

What Can You Do About ALEC?

First, you can ask your elected representatives if they are ALEC members and implore them to consider the needs of their constituency above those of a giant corporate-interest group.

If there is a bill pending in your state that you know or suspect has ALEC behind it, send a letter to the editor of your local newspaper or publication to let the public know who ALEC is and why its bills should not be supported.

Finally, learn more about ALEC and be aware of its actions. Knowledge is one of the best ways to spread awareness and ignite action!

For more information on ALEC and how to research it and other conservative groups, visit the Civil Liberties Defense Center's website at www.cldc.org.

Who's Responsible for This?

The Civil Liberties Defense Center put this flier together to help educate the public about ALEC. The Civil Liberties Defense Center is a nonprofit organization focused on defending and upholding civil liberties through education, outreach, litigation, legal support, and other forms of assistance. The Civil Liberties Defense Center strives to preserve the strength and vitality of the Bill of Rights and the U.S. and state constitutions, as well as to protect freedom of expression.

The Civil Liberties Defense Center can be reached at 541-687-9180; 259 E. 5th Ave., Ste. 300A, Eugene, OR 97401; or www.cldc.org. Donations are always welcome. Become a member today!



ALEC = Corporate Interests Undermining Democracy!

Our state legislative bodies represent communities and are required to uphold the democratic process and work toward the needs of their citizens. The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) does not constitute represented individuals nor does it work in the people's interests. ALEC undermines the relationship between the people and their government. Recently, waves of bills have been introduced and passed in state and federal legislatures that seem to contradict democracy rather than promote it: laws have appeared in state after state that cut off collective bargaining rights, roll back protective environmental regulations on dangerous or polluting industries, and restrict voting rights. And if you suspect that such legislation was not brought about by your elected representative, you would be right: these bills are flooding in straight from the desks of corporate lobbyists of the American Legislative Exchange Council.

What is ALEC?

ALEC is a tax-exempt 501(c)3 organization that works to promote corporate interests in public policy and espouses principles of free markets, limited government, and federalism. Based in Washington, DC, ALEC is primarily a membership organization composed of hundreds of state legislators and representatives of large corporations such as ExxonMobil, Koch Industries, and Peabody Energy. Though it claims to be non-partisan, ALEC works primarily through Republican legislators and pushes laws ideologically similar to the beliefs of its 1970s founders: Henry Hyde, Lou Barnett, and Paul Weyrich.

Membership is offered only to Republican legislators at a bargain of \$100 biannually, though which elected representatives are members remains a highly guarded secret. Memberships for corporations, who account for 80% of ALEC's funding (about \$6 million annually), pay thousands of dollars in annual membership fees.

*“When INJUSTICE becomes law,
RESISTANCE becomes duty.”*

What Does ALEC do?

ALEC's main function is to draft "model bills" and to "educate" legislators about the issues ALEC wishes to promote. These "bought and paid for" bills often re-emerge word-for-word as law. Approximately 1,000 ALEC bills have been introduced annually into state legislative bodies with around 200 of these bills becoming law.

ALEC is able to do this ghostwriting because it acts under the veil of "organizing to educate lawmakers about public policy issues." Most of these bills are written at the tri-annual ALEC conferences, gatherings where the corporate backers sponsor golf tournaments and lavish parties. Legislators can attend these events without acknowledging their corporate sponsorship because they are hosted as ALEC events. If this were interpreted as lobbying, as it should be, ALEC would lose its status as a non-profit pursuant to IRS regulations.

Recently, ALEC has been behind important unconstitutional legislation, such as the Arizona anti-immigrant bill that became SB 1070. The Corrections Corporation of America, the largest private prison company in the US and an ALEC member, was pushing their profit motives at the ALEC meeting where the Arizona immigration bill was drafted. ALEC has also been found to be a driving force in the recent betrayal of the people of Wisconsin by Governor Scott Walker, as evidenced in a report by a respected University of Wisconsin Madison professor William Cronon. ALEC has also made a written guide on how to repeal the recent health care bill passed under President Obama, intended for use by state legislators. Other past examples include: laws that roll-back environmental protections and health and human safety, laws limiting rights to collective bargaining and workplace safety standards, and the infamously unconstitutional Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act, pushed through Congress by pharmaceutical and animal research corporations.

Who Runs ALEC?

National Chairman

Rep. Noble Ellington, Louisiana

First Vice Chairman

Rep. Dave Frizzell, Indiana

Second Vice Chairman

Rep. John Piscopo, Connecticut

Treasurer

Rep. Linda Upmeyer, Iowa

Secretary

Rep. Liston Barfield, South Carolina

Immediate Past Chairman

Rep. Tom Craddick, Texas

Private Enterprise Board Chairman

Mr. W. Preston Baldwin

Centerpoint360 (2011 Chairman)

Why is this Bad for Democracy?

ALEC undermines the value of the public interest in a supposedly democratic country where all people are created equal — and, despite what the Supreme Court majority recently held, corporations are clearly not "people." ALEC buys the influence of our legislators and uses them to push forward laws that further the interests of corporate America, and in doing so, strips "we the people" of the constitutional freedoms that make up our democracy.

ALEC consistently works under the radar of the media and has received little public review or criticism considering the gravity of its actions. ALEC uses shady tactics, including only allowing high paying organizations and Republican lawmakers to be members and to access its model bills, not allowing interviews or disclosing which legislators are members, and keeping much of its work behind closed doors. ALEC essentially lobbies, which is illegal within its role as a tax-exempt organization, through the guise of "educating" legislators on "best practices." This "education" also takes the form of lavish ALEC gatherings where legislators get "scholarships" from unknown sources.

ALEC is a highly influential group in our government, and the people deserve to know how it is shaping our laws and how to contest the presence of corporations in private back rooms with our elected representatives. ALEC is the opposite of democracy. It is contrary to democracy to buy or bribe representatives to legislate laws intended to benefit a particular industry or corporation without disclosure or checks and balances.

