



AMERICA'S CAMPUSES NEED TO DISTANCE THEMSELVES FROM THE KOCH-FUNDED INSURRECTION

A Report from UnKoch My Campus

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Billionaires such as Charles Koch spent a fortune convincing ordinary Americans to doubt everything -- they shouldn't be surprised that violence and division has followed ... It's not just climate change. After Barack Obama was elected president, the Kochs and other major Republican donors bankrolled the 'Tea Party' insurgency that pushed the baseless, racist allegation that Obama was not born in the United States. The most famous 'birther' of all? One Donald J. Trump ... Perhaps, when you spend a fortune undermining democracy, you shouldn't be too surprised when you succeed.

-- [Peter Geoghegan, Open Democracy](#)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Four months ago, on January 6, 2021, domestic terrorists stormed the U.S. Capitol, a brutal bid to disrupt American democracy that left five dead and a nation traumatized. Who funded this effort? And why are some of America's leading colleges and universities still in bed with the dark-money network that funded the insurrectionists?

For years, the Koch network has insisted that they are not trying to buy academics, gin up biased research, and exploit the good name of the higher education institutions into which they muscle their way. These implausible denials have been made for years at George Mason University, George Washington University, Tufts University, and the University of Arizona. Now, the same kind of disingenuous "who me?" claim is being made about the role of Charles Koch and his sprawling empire in the attack on the legitimacy of the 2020 presidential election and the interior of the U.S. Capitol.

The following question must be asked: Why would *anyone* accept at face value the protestations of innocence from an individual and network of dark-money entities that exist to promote confusion, undermine science, and foment conspiracy-based falsehoods?

Charles Koch recently [published a new book and is attempting to rebrand himself as a "uniter" who has some misgivings about fanning the flames of political partisanship.](#) But Koch's latest public relations effort is [dubious at best, given years of unbending right-wing ideology and a long track record of backing far-right think tanks, political advocacy front groups, and pro-insurrection Republican candidates.](#)

INSIDE THE DARK-MONEY MACHINE

While Koch and his network publicly encouraged calm during the assault on the U.S. Capitol and even urged the ratification of the election of President Joseph Biden, a very different Koch-inspired story was going on behind the scenes of the 2020 election and the January 6, 2021 terrorist attack on the U.S. Capitol:

1. In 2020, the Koch PAC [donated the maximum allowed amount, \\$5,000](#), to the QAnon-affiliated Marjorie Taylor Greene. When the donation was exposed by the media, the company [claimed to have asked for a refund](#).
2. A group of Koch-funded U.S. Senators banded together in a bid to block the confirmation of then President-elect Joseph Biden. This seminal event paved the way for the insurrectionist attack on the Capitol that left five dead. Much of the fallout from the January 6th insurrection lies at the feet of the eight U.S. Senate objectors – along with the Koch network that [donated \\$600,000 to them](#) and the other U.S. Senators who publicly argued the election results were illegitimate but did not vote to overturn them. The Koch-funded GOP Senators who voted to overturn the election results were: Josh Hawley of Missouri, Ted Cruz of Texas, Rick Scott of Florida, John Kennedy of Louisiana, Mike Braun of Indiana, Cindy Hyde-Smith of Mississippi, Senator-elect Cynthia Lummis of Wyoming, Roger Marshall of Kansas, and Tommy Tuberville of Alabama. Additionally, the Koch PAC was the biggest single company PAC donor to the campaigns of the coup attempt ringleaders in the U.S. House of Representatives, [as reported by the Center for Media and Democracy](#).
3. At least [three of the most active “nonprofit” groups that promoted the lie the election had been stolen and urged thousands of people to turn out for the January 6th march on the Capitol were funded by Koch Industries or its front groups](#). According to the [TrumpMarch.com website](#), the “Coalition Partners” for the January 6th event at the Capitol included the Rule of Law Defense Fund, Turning Point Action, and the Tea Party Patriots. Here is what we know about those key groups and their dark-money Koch backing:

- **RULE OF LAW DEFENSE FUND.** The dark money arm of Republican Attorneys General Association (RAGA), the [Rule of Law Defense Fund](#) and [RAGA itself](#) have received in excess of \$500,000 from Koch Industries and a subsidiary since 2014. Further, a division of Koch Industries, i360, has a massive voter database that Congressional committees are investigating to ascertain if it was used by RAGA/Rule of Defense Fund to make robocalls for the January 6th event.

The dark money arm of [RAGA made extensive robocalls nationwide in order to significantly boost turnout for the attack on the U.S. Capitol](#). The message Trump supporters heard was as follows:

"I'm calling for the Rule of Law Defense Fund with an important message. The 'March to Save America' is tomorrow in Washington D.C. at the Ellipse in President's Park between E St. and Constitution Avenue on the south side of the White House, with doors opening at 7:00 a.m. At 1:00 p.m., we will march to the Capitol building and call on congress to stop the steal. We are hoping patriots like you will join us to continue to fight to protect the integrity of our elections. For more information, visit MarchtoSaveAmerica.com. This call is paid for and authorized by the Rule of Law Defense Fund, 202-796-5838."

- **TURNING POINT ACTION.** This group's head, Charlie Kirk, [tweeted](#) on January 4th that he was "honored to help make this happen, sending 80+ buses full of patriots to DC to fight for this president." (After the riot, he deleted the tweet, but it was still captured for posterity.) Turning Point Action is a dark money group that does not report its donors to the Federal Election Commission. However, [according to the Center for Media and Democracy](#), its sister group, Turning Point USA, has received \$610,000 from Donors Trust since 2017. [Charles Koch's network has been tied to Donors Trust](#), another dark money group. According to an April 1, 2020 [Center for Media and Democracy](#) report: "In 2014-15, the Koch's Knowledge and Progress Fund gave \$5.3 million to Donors Trust, and the Charles Koch Foundation has given \$980,000 to it since 2014. The connected Donors Capital Fund, to which Koch family foundations have also contributed large sums, donated \$100,000 to TPUSA [Turning Point USA] in 2016."



- **TEA PARTY PATRIOTS.** Another Coalition Partner for the January 6th event, Tea Party Patriots, has [received at least \\$200,000 from Freedom Partners, a Koch front group](#). Tea Party Patriots also received donations from Donors Trust. Even though some Koch-related entities have sought to distance themselves from the Tea Party Patriots, the group and its January 6th actions ultimately go back to David Koch, who helped create it, groom it, and then unleash it on America. The responsibility of the owner of a rabid dog does not end when it leaves his or her porch.

AFTER THE ATTACK ON THE U.S. CAPITOL

And what about those Koch network denials of responsibility? [Consider this](#) clear-eyed take on the aftermath of the terrorist attack on the U.S. Capitol:

“Some of the companies and organizations that have spent big to elect insurrectionist Republican lawmakers in Washington are speaking out against the riot now as if they have been passive bystanders all along. While billionaire Charles Koch and his conservative dark money network have done more than nearly anyone to paint Congress deep red, his network’s political arm, Americans for Prosperity, issued a [statement](#) on Tuesday calling on Congress to certify the election. On Wednesday, the group said: ‘We join fellow Americans who are watching the violence at the U.S. Capitol with grave concern.’ Americans for Prosperity [spent \\$4.6 million](#) to help Missouri senator Josh Hawley defeat Claire McCaskill in 2018. Hawley led the effort among Senate Republicans to challenge certification of the election, and he was [photographed](#) raising a fist in support of the insurrectionists outside the Capitol on Wednesday.”

The reverberations from the deadly January 6th attack on the U.S. Capitol did not stop on that day. The fallout has continued since that date on multiple fronts:

- 1. Corporate campaign contributions dry up.** After the attack took place on Capitol Hill, there was an immediate backlash against sitting elected officials who sought to block the Biden Presidential confirmation. [Lawmakers who objected to election results have been cut off from 20 of their 30 biggest corporate PAC donors.](#) According to the Washington Post: *“Some of the strongest repudiations of the Republican lawmakers came from AT&T, Comcast, Honeywell, PricewaterhouseCoopers, General Electric, KPMG and Verizon. These firms all said they would suspend donations to members of Congress who voted against certifying Joe Biden as president.”*
- 2. Koch network goes silent ... and then goes back to support secessionists.** Even as scores of leading corporations and political action committees firmly and clearly distanced themselves from lawmakers who fueled the January 6th insurrection, no such definitive statement was forthcoming from Charles Koch or his dark-money network. This is significant because the Koch network, by means of its donations, played a major role in setting the insurrection in motion, [made eyeroll-inducing comments at the time to distance themselves from their own actions](#), and then adopted a “radio silence” approach after the deadly attack. If the Koch network truly opposed the insurrection and those who brought it about, it undertook no meaningful public action to reflect that fact. [Nebulous reports that the Koch network will somehow “weigh” the votes of insurrectionist lawmakers](#) fall far short of the firm action of those who have ruled out support for such candidates. In fact, [new federal reports](#) show that Koch PAC resumed giving to federal candidates in March 2021, doling out more cash to several U.S. House Members who voted to overturn the 2020 Presidential election.

- 3. Academic world turns a blind eye.** The fruit of the poisonous Koch network tree benefits not only political candidates, but colleges and universities that are willing to trade on their names and allow themselves to be academically corrupted. Four such examples are George Mason University, George Washington University, Tufts University, and the University of Arizona. In [a January 6th petition to George Mason University faculty and students, the following points were made](#): *“The same wealthy donor network that funded the GOP insurrectionists has a long history of funding at George Mason University. The George Mason University Foundation has received over \$50 million from the Charles Koch Foundation (CKF) since 2005. More significantly, the university has also received additional funding from CKF to George Mason think tanks: the Mercatus Center has received over \$10 million and the Institute for Humane Studies over \$35 million. It’s these centers that provide the Koch network with the ability to exploit higher education institutions for their own benefit. The Koch network’s donations come with strings attached (hiring decisions, the curriculum taught, etc.), are used to propagate disinformation and deregulation, and contribute to the degradation of George Mason University’s reputation as an institution of higher education.”* To date, none of the four higher education institutions most tied to the Koch network have severed their ties with the funders of the insurrection.