

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR **D6 •** OPINIONS **D4-9**

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2015

PAYING FOR POLITICS

An account of Idaho's top donors

Energy, financial and agriculture interests are the biggest players in the state

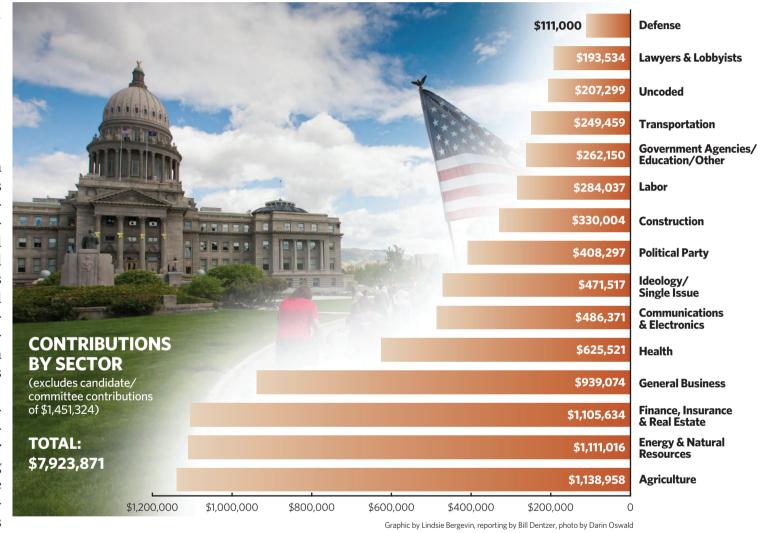
BY BILL DENTZER

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Corporate campaign contributions in Idaho's 2014 elections were dominated by interests in agriculture, energy and natural resources, and financial service-related companies including insurers and real estate, with combined giving from those sectors accounting for more than one-third of all business giving.

Areview of campaign donations shows that companies, trade groups and other organizations representing those top sectors gave roughly \$3.4 million to candidates in Idaho state races last year, about 36 percent of the \$9.4 million contributed by all organized groups, including businesses, PACs, political committees and other special interests.

Giving by individuals for the same period was \$11.3 million, and contributions of \$50 or less, which are not itemized, added another \$1.1 million, bringing the overall total to \$21.8 million.



From a national perspective, Idaho's total is a paltry sum, representing just .5 percent of the more than \$4.6 billion contributed in 2014. Overall, Idaho ranked 43rd among states in total dollars contributed, slightly behind Montana and ahead of South Dakota. The top five states were California, Texas, Illinois, Florida and New York. More than half a billion dollars poured into California, about

See POLITICS, D2

SEE THE TOP 50 BUSINESS OR GROUP CONTRIBUTORS

Also, a breakdown by sector and industry. **D2**

FIVE QUESTIONS ON CAMPAIGN SPENDING

Take this short quiz to test your knowledge.

- 1. Agricultural sector interests donated the most to Idaho campaigns in the last election cycle. Which of these agricultural industries gave the most?
 - A. Forestry & forest products
 - B. Ranching/Livestock
 - C. Crop production, processing
- 2. Which of these health-related groups donated the most?

- A. The Idaho Medical Association
- B. The Idaho Hospital Association
- C. Blue Cross of Idaho
- 3. Whose committee did the Arizona Democratic Party contribute money to?
 - A. A.J. Balukoff
- B. Idaho Democratic Legislative Caucus
 - C. Idaho Democratic Party
- 4. Which of these three out-of-state groups gave the most in 2014?
 - A. National Rifle Association
- B. Koch Industries
- C. Citizens United

- 5. What business interests are represented by the Idaho Committee on Hospitality & Sports?
 - A. Hotels and tourism
 - B. Sports and entertainment
 - C. Beer, wine and spirits

ANSWERS

- 1. A Forestry: nearly \$306,000.
- 2. A Idaho Medical Association: \$53,250.
 - 3. C Idaho Democratic Party.
 - 4. B Koch Industries: \$23,000.
- 5. A Hotels/motels and tourism. It donated \$36,950 to candidates in 2014

POLITICS

CONTINUED FROM D1

12 percent of the U.S. total.

The Statesman analyzed 2014 contributions in Idaho races for federal and state offices, including state legislative offices, with a focus on campaign giving by corporate interests and the sectors and industries they represent. The analysis drew on data compiled from official state sources by the National Institute on Money in State (followthemo-Politics ney.org), which the Statesman refined and localized.

"This is the way the system works," said Jasper Li-Calzi, professor of political economy at The College of Idaho. "İt's not directly 'You vote for this bill and we'll give your campaign \$5,000." It doesn't work that way. They give money to candidates who tend to support them anyway.

"Another way to look at it is kind of like having a lawyer on retainer. What this buys as much as anything is access.... You've got to always be a player so when something comes up you can call them right away.'

TOP STATISTICS

Some additional top level findings:

- ➤ Of the \$21.8 million in total contributions, \$7.2 million came from interests outside Idaho. And of the \$9.4 million in giving by businesses and groups, about \$1.4 million came from candidate committees to other candidates.
- ➤ Among all contributors, the largest single donor was Democratic gubernatorial candidate A.J. Balukoff, who gave \$3.6 million to his unsuccessful campaign; his campaign committee then gave \$500,000 of that amount to the state Democratic Party. Balukoff's spending, representing 17 percent of Idaho's total, slightly skewed the overall state figures, inflating both the underlying prevalence of contributions to Democrats and Idaho's overall rate of contributions relative to oth-
- ➤ Six organizations donated more than \$100,000 to various races, all but one representing Idaho companies or business interests. The top corporate donor, Idaho Power, gave nearly \$133,000 to candidates statewide, followed by Melaleuca, the Idaho Falls-based direct retail sales company, at just more than \$111,000.

The outlier, ranked third, was Club for Growth, the Washington, D.C.-based conservative policy group whose entire contribution of \$109,000 went to one candidate, Bryan Smith, who lost in a Republican primary against U.S. Rep. Mike Simpson.

"There are some overarching principles that we pay attention to, things like the economy and having a good business environment that provides for job creation and a good economy," said Jeff Malmen, Idaho Power's vice president of public affairs, regarding the company's financial giving to candidates. "We do pay attention to the issues that impact our ability to reliably and affordably provide energy to our customers. It covers the gamut."

Malmen said company's political contributions "are not recovered in customer rates." Idaho Power's political giving, he said, "is dwarfed by our charitable and community giving" of more than \$1 million a year, in other organizations, out-ofaddition to employee volunteerism.

spokesman Melaleuca Tony Lima said company CEO Frank VanderSloot was not available for comment. VanderSloot is a prolific contributor to state and national Republican candidates and was one of Mitt Romney's 2012 presidential finance cochairs.

- ➤ Of the nearly 2,400 organizations that donated in Idaho, the top 50 accounted for 30 percent of the giving by businesses and groups and 13 percent of overall giving. Those top 50 represent a broad range of industries and sectors.
- ➤ With outliers such as the the Balukoff campaign excluded, partisan giving by corporate interests ran nearly 12 to 1 in favor of Republican candidates and causes.

BUSINESS OR GROUP CONTRIBUTIONS BY SECTOR/INDUSTRY

SECTOR/INDUSTRY	AMOUNT
Agriculture total Forestry & Forest Products	\$ 1,138,958 \$ 305,988
Crop Production & Basic Processing Agricultural Services & Products	\$ 249,810 \$ 168,200
Food Processing & Sales Miscellaneous Agriculture	\$ 106,027 \$ 102,150
Livestock Dairy	\$78,658 \$72,000
Farm Bureau Poultry & Eggs	\$53,125 \$3,000
Energy & Natural Resources total	\$ 1,111,016
Electric Utilities Oil & Gas	\$382,573 \$291,600
Mining Railroads	\$ 182,369 \$ 96,925
Miscellaneous Energy Waste Management	\$ 54,250 \$ 41,400
Nuclear Energy Water Utilities	\$ 27,500 \$ 11,500
Hunting Miscellaneous Energy & Natural Resources	\$ 10,500 \$ 9,400
Steel Environmental Svcs/Equipment	\$1,000 \$1,000
Fishing	\$1,000
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate total Insurance	\$ 1,105,634 \$ 481,185
Real Estate Commercial Banks	\$ 296,143 \$ 104,449
Accountants Miscellaneous Finance	\$ 49,572 \$ 45,825
Miscellaneous Finance, Insurance & Real Estate Credit Unions	\$41,800 \$30,600
Securities & Investment Payday/Title Loans	\$ 26,060 \$ 18,000
Banks & Lending Institutions Finance & Credit Companies	\$10,000 \$2,000
General Business total	\$ 939,074
Retail Sales Beer, Wine & Liquor	\$ 156,379 \$ 145,440
Gambling & Casinos Tobacco companies & tobacco product sales	\$ 114,550 \$ 109,700
Business Services Business Associations	\$ 81,243 \$ 77,625
Miscellaneous Manufacturing & Distributing Lodging & Tourism	\$ 63,785 \$ 50,864
Food & Beverage Chemical & Related Manufacturing	\$50,401 \$39,983
Recreation & Live Entertainment Miscellaneous Business	\$34,925 \$9,000
Miscellaneous Services Health total	\$5,180
Health Professionals Pharmaceuticals & Health Products	\$ 625,521 \$ 228,050
Hospitals & Nursing Homes Health Services	\$ 172,450 \$ 165,121
Communications & Electronics total	\$59,900 \$486,371
Telecom Services & Equipment Electronics Manufacturing & Services	\$ 215,225 \$ 137,750
Computer Equipment & Services TV & Movie Production/Distribution	\$111,585 \$15,000
Cable TV Miscellaneous Communications & Electronics	\$4,500 \$1,000
Printing & Publishing Recorded Music Production	\$811 \$500
Ideology/Single Issue	\$ 471,517
Conservative Policy Organization Foreign & Defense Policy	\$300,946 \$45,500
Other/Single Issue Groups Gun Control	\$ 42,750 \$ 29,825
Conservative Party Organization Pro-Environmental Policy	\$ 15,500 \$ 13,050
Abortion Policy Liberal Policy Organization	\$13,000 \$8,946
Health & Welfare Policy Gay/Lesbian Rights & Issues	\$1,000 \$1,000
Party Committee total	\$ 408,297
Democratic Party committees Republican Party committees	\$ 222,739 \$ 185,558
Construction total General Contractors	\$ 330,004 \$ 146,954
Construction Services Building Materials & Equipment	\$68,115 \$63,700
Home Builders Special Trade Contractors	\$ 28,765 \$ 22,470
Labor total	\$ 284,037
General Trade Unions Public Sector Unions	\$ 145,382 \$ 112,755
Transportation Unions Covernment Agencies (Education (Other total	\$ 25,900
Government Agencies/Education/Other total Tribal Governments Education	\$ 262,200 \$ 207,700 \$ 47,650
Education Nonprofit Institutions Welfare/Social Work	\$47,650 \$6,500
Transportation total	\$300 \$249,459
Automotive	\$113,550

Automotive \$113,550 Air Transport \$73,309 \$52,350 Trucking Sea Transport \$9,000 Miscellaneous Transport \$1,250 Uncoded (contributions less than \$1,000) total \$207,299 **Lawyers & Lobbyists total** \$193,584 **Defense total** \$111,000 Defense Aerospace \$73,500 Defense Electronics \$24,000 \$13,500 Miscellaneous Defense \$7,923,871

than those from within Idalion, or 56 percent to 44 percent. The same core business group's top five, but in slightly different order.

Among Idaho firms, agriculture led, followed by the page on disclosure and also general business group, buoyed by Melaleuca's individual largesse. The broad finance, insurance and real estate category was third, fol- ny spokesman David Sutton. lowed by the energy/natural In general, he said, Altria resources and then the health sectors.

sectors were led by energy and natural resources, then Idaho and elsewhere, the group, agriculture, general islative action on taxing its business and health.

➤ The top corporate contributors from outside Idaho cigarettes, or restricting were

➤ Among businesses and Health; Potlatch Corp of Spokane, whose subsidiary, state interests gave more Clearwater Paper, also appeared in the top 50; Altria, ho, \$4.4 million to \$3.5 mil- the Virginia-based tobacco company; Los Angelesbased Farmers Group insursectors appear in each ance; and communications firm CenturyLink, which is based in Louisiana.

Altria maintains a web posts its campaign giving by state because transparency is "an important issue for shareholders," said compa-"supports candidates who understand the legislative Outside Idaho, the top five and regulatory issues important to our companies." In finance/insurance company has monitored legproducts, which include smokeless tobacco and e-Utah-based Select where they can be used.

islative landscape in Idaho over the past several years, there have been a number of issues like that that have been in play for us," he said.

Other business or group contributions

(2,305 - includes candidate committees)

PARTICIPATING

Jason Kreizenbeck, president of the Boise lobbying and government relations firm Lobby Idaho, has seen the issue from multiple angles as both a former head of government affairs for Micron and chief of staff to Gov. Butch Otter. His firm represents major corporate clients from Idaho and across the nation.

'We advise our clients that we think it's important that they participate in the political process in accordance with Idaho law," Kreizenbeck said. "We have a part-time citizen Legislature and it's not easy to campaign

"When you look at the leg- in some of the more spread- butions has an effect. Spendcampaigns can be expensive, we support them in the way that the law allows us to.

> greater understanding on corporations or groups afthe public's behalf on how fect the legislature." campaigns are financed, it always creates robust discussion. I don't think it's something that the people always pay attention to."

But gaining influence or access need not come at a price. Back in 2008, LiCalzi gave Idaho lawmakers a survey asking them to rank which groups were the most effective and credible, and had the most impact on them. The top influencers were independent groups that don't make donations but instead contribute information that helps decision makers decide policy.

"Giving campaign contri-

out rural parts of the state. As ing money on lobbying has an effect. Having a good reputation has an effect also," Li-Calzi said. Donating to cam-"Every time there is a paigns "isn't the only way

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\$6,570,410

\$9,375,195

BILL DENTZER

For this story, state government reporter Bill Dentzer spent three weeks collecting, scrubbing

and analyzing records on more than 37,000 donations. An upcoming story will look at which candidates received the most. and from whom.

TOP 50 BUSINESS OR GROUP CONTRIBUTORS

Contributor	Specific Business	Location	Amoun
1. Idaho Power Co	Utilities/Energy	Boise	\$132,890
2. Melaleuca Inc	Direct sales/Retail	Idaho Falls	\$111,379
3. Club For Growth	Conservative policy/ Ideology	Washing- ton, DC	\$ 109,470
4. Micron Technology	Electronics/ Communications	Boise	\$104,000
5. Idaho Association Of Realtors		Boise	\$102,600
5. JR Simplot Co	Miscellaneous/	Boise	\$ 101,150
7. Select Health	Agriculture Accident & health insurance	Murray, UT	\$90,150
3. Potlatch Corp	Paper & pulp mills and paper manufacturing/ Agriculture	Spokane, WA	\$84,688
9. Coeur d'Alene Tribe	Native American tribes/ Tribal governments	Plummer	\$79,000
10. Altria	Tobacco companies & tobacco product sales	Richmond, VA	\$77,450
11. Farmers Underwriters Association	Insurance agencies,	Boise	\$69,110
12. Centurylink	brokers & agents Telecommunications	Monroe, LA	\$ 68,750
13. Avista Corp	Utilities/Energy	Spokane, WA	\$66,162
14. Winning For Idaho	Casinos, racetracks & gambling	Boise	\$ 60,450
15. 2013 Senators Classic Committee	Republican joint candidate committees	Alexandria, VA	\$60,28
16. Union Pacific Railroad	Railroads/Energy &	Omaha, NE	\$ 58,875
17. Monsanto	Natural Resources Agricultural services	St. Louis,	\$ 58,250
18. Arizona Democratic Party	Democratic Party	Phoenix, AZ	\$57,500
19. Louisiana Democratic Party	committees Democratic Party	Baton	\$57,250
	committees	Rouge, LA	
20. Idaho Forest Group 21. Idaho State AFL-CIO	Timber companies, sawmills/Agriculture General trade unions/	Athol	\$57,150 \$57,050
22. Idaho Democratic Legisla-	Labor Democratic party com-	Boise	\$56,210
tive Caucus 23. Hecla Mining Co	mittees Metal mining & processing/ Energy &	Coeur d'Alene	\$53,450
	Natural Resources	u Alerie	
24. Idaho Medical Association 25. Idaho Farm Bureau Federation AGRA PAC	Physicians/Health Farm bureau/affiliated organizations & PACs/	Boise Pocatello	\$ 53,250 \$ 53,000
26. Blue Cross of Idaho	Agriculture Accident & health insurance	Boise	\$50,800
27. Idaho Hospital Association 28. Idaho Sugarbeet Growers	Hospitals/Health Sugar growers and sugar	Boise Boise	\$49,800 \$44,300
Association 29. Idaho Beer & Wine	co-ops/Agriculture Liquor wholesalers	Boise	\$ 42,850
Distributors Association 30. Clearwater Paper (Potlatch Corp)	Paper & pulp mills and paper manufacturing/	Spokane, WA	\$41,150
31. Idaho Association of	Agriculture Builders associations/	Boise	\$38,350
General Contractors 32. Idaho Cable Telecommunications Associ-	Telecommunications/ Telecom Services &	Boise	\$37,250
ation 33. Shoshone Bannock Tribes	Equipment Native American tribes/	Fort Hall	\$37,250
34. Anheuser-Busch	Tribal governments Beer	St. Louis,	\$37,000
35. Idaho Committee on		MO Boise	
Hospitality & Sports	Hotels & motels/Lodging & tourism		\$36,950
36. Idaho Land Fund (JB Scott / Albertsons)	Other single-issue or ideological groups	Boise	\$36,750
37. Professional Fire Fighters Of Idaho	Police & firefighters unions and associations/Labor	Boise	\$36,62
38. Midas Gold, Inc	Metal mining & processing/ Energy &	Spokane, WA	\$36,500
39. United Heritage Financial Group	Natural Resources Insurance companies, general	Meridian	\$36,42
40. Pacificorp	Electric power utilities/ Energy	Portland, OR	\$36,30
41. Chevron	Major (multinational) oil & gas producers/Energy	San Ramon, CA	\$36,250
42. Agriculture & Natural Resource Industry Pac	Farm organizations & cooperatives/ Agriculture	Boise	\$35,950
43. Idaho Conservative Growth Fund	Republican-Conserva- tive based groups/ Ideology	Washing- ton, DC	\$35,100
44. Associated Logging Contractors of Idaho	Timber companies, sawmills/ Agriculture	Coeur d'Alene	\$34,100
45. Pharmaceutical Research	Pharmaceutical	Washing-	\$33,550
and Manufacturers of America 46. Hewlett-Packard	manufacturing/Health Electronics manufacturing/Communications	ton, DC Palo Alto, CA	\$31,00
47. Potato Growers of Idaho	Crop production/	Idaho Falls	\$30,70
48. Ball Ventures	Agriculture Real estate developers & subdividers	Idaho Falls	\$30,46
49. Idaho Trucking Association	Trucking/Transportation	Meridian	\$30,100
50. Reynolds American Inc Total of Top 50	Tobacco companies & tobacco product sales	Winston- Salem, NC	\$ 29,750 \$ 2,804,78 !
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