

Koch Cash Collective

An Emergency Effort Against the Biggest Money Undermining Democracy Today

Thanks to our partnership with Ben and Jerry's, IFG recently brought together labor leaders, climate campaigners, human rights advocates, representatives of communities of color, and clean water/anti-fracking activists (see full list below) to share their stories of frontline fights against America's biggest billionaire ideologues, Charles and David Koch.

Our objective was to help build a broader political power base to deal directly with the role of extreme wealth in undermining democracy and use the upcoming elections as an important opportunity for informing and inspiring renewed activism.

This is a crucial moment. The November elections are the most significant to take place since the Citizen's United decision's unleashing of private wealth upon our electoral process. Many people are already outraged by the corrupting influence of big money on our democracy. Now a new formation of like-minded constituencies who have recognized the importance of this fight and share a long view on solutions is keen to make something happen.

At the meeting, participants agreed on: an overall analysis of the problem; developing long-term strategies for solutions; a series of shared activities for the next 50 and 100 days; a coordinating structure to carry them forth; and a toolkit to educate their constituents and engage more people. All agreed that emergency efforts should be launched immediately. Starting with a focus on the single largest source of money undermining our democracy today, the Kochs, we will galvanize a growing movement to address the systemic problem post-2012.

Participants included Lisa Graves of ALEC Exposed, Jotaka Eaddy of the NAACP, Pablo Solón, Bolivia's former Ambassador to the UNFCCC, Derek Cressman of Common Cause, Cindy Wiesner of Grassroots Global Justice, Aliya Haq of Greenpeace, Aaron Black and Justin Wedes of Occupy Wall Street, Lisa Hoyos of Blue Green Alliance, Larry Fahn of the Sierra Club, Abraham Entis and Amy Hanks of Move To Amend, Mark Scholssberg of Food and Water Watch, and Rose Braz of the Center for Biological Diversity. USW, SEIU, Energy Action Coalition, 350.org, Credo, and other groups await outcomes. Here is our plan.

WHAT WE AGREED

Participants agreed:

- That the Kochs are attacking inherent rights protecting people and planet;
- That all peoples' constituencies organizing to defend these rights must unite;
- Beginning *immediately*, to call out how Koch Cash is damaging our democracy;
- Common goals must include a constitutional amendment, plus publicly funded elections;
- To use a new narrative which allows others to join efforts against Koch Cash;
- To engage in a series of collaborative actions over the next 60 days, and 6 months;
- To converge with other efforts eliminate money corrupting our democracy;
- To ask IFG to coordinate ongoing efforts to carry forward our agreed actions, and to provide a tool kit of as outlined below.

ALIGNING OUR ANALYSES

Participating groups agreed that “Koch Cash” is today’s most egregious example of extreme wealth being used against the public interest. The carbon billionaire brothers’ combined net worth quintupled from \$10B in 2005 to \$50B in 2011, making them now the third wealthiest persons in the world after Carlos Slim and Bill Gates. The Kochs embody a new form of power emerging as a result of globalization's extreme concentrations of wealth. They now exert undue influence beyond the power of the biggest corporations and industry groups, rolling back hard-won rights for protecting people and the planet while deeply damaging democratic institutions and processes.

Participants in the meeting outlined a set of shared activities for this fall and beyond to call public attention to the Kochs’ financial rampage. **All are united in defending as inherent human rights: the right to vote, to collectively bargain, to have clean air and clean water, and to a social safety net that would provide not only peoples’ dignified survival but opportunity to thrive as well.** Groups are also united in opposition to the \$1B blitz the Kochs are now leading to unseat the President, seize the Senate, and fill the House with even more Tea Party ideologues. Global impacts on hunger and the environment are especially urgent since the Kochs are the biggest barrier to US climate action (outspending Exxon by a factor of four), causing an international impasse at the UNFCCC. Never before have peoples’ movements faced such organized opposition financed by extremely wealthy individuals with such a dangerous agenda.

OUR OBJECTIVES AND OVERALL APPROACH

Our objective is to make use of this election season as a chance to show that accepting Koch Cash can carry a political cost for candidates. We propose a three-part way to carry out that task -- *taint, target and tag*.

Taint: Using very clear language and very easily understood examples, we will explain in a set of original fact sheets and policy briefs how the Kochs agenda is bad for three key audiences: progressives, independents, and Tea Party people. We will model what that narrative could and should be for those who speak to the larger public as well.

Target: Time is short and resources are scarce, so we’ll put our heads together with partners who are playing close attention to the targeting of key House and Senate races and pick a few where the Kochs and their associates are real factors and where the candidates on the other side are keen to call out Koch Cash. Even if all we achieve is that the post-election press says the association had an impact on one key race, we’ll have made a powerful start.

Tag: We will create entertaining, low-cost ways to paint those candidates with the Koch label. Think of the Prop. 65 campaign years back when environmentalists posted big stickers saying “Paid for by Chevron” on anti-65 billboards. A candidate's photo with the words, “Paid for by the Koch Cash, Destroyers of US Democracy” might make some candidates reconsider their sources of support.

KEY RESOURCES

In addition, IFG will prepare a toolkit for activists. It will provide a set of ten data-driven, network savvy, movement building research products to provide content for communications, mobilization, and broader movement building. Grassroots groups will use the information to better access more accurate intelligence and clearer images of they are up against. This will allow people to follow the financial flows from the Kochs to the various entities comprising their influence network.

As part of this effort, IFG will provide a toolkit to include the following components:

1. Kochtopus: online mapping of the money, structure, and scale of Koch Cash;
2. Koch Cash Tracker 2012: online tool for following the money this fall;
3. Koch Map: online tool for collaborative planning of actions;
4. Three policy briefs drawing links between Kochs and issues identified above;
5. Three podcasts on above issues for distribution via interested partners' networks;
6. Email campaign to IFG's online community, which can be adapted for partners;
7. Social media content (memes, pictographs, etc., for Facebook, Twitter, etc.);
8. Graphic poster of KochCash for partners, campus groups, and general public;
9. Online resource page of all articles, studies, and perspectives on the Kochs;
10. Whistleblowers' Website: where Koch corruption can be reported.

APPROACH TO SHARED ACTIVITIES

We will model ways to collectively call out the biggest money funding today's efforts to attack inherent human rights like voting, and to redefine the role of government to protect the power of capital at the expense of people and the planet.

By coordinating communications and mobilizing memberships, partners will participate in acts of peaceful public protest against the single largest source of funding for the extremists' "economic freedom" agenda.

Actions will focus attention on the flow of funds from the Kochs' fossil fuels empire to promote its purest political expression, such as the Romney Economic Plan's proposal to entirely eliminate the EPA's right to regulate the carbon that is killing our planet's ecosystems.

Groups will focus attention on Koch-funded entities and draw the links by protesting at Koch-funded events and fundraisers. We will model our actions so that others can also organize their own autonomous events wherever and whenever deemed appropriate.

Coordination among organizations is needed to keep track of ongoing collaborations and to deadline specific activities, and IFG was asked to coordinate key aspects.

A common list-serve will be set up and at least three conference calls on each collaborative action will be convened to execute workplans for the following shared activities:

1. Research and Reporting:

Frontline groups: ALEC Exposed, Greenpeace, Common Cause, USW, IFG

Continuous research among groups will inform our evolving efforts to meta-message to a broad audience while drawing specific links to peoples' everyday issues. Researchers from all the partner groups actively investigating the Kochs will share information and avoid overlap in research agendas.

2. Coordinating Communications:

Frontline groups: NAACP, Common Cause, USW, OWS, GGJ, ALEC Exposed, Greenpeace, Focus on the Global South, IFG, and others.

Four types of audiences were discussed and partners will participate in various aspects of them:

- Consolidating Progressive Power

Interested partners will agree on ways to tell the stories so that today's frontline fights can be framed in a larger narrative of how money in politics corrupts our democracy. **We will show how the agenda to “shrink government” by reducing regulatory powers and cutting social programs enriches the Kochs.** The added capability of coordinated messaging will increase partners' collective power to tie issues to candidates and their campaigns' acceptance of Koch cash. We will work together via regular conference calls and ongoing online discussions to message from a common frame that explains links to working families, collective bargaining, jobs generated in the clean energy transition, climate, voting rights, safety net, education, etc. Our objective is to inform and inspire new activism and mobilization of memberships from national networks of progressive constituencies toward reducing the role of private money influencing political outcomes.

- Messaging to Middle America: USW, GGJ, SEIU, Sierra Club, ALEC Exposed, IFG

As progressives expose the way the Kochs' political investments enrich mainly themselves, we will also aim at their perceived strengths. For example, **the Kochs' millions of dollars spent on cancer research mask the toxic legacy left at their industrial sites where communities cope with carcinogenic clusters.** We will publish a **special policy brief** and other information on how the Kochs benefit from funding cancer research, how they've created a clear record of weakening regulations and suppressing scientific findings that could cost them money, especially in the case of directly funding scientists to deny climate change. Working with a special media outreach coordinator, we will prioritize public broadcasting media markets in swing states, finding frontline voices from our partners' communities and individuals directly impacted by the Kochs' refining, piping, fracking, etc., to tell their stories. Our aim is to taint Koch cash in the eyes of mildly biased but still malleable minds.

- Testing Tea Party territory: TBD

The driving force of exponential growth in the Kochs' combined net worth appears to be oil derivatives and speculation that is shown to significantly increase gas prices. With no ban on insider trading of commodities, the Kochs' influence over energy supplies—via refining, shipping, storing, and other strategic services—gives them intelligence that allows them to anticipate price changes, if not move markets directly, thereby profiting enormously. We will demonstrate that **the Kochs have literally gamed the system, lining their pockets by picking the pockets of Americans who are locked into today's fossil fuel infrastructure.** In a **second policy brief**, we will aim at audiences of political independents in Tea Party territory where rank and file activists have deep distaste for market manipulators, and tend to personally feel the “pain at the pump.” Our aim is to turn sufficient numbers of Tea Party people to divide their political power base.

- International Audiences and Outside Pressure

In a **third policy brief**, the Kochs' role in blocking US climate policy is the message in a global effort aimed at the Dec. 2012 UN Climate Conference in Doha, Qatar, and other actions worldwide.

3. Mobilizing Memberships:

Frontline groups: Common Cause, OWS, Move To Amend, Food and Water Watch, NAACP, GGJ, USW, Sierra Club, SEIU, USW

Donor events are the iconic “scene of the crime” where legalized corruption occurs, and Americans have become far too tolerant by allowing the laws that let it take place. As the largest campaign contributor, as well as “bundler” of others’ donations, the Kochs host such events to move money to their candidates and front groups. Efforts will focus media and movement attention on and a variety of actions, from “Twitter storms” to “Occupy swarms.” Broader collaboration among partners will scale up the actions to create new political conditions where such practices are unacceptable.

Our “KochMap” on Google locates offices, work sites, country clubs, golf courses, churches, cancer research centers, and other charities—for strategic messaging via savvy social media, street actions, billboards, and even nonviolent direction action protests. By strategically targeted messaging, we will create an atmosphere of deep personal discomfort and intellectual isolation, eventually tainting the Kochs’ carcinogenic cash.

Such efforts would be supported by a series of targeted talking points as fodder—provided by IFG with the communications team—for: 1) grassroots groups’ fact sheets and flyers in a narrative that creates new political space for dealing with money in politics; 2) anti-Koch electoral candidates who would be willing to speak out but require popular support; 3) journalists to identify issues and shape coverage. We are also exploring sophisticated messaging to invite the Kochs’ family and friends to directly ask David and Charles difficult questions or even reinforce our concerns about crony capitalism masked as “economic freedom.”

Agreed dates for actions:

- October 3: Presidential debate in Denver, Colorado
- October 22: Presidential debate in Boca Raton, Florida
- Dec 2: ALEC Reception in DC; UNFCCC’s COP 18 in Doha, Qatar; Manila Migrants’ Forum
- Jan 21: Democracy Day: Inauguration, MLK Day, Citizen’s United Anniversary

4. Building a Broader Movement Power to Address “Money in Politics”

This organizing energy must go toward far-reaching reform that would ultimately radically reduce if not remove money from politics. US social movements are beginning to converge around this crisis of democracy, which is making social progress almost impossible. Groups agreed on at least two long-term goals: 1) a constitutional amendment to delink money’s status as speech, and corporations’ constitutional protections as people; and 2) publicly funded elections. We will also work to:

- Increase overall awareness about issues and linkages;
- Clarify policy asks and a viable political pathway for transformative policy change;
- Create more accessible onramps for activists and organizations to get involved;
- Commit organizations to devote resources to long-term efforts.

Our aim is to ignite a deeper debate beyond 2012 after exposing the debacle of the way this year’s elections were tainted by individuals of undue influence.