. We know far more about the 501(c)(3)s than the 501(c)(4)s; we’ve traced 74 percent of New Venture Fund’s 2021 contributors, for example, compared with just 7.5 percent of Sixteen Thirty Fund’s contributors for that year.

In the case of the 501(c)(3)s, these contributions overwhelmingly came from private foundations or other pass-through funders (i.e. donor-advised fund providers), while much of the rest almost certainly came from individuals or even private companies cutting checks to each nonprofit. That money is untraceable. For the 501(c)(4)s, the money is split between labor unions and other (c)(4) groups. Much of North Fund’s money, recall, comes from

its Arabella-run “sisters,” making the source even darker.

We’ve listed the biggest and most notable donor to each Arabella nonprofit below, excluding intra-network grants (with the exception of North Fund, since its money from 2019–2021 overwhelmingly came from its “sister” nonprofits):

Sixteen Thirty Fund

Donor	Total (since 2013)
Chan Zuckerberg Initiative Advocacy	\$7,442,000
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)	\$6,137,525
Democracy Fund Voice	\$6,182,000
National Education Association	\$5,077,371
Tides Advocacy	\$4,414,700
AFL-CIO & affiliates	\$3,504,000
Heising-Simons Action Fund	\$2,100,000
Forward.US (FWD.US)	\$2,000,000
Patriotic Republic	\$2,000,000

North Fund

Donor	Total (since 2013)
Sixteen Thirty Fund	\$29,827,334
New Venture Fund	\$24,042,118
Democracy Fund Voice	\$4,600,000
Open Society Policy Center	\$3,732,000
Onward Together	\$335,000
American Future Republic	\$325,000
Center for American Progress Action Fund	\$250,000
Long Ridge Action Fund	\$250,000
United to Protect Democracy Action Fund	\$237,500
Heising-Simons Action Fund	\$200,000

New Venture Fund*

Donor	Total (since 2013)
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	\$584,295,038
Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund*	\$284,482,619
National Philanthropic Trust*	\$166,655,232
Silicon Valley Community Foundation*	\$160,447,611
Ford Foundation	\$120,565,095
Chan Zuckerberg Initiative	\$105,050,000
Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation	\$102,430,388
Open Society Foundations/FPOS	\$42,988,350
Gordon & Betty Moore Foundation	\$41,517,772

Windward Fund*

Donor	Total (since 2015)
JPB Foundation	\$73,250,000
John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation	\$56,400,000
William & Flora Hewlett Foundation	\$37,850,000
SD Bechtel Jr. Foundation	\$29,342,750
Gordon & Betty Moore Foundation	\$20,373,000
Rockefeller Foundation / RBF / RPA	\$7,440,000
National Philanthropic Trust*	\$5,201,000

Hopewell Fund*

Donor	Total (since 2015)
Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation	\$80,138,832
Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund*	\$43,333,323
Open Society Foundations/FPOS	\$10,756,750
Silicon Valley Community Foundation*	\$7,212,500

*Donor-Advised Fund Provider

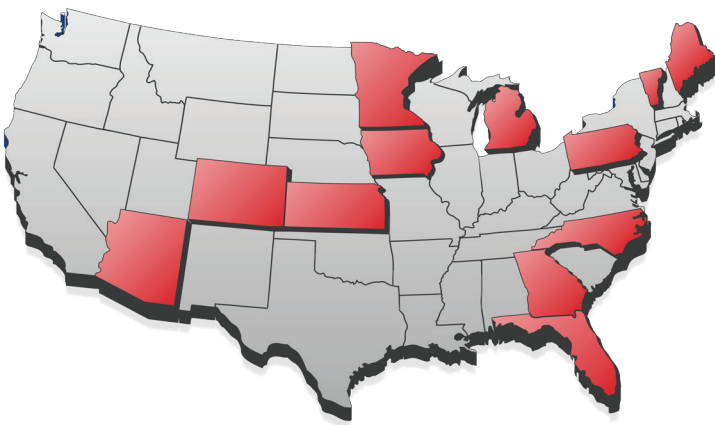
Clearly, New Venture Fund might be considered the Gates Foundation's preferred pot for funding politics. But a huge portion of the 501(c)(3) groups' funding comes from *other* pass-through nonprofits, most notably major donor-advised fund providers like Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund and National Philanthropic Trust.

These act as a double- or triple-blind: A donor dumps money into his Fidelity Charitable account for an immediate tax write-off, and later directs a portion of it to New Venture Fund, which then goes either to an Arabella-run pop-up or to yet *another* political group. There's absolutely no way to trace those funds back to the original source—and that's exactly the point.

Spending Big in 2020

2020 was without a doubt the Arabella network's biggest year. The 501(c)(4) Sixteen Thirty Fund poured \$44 million into dozens of anti-Republican groups in 29 states, notably the battlegrounds of Florida, North Carolina, Arizona, Wisconsin, Michigan, Georgia, and Pennsylvania.

\$1 MILLION+ GRANTS FROM SIXTEEN THIRTY FUND, 2020



The biggest of these by far was North Carolina, where leftists received a stunning \$9.5 million from Sixteen Thirty Fund in 2020. One of them, Fair Future NC, used \$1 million of it—three times its total budget for the prior year—to savage Republican state senators. Piedmont Rising, despite its name a *Philadelphia*-based group, took in \$1.2 million from the fund to attack Sen. Thom Tillis (R).

In Arizona, Sixteen Thirty Fund poured \$3.6 million into Advancing AZ, formed just six months prior to the

November election, which spent heavily on attack ads criticizing Sen. Martha McSally (R) for voting to overturn Obamacare. She lost reelection by 79,000 votes.

In Georgia, Stacey Abrams' voter turnout group Fair Fight Action raked in \$3.1 million from Sixteen Thirty Fund, swamping the 2021 Senate runoffs with 800,000 newly registered voters, "half of them people of color and 45 percent under 30," according to *Newsweek*.

And in Pennsylvania, Sixteen Thirty Fund's \$3.3 million paid for a Philly-based get-out-the-vote drive run by the Voter Project—itsself a front for the SEIU- and AFSCME-funded Keystone Research Center. The Voter Project reportedly registered 3.2 million new voters nationwide for mail-in ballots. Its lead strategist later bragged that the project led "the soft-side effort to win the swing state [for Biden] in 2020."

What's amazing is that Arabella's millions didn't make *more* of an impact. Democrats picked up four seats in just three of the 19 states with Senate races targeted by Sixteen Thirty Fund in 2020 (Arizona, Colorado, and Georgia).

One or two seats is certainly enough to change control of the chamber. But the lesson is clear: "Progressives" must vastly outspend conservatives to have a chance at winning majorities.

Carpet-Bombing the 2022 Midterms

Sixteen Thirty Fund channeled another \$9.3 million into pro-Democrat PACs in the 2022 midterm cycle. Over 40 percent of that sum (\$4 million) went to a single group: Open Democracy PAC, which aimed to "stop election subversionists" and "extremists" by endorsing Democrats running for everything from county clerk to governor. Its ultimate aim is to enact automatic voter registration laws and "eliminate rules disenfranchising voters because of race," as if it's 1865.

76 percent of its budget came from Sixteen Thirty Fund. In turn, Open Democracy paid Elias Law Group \$148,000 (whose principal, super-lawyer Marc Elias, sits on the PAC's board); the Democrat consultancy BerlinRosen \$687,000; and moved \$1.5 million and \$777,000 to PACs in Texas and Colorado, respectively.

In Alaska, Sixteen Thirty Fund pumped \$1.1 million into Alaskans for Bristol Bay Action, 73 percent of that group’s budget for the 2020 cycle. Almost all of that money went to attacking Lisa Murkowski (R) in the Senate race and supporting Democrat Mary Peltola in the congressional race, who defeated Republican Sarah Palin largely thanks to the state’s ranked-choice voting policy.

In total, pro-Peltola groups spent \$3.1 million to the meagre \$15,000 spent by pro-Palin groups—and Alaskans for Bristol Bay Action was the second-biggest spender.

The North Fund, Arabella’s newest 501(c)(4), dropped another \$5.3 million in the midterms, \$4.1 million of which went to a single PAC: Somos, which spent its millions attacking Republican Senate candidates in Nevada, Arizona, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and other key states.

2022 Pop-Up Ads

Across the 2022 cycle, we’ve discovered nearly \$6.6 million in political ads backing at least 20 Democrats paid for by Arabella nonprofits, and another \$4.9 million from its spin-off, Demand Justice.

Sixteen Thirty Fund and its pro-Obamacare pop-up, Protect Our Care, ran generic ads for House Democrats in close races, all of which hit prescription drug prices, Big Pharma, health insurance premiums, and

preexisting conditions: Abigail Spanberger (VA-07); Elaine Luria (VA-02); Angie Craig (MN-2); Antonio Delgado (NY-19), now New York’s lieutenant governor; Chris Pappas (NH-01); Cindy Axne (IA-03); Colin Allred (TX-32), who’s running for Texas’ Senate seat in 2024; Elissa Slotkin (MI-07); Jared Golden (ME-02), who won with Maine’s new ranked-choice voting policy; Susan Wild (PA-07); and Susie Lee (NV-03).

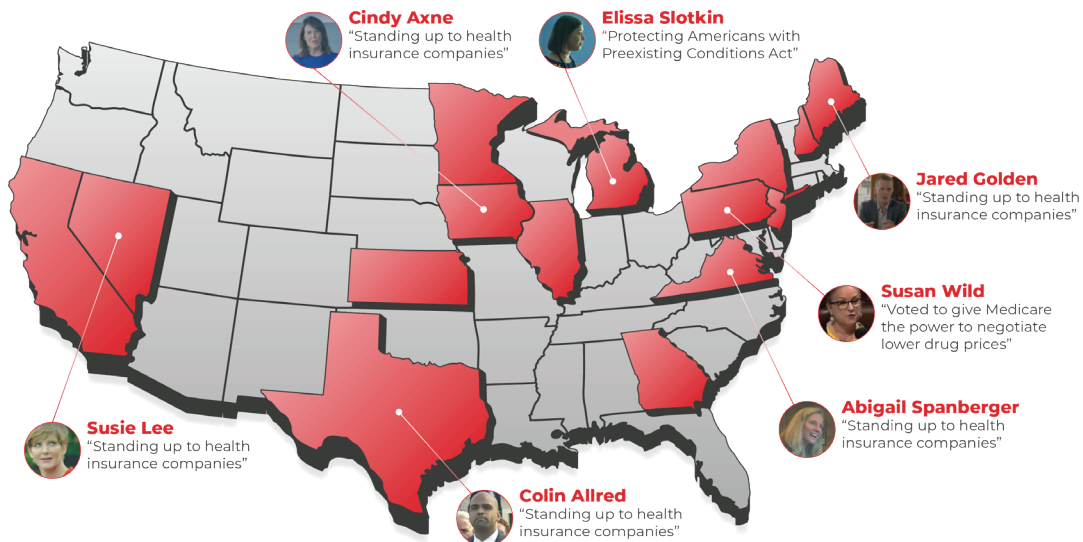
Many of the network’s 2022 ads ran under the name of a pop-up campaign, not the nonprofit sponsoring the ad.

Defend American Democracy (DAD), a Sixteen Thirty Fund front, wants voters to “put country over politics” by handing permanent control of Washington to the Democrats. DAD was originally formed to push Robert Mueller’s investigation into pro-Trump Russian “interference” in the 2016 election.

In January 2022, DAD ran ads targeting veterans in Arizona, demanding that Sen. Kyrsten Sinema (D) vote to “end the filibuster” so lawmakers could “protect the right to vote” and “hold [Jan. 6] insurrectionists accountable.” (Sinema ultimately joined Republicans in preserving the filibuster rule.)

It also urged Sinema to support Sen. Amy Klobuchar’s (D-MN) Freedom to Vote Act, which would’ve enacted same-day and automatic voter registration and permanent vote-by-mail nationwide, barred states from

STATES WITH ARABELLA NETWORK POLITICAL ADS, 2022



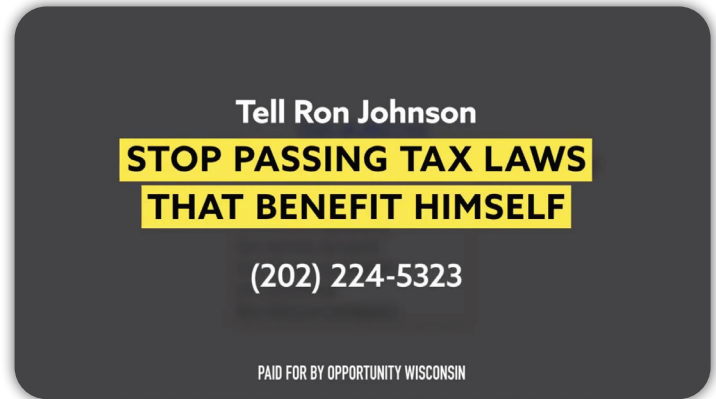
removing inactive voters from the rolls (something they're required by law to do), restricted campaign finance laws, and handed control of state redistricting to the Justice Department.

Another DAD ad complained that there are “30,000 veterans in Washington, D.C., [who] don't have a vote in Congress because D.C. isn't a state.” “Patriotism means doing what's right for our country,” we're told, which apparently means giving a city of 713,000 residents—only 12,000 of whom voted Republican in 2022—two U.S. senators.



In Wisconsin, an Arabella-run North Fund ad accused Sen. Ron Johnson (R) of supporting a “tax loophole” that earned him \$5 million for selling his family's manufacturing business, doubling his net worth since he took office in 2011. Where'd they get those amazing facts? From the Congressional Integrity Project, an activist group run by multiple Arabella staffers—and funded with millions of dollars from Sixteen Thirty Fund.

If that's not incestuous enough, the ad was also run through North Fund's D.C.-based front Opportunity Wisconsin, a fact missed by the lefties at PolitiFact when they glowingly described the pop-up as “a coalition of Wisconsin residents focused on an economy that works for working people.”



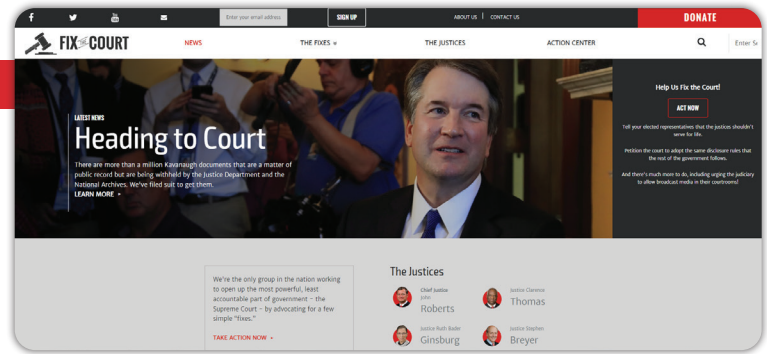
Demand Justice's pre-printed signs at 2018 Supreme Court protest. Source: Hayden Ludwig.

Credit: Capital Research Center

Delegitimizing the Supreme Court

No group so perfectly illustrates the professional Left's grip on the Democratic Party than Demand Justice. Beginning in early 2019, this toxic “dark money” group quickly became Sixteen Thirty Fund's most notorious pop-up and the source of so much criticism that Arabella later spun it off into a separate 501(c)(4) in mid-2021.

This far-left outfit launched in July 2018 with a much-trumpeted \$5 million budget to protest the “extremism” of Trump's Supreme Court nominee—days before Brett Kavanaugh's name was publicly announced—alongside another Sixteen Thirty Fund pop-up, Protect Our Care. We now know that more than half of Demand Justice's budget came from George Soros, whose Open Society Policy Center gave Sixteen Thirty Fund \$2.5 million in mid-2018 “to provide support for Demand Justice,” \$50,000 “to support advocacy on executive nominations,” and another \$87,000 later that year “to support advocacy on judicial nominations.”



Democrat in Congress—and accused Republicans of “packing” the courts with conservative judges, a spin so novel it’s almost admirable.

Throughout the 2022 midterms Demand Justice attacked the “Republican Supreme Court” and its “hard-right majority” for overturning *Roe v. Wade*, accused Justice Neil Gorsuch of stealing his seat from Obama, and continually maligned Kavanaugh as “a man accused of sexual assault.” Other ads supported passage of the John Lewis Voting Rights Act (H.R.4), an update to the Democrats’ tyrannical For the People Act (H.R.1), to pass the Democrats’ suite of election “reforms.”



Today, Demand Justice regularly cites Fix the Court as an “expert” source for “reforming” the court with term limits and a code of ethics. Ditto the *New York Times* and Sens. Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) in their years-long onslaught against the “hypocrisy” of the court’s conservative justices. The first thing Fix the Court did after it launched was run ads attacking the justices’ “disdain for openness and transparency.”



But that money didn’t materialize from nothing. In April 2018, Demand Justice director Brian Fallon—the wild-eyed ex-spokesman for Attorney General Eric Holder, Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-NY), and Hillary Clinton’s 2016 presidential campaign—presented his scheme to seize control of America’s courts at the Democracy Alliance’s spring conference, when the biggest influencers and mega-funders gather to strategize on winning the next election. After that, the Left’s money spigot opened up for Fallon’s group.

When I was at a Demand Justice rally in July 2018 I photographed protesters wielding pre-printed signs opposing every possible name on Trump’s shortlist: “Stop Kethledge,” “Stop Hardiman,” “Stop Barrett,” and “Stop Kavanaugh.”

That was just the beginning. The pop-up quickly created the attack website StopKavanaugh.com and even purchased the website StopBarrett.com in 2018 in the off-chance Amy Coney Barrett was nominated (two years before she actually was). And during his confirmation hearings, Demand Justice stationed protesters outside the Supreme Court dressed in costumes from *A Handmaid’s Tale*.



At the same time, a sister pop-up called Fix the Court—this run by the 501(c)(3) New Venture Fund—smeared Kavanaugh as a rapist. It populated a second attack website (BrettKavanaugh.com) with links to survivors of sexual assault.

When that didn’t pan out, Demand Justice later invented the scheme in 2020 to pack the Supreme Court with partisan justices. It coined the phrase “court expansion”—a talking point now echoed by nearly every

If that line of attack sounds familiar, it's the seedbed for the Left's newest offensive against Justices Clarence Thomas, Neil Gorsuch, and John Roberts. We know their playbook: Saturate the court with fake scandals, threaten to impeach the justices, then use the manufactured crisis to pass dictatorial laws granting congressional Democrats power to put the "fix" in.

Disclosures show that Demand Justice continued to receive Arabella network funding after spinning off—evidence that its "independence" is a sham.

And thanks to a major screw-up by Fix the Court director Gabe Roth—who accidentally released his group's donor list in May 2023 to a conservative news outlet—we know that *all* of its funding in 2021 came from two sources: New Venture Fund and the Hewlett Foundation, a left-wing standby and regular donor to the Arabella network. It's entirely possible that Hewlett also funded Fix the Court before it spun off. Should private foundations be paying for a partisan crusade against the Supreme Court?

More of the Pop-Up Playbook

The Arabella network has run similar—if more obscure—pop-up campaigns on virtually every hot issue in politics. The following are a small sampling of the worst and the damage they've caused our country.

The Dangerous Speech Project aims to "inoculate" Americans against right-wing "hate" and

Republican "misinformation" by using the legal system to punish "influential liars." It also spreads its own conspiracy theories, including the lie that Paul Pelosi's attacker was a right-winger rather than a nutty illegal alien, pothead, and Pelosi family friend. The Ford, MacArthur, and George Soros' Open Society Foundations have all tagged grants to the project since 2019.

Accountable.US, a New Venture Fund spin-off, runs CorporateComplicity.org, which aims to blacklist ex-Trump administration officials from getting jobs in corporate America because they "incite[d] a mob attack at the U.S. Capitol" on January 6, 2021. Among them are ex-Homeland Security official Ken Cuccinelli, Attorney General Jeff Sessions, senior advisor Kellyanne Conway, and Health & Human Services Sec. Alex Azar. "Government service does not guarantee private employment. In fact, it should not," the website spews. "Your words are meaningless unless they are backed up with resolute action."

All Above All has one goal: Overturn the Hyde Amendment, the 1976 legislation barring the federal government from paying for abortions (except in the most extreme circumstances). In practice, that

Campaign Against Corporate Complicity

About the Campaign Against Corporate Complicity

The Trump administration tore our government apart. It shredded norms, violated the rule of law, waged war on facts, spread misinformation and manipulated the public, and paved the way for the President Trump's supporters to incite a violent mob attack at the U.S. Capitol. We must ensure that the past four years of flagrant disregard for the core tenets of our democracy do not spread beyond this disgraceful administration.

As senior Trump administration officials seek refuge in corporate America, companies should fully vet applicants for their participation in cruel and anti-democratic policies.

There are simply some lines that cannot be crossed.

means pushing the EACH WOMAN Act, a bill that would prevent states from restricting abortion access in private healthcare plans.

One of the network's top donors, Warren Buffett, is probably the single biggest donor to pro-abortion causes in human history, dumping at least \$4.7 billion into the industry since 2000, enough to pay for some 4 million 20-week abortions. "Have an IUD? Thank Warren Buffett," opined the *Washington Post* in 2015. Amazingly, CNBC has celebrated Buffett as America's "most charitable billionaire."

In 2018, his pro-abortion philanthropy—the Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation, named for his late ex-wife—was the largest donor to Arabella's Hopewell Fund, funds that almost certainly bankrolled Hopewell Fund's pro-abortion pop-ups.

States Newsroom is another Hopewell Fund spin-off created to set up “independent” local news agencies across numerous states ranging from Virginia to Alaska. The network, of course, claims to be nonpartisan. Far from it—early job postings from 2019 show the network proudly proclaiming itself a “progressive political journalism startup” led by a left-wing activist in North Carolina, a state Democrats have poured millions into flipping.

From 2017 to 2018, Arabella’s D.C.-based Western Values Project ran an all-out war against Trump’s Secretary of the Interior, Ryan Zinke, with the goal of driving him out of office—which they did in January 2019, when Zinke left office amidst ethics complaints that he’d misused public funds (brought to light by the group’s endless FOIAs). In classic Arabella fashion, the project used an attack website to topple its target: HasRyanZinkeBeenFiredYet.com.

This character assassination machine then turned its guns on Zinke’s successor: David Bernhardt, calling him a “walking conflict of interest” who would continue “Ryan Zinke’s culture of corruption,” and accusing the entire department of shilling for Big Oil.

As with Zinke (and Kavanaugh before him), Western Values Project erected a website—DavidBernhardt.org—calling him “the ultimate DC swamp creature” and an “ex-lobbyist who is too conflicted to be Interior Secretary,” while detailing a laundry list of ethics charges in an

attempt to derail his confirmation to the post. It even ran a 6-figure television ad demanding moderate Republican Senators Cory Gardner (CO) and Martha McSally (AZ) oppose Bernhardt’s confirmation. When that failed, Western Values Project spent the next two years trying to thwart the Interior Department with an online “David Bernhardt Scandal Tracker” until Trump left office in 2021. (Rep. Zinke later entered my exposé on the ugly story into the congressional record in January 2023, but the damage cannot be undone.)

Two Arabella pop-ups, the Center for Secure and Modern Election (CSME) and Institute for Responsive Government, are cogs in the “Zuck Bucks” 2.0 machine run by the Center for Tech and Civic Life (CTCL), which distributed \$420 million from Mark Zuckerberg as COVID-19 “relief” grants to pump

up Democratic turnout in the 2020 election. The updated scheme aims to embed “progressive” groups into election machinery by hooking county offices on private “scholarship,” funds that may be used for “services” like consulting on drop boxes and vote-by-mail expansion. CSME has pushed for automatic voter registration in New York, Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, and Oregon.

In fact, Arabella’s New Venture Fund may have helped disseminate “Zuck bucks” in 2020 by pumping \$25 million from an unknown donor (possibly Zuckerberg) into CTCL, which gifted \$1.1 million across 13 Louisiana parishes. As of writing, both New Venture Fund and CTCL are under investigation by the state attorney general, while voters are likely to pass a Zuck bucks ban in the state’s October 2023 election.

The image shows a screenshot of a website. At the top left, there is a circular profile picture of David Bernhardt next to the text "MEET DAVID BERNHARDT". To the right of this are navigation links: "Meet David", "Resources", "Conflicts", "Legal Clients & Opinions", and "Past". Below the navigation is a large black and white portrait of David Bernhardt. Overlaid on the left side of the portrait is the text "MEET DAVID BERNHARDT" in large, white, bold, sans-serif font. Below the portrait, the main headline reads "EX-LOBBYIST WHO IS TOO CONFLICTED TO BE INTERIOR SECRETARY" in bold, black, sans-serif font. Underneath the headline is a sub-headline: "David Bernhardt is the 'ultimate DC swamp creature' who has gone round and round through the revolving door between industry and government:". At the bottom left, there is a small box containing the year "1990's" with a vertical line pointing to the start of a paragraph of text: "Bernhardt began his career in the 1990s working for Scott McInnis (R-CO) before taking a position in the Washington lobbying shop of Brownstein, Hyatt and Farber, where he lobbied on behalf of oil and chemical companies."

We've also exposed the Hub Project, a deliberate attempt by a private foundation to circumvent IRS prohibition on election work by running its work through the Arabella empire. That scheme is funded by Swiss billionaire Hansjörg Wyss and his Wyss Foundation, a left-wing mega-donor with a ghoulish background whom some have labeled "the new George Soros."

According to a secret memo written for the Wyss Foundation in 2015, this "Hub Project" would support the 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."

While the actual operation would be housed in the Arabella network for tax purposes, 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*.

Save America's Charities

As it stands, the Arabella network is a monument to the Left's political weaponization of charities, as well as its innovativeness, ruthlessness—and vulnerability. For all the power this empire wields, it reveals how

dependent the modern Democratic Party has become on expensive D.C. activists to win elections. Elite "Progressivism" is top-heavy and out of touch with the grass-roots. What would it take to capsize?

Private foundations have been barred from electioneering since the 1960s. They aren't allowed to fund 501(c)(4)s—except to do (c)(3) activities—or engage in significant lobbying, either. Yet foundations make up the bulk of donors to the Arabella network, whose funds are lopsidedly lumped in its 501(c)(3) charities.

A drastic solution would be to radically redefine what the IRS considers "charitable" activities. Nonpartisan voter registration—as if such a thing actually exists—is one example. Ban it. Similarly, most experts agree that (c)(3)s may lawfully spend up to 25 percent of their budget on lobbying, which the IRS broadly defines as "attempting to influence legislation."

Obviously, budget size is the key metric: New Venture Fund's budget for 2021 was \$964 million, theoretically freeing up \$241 million for advocacy. That buys a *lot* of influence. In reality, though, New Venture Fund reported just \$2.8 million in lobbying expenditures in 2021; yet it spent \$234 million on "public awareness" and "education" programs to foster "public engagement [on] important issues."

The smart approach here is to target the definition of issue "education." Congress rightly took a light-touch approach to defining

"charity" in the last century; today's battles call for a firmer hand. If we want to restore America's charitable sector, start by banning 501(c)(3)s from policy work under the guise of "education." That will take lawyerly finesse. While they're at it, lower the lobbying cap for (c)(3)s to 5 percent or less. Shunt it all into 501(c)(4) groups, removing donors' tax-deductibility incentive, then consider lowering the (c)(4) lobbying limit to 25 percent of the total budget rather than its current 49 percent cap. That would move virtually all political dollars into a single pot (besides PACs) without forcing donor disclosure, which conservatives correctly defend under the Constitution's First Amendment and leftists hypocritically crave.

More prosaic but no less important: Congress can also dramatically overhaul the Form 990 and 990-PF (for foundations) disclosure to reflect the modern nonprofit landscape. After all, the point of these documents is to show what groups are doing with their tax exemption. What use are they if important details are missing?

The Capital Research Center's Robert Stilson has some excellent suggestions, many of which are included below:

- Foundations should cease reporting investments as a lump-sum and instead itemize all securities and other holdings;
- Foundations that make pass-through grants must identify the ultimate recipient(s) of their

- grants, not just the intermediary;
- The Schedule I grant list of foundations, unlike those of other nonprofits, doesn't have a column for employer ID number (EIN), confusing readers—include this simple but vital data point;
- Foundation grants to *foreign* entities are reported in far less detail on a separate schedule—include them with domestic grants on the Schedule I and require the same information of domestic grants (e.g. address, grant purpose, EIN-equivalent);
- Similarly, ban nonprofits from using a grant recipient's DBA ("doing business as") name in the Schedule I;
- List all of the nonprofit's owned DBAs, including those of fiscally sponsored projects;
- Require nonprofits to include *all* attachments and schedules when posting their Form 990 filing (since so many fail to do so);
- Force nonprofits to publicly post their latest Form 990 with all attachments online for general access, rather than withholding the documents for in-person requests;
- Generate a new schedule listing all fiscally sponsored projects (Arabella's pop-ups) with their name, operating address, staff names and salaries, date of creation, anticipated date of achieving independency and tax exemption recognition, budget, grantmaking and lobbying, redacted donor list, and management fees paid to the sponsor;

- Alternatively, require fiscally sponsored projects to file their own, simplified Form 990;
- Expand list of contractors to every vendor over \$10,000 (rather than the current \$100,000);
- Expand employee and salary list to cover every full-time employee, rather than just the five highest-paid;
- Report all independent expenditures (i.e. TV ads) with individual cost, medium, detailed content description, and targeted candidate;
- Break down lobbying expenditures in detail, rather than as a lump-sum, by listing sums spent on individual bills, as well as contracted lobbyists and firms, by quarter.

Enacting these reforms would take a combination of congressional legislation and executive oversight of the IRS. Would they destroy the Arabella empire? Of course not. What they *would* do is make it harder for "progressive" groups to run political gambits in the shadows. They'd make it vastly more difficult to funnel foundation money into politics, run pop-up campaigns, and shuffle huge sums into dark corners. And they'd help legitimate reporters find and expose this difficult-to-trace information.

Congressional Republicans ought to accompany these reforms with a relentless onslaught of embarrassing investigations into the corruption of charities with subpoenas to the leadership of every major funder, activist group, and pass-

through group in America. There's more than enough information in the press about how they're abusing nonprofit laws for partisan gain. The onus is on nonprofits to justify their tax benefits, so make 'em sweat.

Many conservatives will wince at these far-reaching proposals, but it's time for our movement to wise up and leave childish ways behind. We aren't in the 1990s anymore; "unfair" is the defense of losers that gets us nowhere.

Here's a better one: "Level the playing field," a favorite slogan of the Left even as they clobber conservatives on the battlefield. Conservatives, let's call them on their bluff.

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