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US News
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House Panel Introduces Bill Banning Some Public Lobbying

<https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/idaho/articles/2018-01-25/house-panel-introduces-bill-banning-some-public-lobbying>

An Idaho House panel on Thursday introduced legislation banning state agencies, universities and school districts from hiring lobbyists to influence state lawmakers.

Rep. Priscilla Giddings, a Republican from White Bird, says taxpayer dollars should not be used to advocate for a bill's passage or defeat.

"These current practices are eating away at the very core of our constitutional republic," Giddings said.

Multiple taxing districts across the state hire lobbyists using public funds to represent their interests while lawmakers meet in Boise during the legislative session. For example, Blaine County School District faced scrutiny in late 2016 after deciding to hire a lobbyist. At the time, it was the only school district in the state to do so.

Giddings' bill does not include political subdivisions — meaning cities, counties, water district and highway commissions would still be allowed to hire lobbyists. When asked why those entities were excluded, Giddings asked for the definition of political subdivisions and later said she would be open to expanding the ban.

According to the Secretary of State's office, almost 20 taxing districts — ranging from irrigation, public health and urban renewal — hired lobbyists this year. The majority of these districts are located in or around Boise, the state's most populated city.

"If legislation were to come forward that would be harmful to the species in your legislative district, I think you would want at least someone to come forward from the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and tell you why that is not a good idea," said House Assistant Majority Leader Brent Crane, R-Nampa. "Would this legislation restrict them from doing that?"

Giddings responded that she had "incredibly smart" citizens in her district and would rather depend on them for information than experts paid with taxpayer money.

The only two lawmakers to vote against introducing the bill were Democratic Reps. Elaine Smith of Pocatello and Melanie Wolf of Moscow.

"I see the University of Idaho and the way the University of Idaho is represented here with a lobbyist as a way to make sure my constituents are very fairly represented and have an opportunity of benefiting from (a lobbyist)," said Wolf, who is substituting for Rep. Paulette Jordan, D-Plummer, this week.

The House State Affairs Committee introduced Giddings' bill on Thursday. It must now clear a hearing.

The Kansas City Star
January 24, 2018

Big donations flow to group trying to change Missouri government, raising GOP eyebrows

<http://www.kansascity.com/news/politics-government/article196347414.html>

A proposed ballot measure that would make sweeping changes to state government is picking up momentum — and cash.

Missouri Republicans are starting to take notice.

A group called Clean Missouri has been collecting signatures to put a constitutional amendment before state voters that would ban all lobbyist gifts to legislators larger than \$5; require legislators and their staff to wait two years before becoming lobbyists after they leave the Capitol; and rework how legislative districts are drawn.

Earlier this month Clean Missouri received a \$250,000 donation from MOVE Ballot Fund, a St. Louis-based political action committee connected to a nonprofit of the same name.

Three days before the donation to Clean Missouri, MOVE received a \$300,000 donation from the Open Society Policy Center, the lobbying arm of liberal billionaire George Soros' philanthropic network. MOVE reported raising only \$100 before that donation.

Sam Cooper, executive director of the Missouri Republican Party, said the donation was an example of hypocrisy by Democrats, who have hammered GOP-aligned groups over the last year when they've taken steps to shuffle money around to conceal its source.

Cooper keyed in on the provisions in the ballot measure that would reform legislative redistricting.

“Under the guise of ‘Clean Missouri,’ they’ve accepted hundreds of thousands of dollars from George Soros in order to rewrite the Missouri Constitution in an attempt to disenfranchise Missouri voters,” Cooper said. “I wish I could say I was surprised, but after years of getting their tails kicked at the ballot box, I guess using Soros money to redraw legislative districts is the only chance they have of winning.”

The comparison between the Clean Missouri donation and GOP-aligned nonprofits working to obfuscate donors is inaccurate, said Molly Fleming, the group’s executive director, because MOVE set up its PAC specifically to be as transparent as possible about its efforts to support Clean Missouri.

“We’re really excited about the opportunity presented by the Clean Missouri effort to make our state government more open and accountable,” Fleming said. “Big money and political insiders have been running the show for too long — leaving working people out in the cold.”

Sean Nicholson, executive director of Clean Missouri, said the group’s proposal has earned “support from across the political spectrum because everyone can see what’s been going on in Jefferson City. We’re all ready to restore integrity, transparency and accountability in our state government.”

The redistricting provisions of the proposed ballot measure would turn over the task of drawing legislative districts to a nonpartisan expert, whose work would then be reviewed by a citizen commission. Competitiveness would be a required criteria for drawing districts, and an independent state demographer would help create the maps, which are set to be redrawn after the 2020 census.

The goal, according to Clean Missouri, is to ensure legislative maps are drawn fairly, rather than being drawn to protect incumbents or to unjustly favor one party.

Legislative redistricting in Missouri now is handled by two bipartisan commissions, one for each chamber. The governor selects members of the commission from lists of nominees submitted by the state committees of the Democratic and Republican parties.

Cooper said he expects the redistricting provision to doom the larger ballot measure if it does end up on the statewide ballot later this year.

“I’m confident,” Cooper said, “that Missouri voters won’t let out-of-state liberal billionaires change the way we elect our representatives.”

Forbes
January 23, 2018

While Uber Invests In Lobbying And AI, Drivers Are Fighting For Decent Pay

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/janetwburns/2018/01/23/while-uber-targets-laws-and-ai-drivers-are-fighting-to-win-fair-pay/#a6d4c3167f61>

For almost nine years, Uber has drawn attention and business with its neoteric solutions and rule-breaking style. Along the way, it's also drawn plenty of public criticism.

For example, Uber has gained an international spotlight for using special kinds of software to gouge riders and track them after drop-off, to spy on and manipulate competitors, and to circumvent authorities. Regulators have questioned whether it's a public nuisance, or clogging our streets, or has mishandled breaches of user data, or failed to protect and perform sufficient background checks on its drivers, a (proportionately tiny) number of whom later committed rape or murder.

Last year, Uber repeatedly "trended" in the U.S. for its reported mistreatment of women, ranging from ignoring and trying to undermine sexual assault victims to creating a widespread, toxic corporate culture. It's made headlines over accusations of industrial theft and espionage arising from its court battle with Google and, most recently, for choosing Nvidia's tech for its self-driving fleet, which it plans to roll out in 18 months.

From the beginning, however, the most fundamental glitch in Uber and its peers' approach to transportation has gotten relatively little attention from U.S. audiences and riders, even as protests around the globe have driven other nations to face facts.

That issue, of course, is ride-hail companies' ongoing and multifaceted abuse of millions of drivers who provide the actual services they sell, and upon whom the whole multibillion-dollar, autonomy-bound industry has relied.

And the lion's share of this, to be sure, belongs to Uber.

For years, drivers for Uber, Lyft, and other transportation network companies (TNCs) have endured multiple fare cuts of 10% to 40% as companies have battled for global control, and seen their workloads drop as ever more drivers (experienced or not) have packed the platforms.

They have been recruited with earnings statistics which the FTC later found to contain hot air, and been fined and kicked off the app for having language abilities that weren't an issue during recruitment.

They've suffered assaults and insults and countless messes in their own cars — sometimes acquired at iffy rates through Uber itself — while receiving little to no protection or support from the company, or anything like a human resources department (or, until recently, even a voice on the phone).

In general, drivers for TNCs have been expected to bear the highest risks, responsibilities, and costs entailed in the ride-hail industry all on their own, and with virtually no say in the terms of that work — not even when changes are periodically made to their digital contract, and which, to begin the work day, drivers are forced to accept.

And for the most part, attention to TNCs' activities surrounding their drivers has been minimal, though some media outlets and many consumer groups got the message en route. For better or worse, other businesses have taken note, too.

In 2016, for example, a competitor app called Juno promised to improve the current ride-hail model, which had already squeezed veteran and new professional drivers — traditionally, members of immigrant and working-class families — to their limit. The company, which launched in NYC (with the usual coupons for riders and drivers), announced it would raise the bar by taking a lower cut from each

fare, giving drivers more attention and better wages, and allowing drivers exclusive to Juno to get benefits and earn company shares.

Many would-be conscientious riders made the switch, and drivers began praising Juno fares over ones from Uber and Lyft. Juno founder and CEO Talmon Marco told NPR at the time that his research on the ride-hail industry revealed that drivers "really hate ride-sharing companies, [which] have been abusing them, [and] treating them like a commodity."

Marco pointed to Uber's practice of "deactivating" drivers whose ratings from customers fall below a certain level, rather than retraining or properly firing them. "You do not deactivate people — you deactivate machines. When you say that you deactivate a person, I think that speaks volumes of the way that you actually think of these people," Marco told NPR.

Soon after, however, Juno literally sold out to another rival. Drivers were left feeling betrayed, and received puny, unexplained payouts on their shares; several have since moved to sue the company for securities fraud.

In the past year, Uber has also announced its intention to get the company back on a more ethical track (in so many words) with its new CEO, fresh corporate oversight, and plans to give drivers more transparency in how they get paid, among other things. Following backlash over sexual harassment and other misconduct in its corporate ranks, and the ousting of Uber cofounder and inaugural CEO Travis Kalanick, the company also launched a campaign last year entitled "180 Days of Change."

By phone, a spokesperson for Uber said the company hopes the listening it did last year, as well as some tweaks it made to the platform, will help it to keep improving its "partnership" with drivers in the years ahead.

Recently, Uber has reportedly also tried to cut down on those windows when drivers have gone un- or underpaid, such as when riders cancel last-minute or need to be picked up from far away, though it couldn't confirm by exactly how much in which cities. Uber also says it's committed to creating more transparency for drivers about what they can earn and have earned, and to supporting drivers in earning more, but didn't specify how, beyond an app (and possibly a website) that purportedly lets drivers view their per-minute pay.

However, according to drivers, and to a growing list of elected officials and labor advocates around the country, the problem of drivers' exploitation only seems to get worse as lobbyists for Uber and Lyft continue pushing to change rules that are meant to protect workers — or, as they have successfully done in four out of five U.S. states, to "preempt" local governments' ability to regulate TNCs by targeting laws at the state level.

A report released last week by the Partnership for Working Families and the National Employment Law Project revealed somewhat staggering data on the impact of Uber and Lyft's lobbying efforts to date, including laws on the books in 41 states that prevent city and municipal authorities from creating their own rules for ride-hailing.

While looking into companies' efforts to legislate or counter-sue their way around local efforts to regulate TNCs, the authors discovered that lobbyists for Uber and Lyft (but mostly Uber) had outperformed even the gun and tobacco lobbies when it came to turning laws in their favor, albeit with those industries' own playbooks.

Supported in part by the Public Welfare Foundation, the report *Uber State Interference: How Transportation Network Companies Buy, Bully, and Bamboozle Their Way To Deregulation* found that Uber and Lyft have poured millions in recent years into swaying states to take their side amid local attempts to regulate.

Researchers also found that the total number of lobbyists deployed by the two companies in 2016 exceeded those representing Amazon, Microsoft, and Walmart combined, and frequently took up a disproportionate amount of lawmakers' listening time across 44 states.

In most cases, and often with very similar wording, state-level laws enacted after such lobbying efforts have established that TNCs "shall not be deemed to control, direct, or manage vehicles or drivers" that log into their digital networks. According to the report's authors, this trend reveals two key areas for concern.

The first is the ability of special-interest lobbies to affect widespread, under-the-radar changes around the country. "In the states we reviewed, these efforts have been led by Uber, and have largely benefitted just Uber and Lyft, two companies that have been in existence for less than a decade," the authors explained. "Statewide TNC laws are the ultimate special interest legislation: further enabling their monopoly or duopoly in the entire for-hire sector, frequently with far less regulation than that traditionally applied to other vehicles-for-hire."

Miya Saika Chen, staff attorney for the Partnership for Working Families and one of the report's co-authors, commented by phone that statewide laws which preempt any regulatory efforts by local officials also serve to silence communities of color and other underrepresented groups, who typically have far more seats in local governments than state-level ones.

"It's no coincidence that mostly white male legislators at the state level are trying to limit the abilities of local governments to create their own rules," Chen said. "People are working to raise standards in their communities, and that power has essentially been taken away by state legislators. And because Uber has such strong weight at the state level, this basically creates a regulation-free environment."

"The problem of state preemption is an overwhelming one for democracy," Chen added.

Uber and Lyft also haven't hesitated to throw their weight around when challenged, researchers say. When local governments have tried to regulate TNCs' activities, for example, the companies upped their efforts to "bully and bamboozle" states by threatening to shut down services entirely (or doing so), upping their spending, and getting lobbyists to consistently target officials for their votes, according to Chen.

While Uber was fighting pushback in Florida and Texas, it even sent political messages and rallying calls directly to riders through the app, according to screenshots researchers have gathered — a move seemingly aimed to enhance consumer uproar. In Portland, Oregon, meanwhile, the two companies logged a total of 453 meetings with officials in 2016, representing 50% of all lobbying activity conducted there.

The second area for concern, according to the nonprofit groups, is TNCs' apparent determination to ensure drivers are defined legally as independent contractors, and not employees, from the state level.

Rebecca Smith, deputy director of the National Employment Law Project and a report coauthor, explained by phone that TNCs' "surgical" laws separating companies from responsibility to or for their drivers have wide impacts for those workers — from limiting their wages and protections to their options for collective bargaining — but also the states and cities where they live.

Once these "hands off" laws are on the books, which TNCs achieve "either by picking a fight or engaging a fight at the local level, and telling state legislators they have to solve it," Smith said, cities and towns are left with their hands tied on issues that are only theirs to solve — like municipal transportation, for starters.

"If you think about the amount of city policies and resources that go into regulating city transportation, it really throws a wrench in the whole system if you interfere with regulators around what would be an important part of transportation there," Smith said.

"We maintain that companies have been misleading in going to state legislators in these issues, because state legislators know much less about regulating transit, and less of the right questions to ask," she continued. "TNCs approach them with ready-made legislation for them to pass, and in doing so de-emphasize the most important aspects of that legislation, such as depriving workers of their labor rights."

Chen commented, "TNCs have lobbied heavily in favor of independent contractor status, and to make sure their drivers are not considered employees, meaning they're not liable for worker's compensation, unable to collectively negotiate their hours, and other things. We've seen it happen in court, and quite seamlessly at the state level."

As it turns out, the process for determining whether a job constitutes independent contractor- or employee-status involves weighing such factors as company control over workers' activities, and workers' "flexibility" — something that Uber and Lyft (but especially Uber) have consistently emphasized as a fundamental advantage to their gigs.

According to members and leaders of the Independent Drivers Guild (IDG), which has been organizing TNC drivers in New York City since 2014, that flexibility has proved more than a little euphemistic as fares and workloads have continued to fall.

At the same time, they say, companies' control over their drivers — legally recognized or otherwise — has only increased with time, while drivers' contractor-only status has forced them to create support networks and resources on their own, and off the clock.

Sohail Rana, who has been driving vehicles professionally for over 25 years, commented by phone that he soon felt the need for support after switching over to Uber from a Taxi and Limousine Commission-approved black car service in 2014.

Rana, whose Chevy Suburban allows him to take luxury fares, said that "in the beginning, the pay was okay." After two fare cuts in NYC and a 30% cut to what drivers earn for 30 minutes without a ride, however, he saw his income falling, especially as the prices of gas and car maintenance continued to rise.

"Before Uber, I was making good money. Since Uber arrived, they have ruined the professional driving industry," Rana said.

Around that time, Rana came across IDG, which he feels could be "the answer to drivers' problems," at least while TNCs refuse to (fairly) play ball. As an IDG driver steward, he now volunteers his time teaching classes on how to improve customer and performance ratings for drivers who have been summarily deactivated by Uber.

"Drivers are promised \$1200, \$1500 a week, they sign up, sometimes buying or leasing new vehicles for the job, and then get permanently deactivated after a week because they don't know what they're doing," Rana said. Absent training from Uber itself, so far Rana and other drivers have worked to help more than 200 deactivated users — many of whom are immigrants and English-language learners — to hone their skills and get back on the platform.

In addition, Rana and his fellow IDG members have advocated for better conditions in NYC, where drivers have endured countless of the fledgling industry's 'growing pains' first hand. Thanks to their efforts, drivers in New York now have access to bathrooms at John F. Kennedy airport and must be able to receive tips on any TNC platform.

"Uber puts everything on drivers' shoulders, while drivers are not really even making minimum wage after the cost of the car, parking tickets, and finding parking places where they can use the bathroom, eat, and take a break," Rana added. "I earn a little more because I drive a Suburban, giving me access to Uber's better-paying service levels, but people who drive [Toyota] Camrys are really suffering."

Rana, who is on the IDG's negotiating committee, said that around a 37% fare raise would bring drivers up to minimum wage after expenses — a fact that drove one driver to describe Uber's arrangement as "modern-day slavery."

According to Rana, the fact that Uber and Lyft don't put a cap on their recruitment has also caused drivers to see some unsettling trends on the road. Following prolonged backlash, Uber has reportedly stopped lowering fares to stay competitive, and instead moved to raise their cut from each pre-calculated fare to as much as 40%; because that number is variable, a spokesperson for Uber couldn't offer a standard or average number for that cut, but said that sometimes their cut is 0% or less.

IDG members have also reported that new Uber drivers, who now receive a "guaranteed income" in some cities for the first few weeks or months if they meet a certain ride threshold, seem to be receiving more fares than veteran drivers do — something that drivers speculate could be a deliberate effort by one of Uber's many algorithms to lock in new drivers with attractive earnings. Uber did not respond to questions about this theory, but reiterated that it hopes to make real-time and potential earnings more transparent for drivers going forward.

MaryGrace DeCotiis, Organizing Director for IDG, also noted by phone that working to secure benefits for TNC drivers is one of their highest priorities, given companies' decision to treat all drivers as contractors.

According to IDG surveys, more than a third of TNC drivers in New York City say they have no medical insurance, but would like to have it. In response, the group has petitioned to change this stance, and offered resources for drivers seeking coverage through the ACA, Medicaid, and CHIP, including through open enrollment outreach with translations in 144 languages (the NYC deadline is January 31).

To help support drivers whose interests and needs are longer be met by TNCs, the group also plans to hold its first-ever Opportunity Fair in partnership with various non-profits, unions, and universities on

January 31. The event will include job recruiters, offers of free college courses and programs, ESL programs, and job training, and free health care screenings from New York State Health Insurance representatives, among other things.

Overall, DeCotiis and Rana said that TNCs' modus operandi has left an enormous amount to be desired, despite companies' promise to innovate an extant industry — one that, despite its flaws, resulted from decades of thoughtful planning, and upon which millions of drivers and riders rely — with convenience and flexibility.

"That work flexibility already existed with black cars," Rana said. Regarding the whole situation of drivers' treatment and seeming disposable-ness, he joked, "Sometimes I think it's a conspiracy to keep immigrants from coming in, who traditionally can find work driving a cab."

Rana continued, "Really, I am just amazed at how Uber has been getting away with all this. Nobody has been able to stop them or slow them down. But after IDG, I have hope."

For Chen and her co-authors, groups like IDG are also sources of hope amid the ride-hail industry's chaos, as well as the successful efforts of drivers and labor advocates in a handful of cities.

In Seattle, for example, one of the first cities where the lower-cost UberX service was launched, advocates were able to withstand lobbying and pass a "groundbreaking" ordinance enabling collective bargaining for for-hire drivers, though Uber continues to fight that decision, and mild state-level protections for such drivers, in court.

Given TNCs' massive reach with lawmakers, investors, and directly into consumer's phones, however, the fight for drivers' fair treatment and compensation remains very much an uphill battle, according to industry experts and members.

As Uber and Lyft continue expanding their services, labor stances, and plans to eliminate drivers with technology around the globe, it also seems clearer than ever that the meter is running on this issue — and that drivers can no longer afford to foot the bill alone.

Bloomberg
January 23, 2018

Business Groups Spent Big on Lobbying During the Tax Overhaul

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-01-23/tax-bill-prompts-business-to-pay-heavily-for-lobbying-campaigns>

Three groups seeking to influence the most extensive changes to the American tax code since the 1980's spent more than \$56 million on their lobbying efforts in the last three months of 2017, according to disclosures filed with the federal government.

The spending by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Realtors and the Business Roundtable, the last of which set a quarterly record, capped a big year of lobbying expenditures by corporate interests as President Donald Trump pursued pro-business tax reform and a regulatory rollback in his first year in office.

Beginning in the last week of September with a nine-page outline for a tax overhaul, Republicans in Congress took less than 90 days to pass a final bill that provided a deep, permanent tax cut for corporations, as well as shorter-term relief for individuals.

During the quarter, the roundtable, a group made up of more than 200 chief executives, spent \$17.35 million, more than quadrupling its spending from the same period a year earlier as the organization's chairman, JPMorgan Chase & Co. Chief Executive Officer Jamie Dimon, sought to increase its lobbying clout and push the tax legislation over the finish line.

The disclosures reflect lobbying on all issues, but the tax overhaul was a top priority for a broad set of companies and trade groups.

The Realtors group spent more than \$54 million for the year, including more than \$22 million in the fourth quarter. It led opposition to proposals to limit a deduction for state-and-local taxes, or SALT, which it said would hurt the home market.

The association eventually cofounded a coalition to fight the state-and-local tax proposals. Another founder of the coalition, the American Federation of Teachers, also set a quarterly record, spending more than \$500,000.

The debate initially caused some Republican members of Congress to drop support for the bill, although the final compromise, which capped a SALT deduction at \$10,000, brought enough of them back for the legislation to pass.

The chamber, which was the number-one lobbying spender in each of the first three quarters of 2017, spent more than \$16.8 million in the fourth quarter, bringing its lobbying total for the year to nearly \$59 million. It spent much of the fourth quarter pushing for permanent tax cuts that it said should bolster investment and reform international taxation.

Because of the variety of its members, it did not lobby on specific provisions, the group has said, although it did help companies that wanted to negotiate transitions to the new rules plead their cases to lawmakers.

The National Association of Home Builders, which found itself working both for and against the tax bill at different times, spent nearly \$1.7 million during the quarter.

In September, CEO Jerry Howard told Bloomberg that the group was "at DEFCON One" to support or oppose a bill even as it harbored significant concerns over a deduction for mortgage interest. The association, which was then negotiating with the congressional leadership to craft a new tax break for home ownership, later "enthusiastically" backed Trump's outline for changes, only to find itself at what Howard described as a "hell no" when the break for home ownership fell through.

After lobbying efforts that, according to Howard, included emailing and texting with congressional staff members right through a conference that resolved differences between the House and Senate tax proposals in the closing days of the process, the home builders supported the final bill.

The lobbying on taxes coincided with fourth-quarter increases in lobbying from technology companies as some of them increasingly faced public scrutiny over their size, Russia's use of their platforms to meddle in the 2016 election, and extremist content online.

Alphabet Inc.'s Google spent \$4.42 million during the quarter, up from \$3.81 million during the fourth quarter of 2016. The company spent more than \$18 million in 2017, during which it also hired several new outside lobbyists.

At the end of October, a company executive, alongside executives from Facebook Inc. and Twitter Inc., testified before Congress on Russian activities on their platforms. Facebook spent more than \$3 million during the quarter, and a record of more than \$11.5 million during the year.

As a result of the scrutiny, the House and Senate also introduced bills that would regulate online campaign advertising. Facebook and other tech companies suggested changes in their own policies and a self-regulatory regime would be preferable.

In addition, tech platforms also spent time fighting a proposal to curb online sex trafficking because it would curtail liability protections that online platforms enjoy with regard to content that their users post. In November, Facebook and the Internet Association trade group, which represents the companies, backed a Senate compromise on the bill, which now has enough votes to pass.

Apple Inc. also set an annual lobbying record, spending more than \$7 million. The company announced earlier this month it would bring hundreds of billions of dollars currently stored overseas back to the United States, where it will pay about \$38 billion in taxes and spend more on domestic jobs and offices. The announcement prompted Trump to tweet that the Republican-backed tax-reform was the incentive for Apple's investments.

The Post and Courier January 22, 2017

Oil campaign contributions went to S.C. lawmakers who support offshore drilling, data shows

https://www.postandcourier.com/news/oil-campaign-contributions-went-to-s-c-lawmakers-who-support/article_fa1c1892-f58c-11e7-81e0-db70e28dfe2a.html

The two highest profile congressional champions of drilling for oil off of South Carolina collectively have taken in hundreds of thousands of dollars in campaign money from the industry in the past few years.

But the industry has also spread its contributions around, and some analysts say the money is spent more to support candidates who back the collective wants of big oil and gas rather than to sway them on this one issue.

From 2011 to 2016, U.S. Sen. Tim Scott, R-S.C., received \$491,076 from oil and natural gas companies, individuals tied to the industry and related political action committees, according to the non-partisan Center for Responsive Politics.

Republican U.S. Rep. Jeff Duncan of Laurens in the Upstate received \$92,100 from 2013 to 2016.

In contrast, U.S. Rep. Mark Sanford, R-Mount Pleasant, who has vocally opposed the offshore work, took in \$21,350 from the industry, according to center records.

Democrat U.S. Rep. Jim Clyburn, D-Columbia, another offshore drilling opponent, received \$24,180.

The amounts are not huge in terms of the overall campaign money raised. Scott, for instance, raised more than \$12.7 million from 2011 to 2016.

The contributions are only a small share of how much the oil and gas industry contributes overall. The industry put more than \$170 million into the two election cycles.

During the 2016 presidential race, now-President Donald Trump — who recently reopened the offshore leasing process — and then-candidate Hillary Clinton received roughly even shares of \$1.95 million. Trump received \$992,137; Clinton \$967,631, according to the center.

The center is a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit research group tracking money in all sectors of U.S. politics, according to its website.

According to the center, oil and gas contributions to other South Carolina delegation members total:

- \$256,850 to Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham (from 2009 to 2016)
- \$46,400 to Republican Rep. Trey Gowdy (2103 to 2016)
- \$32,000 to Republican Rep. Joe Wilson (2013 to 2016)
- \$26,250 to Republican Rep. Tom Rice (2013 to 2016)

Republican Rep. Ralph Norman, who was elected in a special 2017 vote, received \$16,400.

Scott's staff said the contributions were not a conflict for him.

"As he has stated multiple times, Senator Scott believes it is essential to build more support from coastal communities before moving forward with offshore energy exploration," said spokeswoman Michele Exner.

"He will continue working with folks to share why he believes offshore energy exploration is important — tens of thousands of jobs and billions in economic investment alongside some of the strongest safety regulations in the world — but will not move forward without coastal support," she said.

Neither Duncan nor his staff returned two emails or a phone call asking for comment. In January, when Trump announced he would review the leasing policy with an eye toward reopening it, Duncan called it "tremendous news for American energy independence, economic development, and job creation."

Sanford said his anti-exploration views likely have cost him some contributions.

"There are no free lunches in life, or in the political process," he said. "Speaking as I have (opposing the offshore work) has had a degree of consequence. That's the way the cookie crumbles in the world of politics."

The industry and conservation opponents have fought for more than five years over opening the Southeast coast to exploration after the federal government restarted the five-year leasing process for the years 2017 to 2022. Then-President Barack Obama closed the waters in 2016, but Trump restarted the process for the years 2019 to 2023.

From the beginning, the industry has attempted to influence the leasing process. Then-Gov. Nikki Haley was part of a coalition of governors who worked behind the scenes, largely in private, with industry

lobbyists to open the Southeast coast to oil and natural gas testing and drilling, according to the Institute for Southern Studies in 2015.

During her two gubernatorial campaigns, Haley received 88 contributions from the oil and gas industry worth a combined \$118,331, according to data compiled by the Montana-based National Institute on Money in State Politics. The governor raised about \$12.4 million over two campaigns.

Haley, in a statement from staff at the time, championed her work with the coalition as critical, responsible economic development.

Haley, appointed by Trump, is now U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.

Analysts said the contributions aren't usually a case of direct influence buying. Great bulks of the money went to politicians long before Trump was considered a potentially successful candidate with an eye on expanding offshore exploration.

"It is wrong to think that lobbyists 'buy votes' in Congress. Rather, they tend to support lawmakers who already support their position," said Jordon Ragusa, College of Charleston political science professor.

"Lobbying is effective, just not in the way most Americans think. An interest group's most powerful tool is information about policy, not campaign contributions. Lobbyists play a key role in the drafting of legislation given how much they know about the intricacies of public policy," Ragusa said.