



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

July 13, 2022

NEW REPORT REVEALS GROWING & DANGEROUS TREND OF BILLIONAIRES BUYING FEDERAL ELECTIONS

America's Wealthiest Pump Millions Into 2022 Campaigns, Mostly to Republicans Who Will Cut Their Taxes, Including Many Who Back Lie That Trump Beat Biden

WASHINGTON, D.C – A new report from Americans for Tax Fairness has found that America's billionaires are pumping tens of millions of dollars into the 2022 midterm elections, mostly backing Republican candidates for Congress who will cut taxes on ultra-rich people like them and the corporations they own. The report finds that many of those receiving billionaire campaign contributions are undermining our democracy by peddling the dangerous lie that the 2020 presidential election was stolen. The increased flow of billionaires' dollars into American politics this year continues a trend that began when the Supreme Court struck down effective campaign-contribution limits 12 years ago in the *Citizens United* decision.

These are among the findings in the report, [*BILLIONAIRES BUYING ELECTIONS: How the Nation's Wealthiest Translate Economic Power Into Political Clout*](#):

- Almost half—\$89 million, or 47%—of the nearly \$190 million raised by the House and Senate GOP super PACs in the first 16 months of the 2022 campaign cycle came from just 27 billionaires. Almost all of that money came from Wall Street tycoons, who particularly benefit from some of the biggest loopholes in the tax code.
- The Democratic counterparts of the two congressional GOP super PACs have received much less billionaire money: about 17%, or about \$26 million out of \$154 million. These billionaire contributions were much less concentrated by industry: while the most still came from finance and investment (35%), cryptocurrency (26%) and high-tech (18%) were also substantial sources.
- Among the biggest billionaire donors are Illinois hedge-fund pioneer Ken Griffin, who alone contributed over \$28 million to the two GOP congressional super PACs; money manager Stephen Schwarzman, who gave the groups \$20 million; and PayPal co-founder Peter Thiel, who handed nearly \$30 million to super PACs backing his U.S. Senate candidates in Ohio (J.D. Vance) and Arizona (Blake Masters) who both used to work for him and deny that President Biden won the 2020 election.

Billionaires are among the wealthy Americans who [mostly control Corporate America](#) through their stock holdings, and many of those corporations have also been playing a big role in the midterm elections. Like the billionaires themselves, these firms mostly back GOP candidates

who pledge to preserve loopholes and special breaks that keep corporate tax rates low, many of whom also claim Joe Biden is an illegitimate president.

The report highlights seven huge corporations—**AT&T, Chevron, ExxonMobil, FedEx, GM, Merck, and UPS**—that together gave almost \$1.5 million to election deniers this election cycle. The firms' concern for truth and democracy was apparently outweighed by their desire to go on dodging taxes: in 2021, they paid an average 2.7% tax rate on a combined \$78 billion in profits. Average American families [pay about 13%](#).

Billionaire campaign funding has grown exponentially since the Supreme Court in 2010 removed effective limits on how much rich people and corporations could spend on politics in the *Citizens United* decision:

- In 2008, the last election year before the ruling, billionaires contributed a relatively modest \$31 million to federal campaigns. By 2020, their donations had ballooned to \$1.2 billion, a nearly 40-fold increase. In the 2020 election cycle, billionaires contributed nearly \$1 out of every \$10, while making up just 0.01% of all donors contributing more than \$200.
- Billionaires donated almost \$240 million to the combined campaign efforts of **Donald Trump's** two runs for president. Over half came from just one billionaire household, that of casino magnate Sheldon Adelson (who has since died).

“Billionaires, who are used to buying whatever they want, have increasingly dedicated their almost unlimited resources to buying American elections,” said **Frank Clemente, executive director of Americans for Tax Fairness**. “The problem is what’s good for billionaires—including cutting taxes on the rich and corporations—is bad for working families. We need to rein in billionaire political and economic power through campaign-finance reforms and tax reforms such as a billionaires income tax like that proposed by President Biden.”

The fortunes of U.S. billionaires [grew by a collective \\$2 trillion](#), or 70%, during the first two years of the pandemic. Over a recent nine-year period, the 400 wealthiest Americans paid an average effective federal [income tax rate of only 8.2%](#) when the growth in the value of their stock holdings is included in their income. The average federal income [tax rate for all taxpayers was 13.3%](#) in 2019.

Taxing billionaires more begins with some form of a billionaires income tax. [Legislation has been proposed](#) by President Biden, Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Rep. Jamaal Bowman. Such a reform would tax the increased value of the assets of the ultra-rich like corporate stock—just like workers' wages are taxed each year now—whether they sell those assets or not. This way income from wealth will be taxed more like income from wealth. The growth in these assets is the biggest form of income for the ultra-rich, can be as useful to them as money in the bank, and can under current law go entirely untaxed.

President Biden's version of a billionaires income tax could [raise \\$360 billion](#) over 10 years. Sen. Wyden's tax could [raise more than \\$550 billion](#).