

# MONEY IN POLITICS PROJECT

## REPORT #16

Corporate Money in  
Maine Political  
Campaigns





# MONEY IN POLITICS PROJECT

The Money in Politics Project is a program of **Maine Citizens for Clean Elections**, a nonpartisan nonprofit organization working to ensure that Maine's campaign finance laws, elections, and government serve the public interest, both in principle and in practice. We engage Maine people from across the political spectrum, using research, education, and outreach to further fairness, inclusion, and opportunity in our politics.

MCCE is a 501(c)(3) organization.

[www.MaineCleanElections.org](http://www.MaineCleanElections.org)

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## REPORT #16

### Corporate Money in Maine Political Campaigns

#### INTRODUCTION

In recent years, particularly since the landmark Citizens United decision in 2010, politicians and activists alike have decried the rise of big money – and corporate money – in the American electoral system. Corporate political influence can crowd out the wishes of voters and warp the legislative process. It can reduce voter confidence that their votes count and that elections matter. It can also perpetuate private sector inefficiencies by allowing an unearned competitive advantage for companies and industries that have the power to influence public policy. And it can exacerbate inequalities between the haves and the have-nots.

In the complex world of campaign finance regulation, an assortment of rules governs the flow of money from the corporate world into all variety of national, state, and local political activities. For almost as long as there have been corporate contributions, they have been strictly regulated at the federal level. Corporations have been banned from making contributions directly to political candidates and parties since the Tillman Act

of 1907. In 1947 Congress enacted the Taft-Hartley Act, extending the ban to labor unions.<sup>1</sup> Corporate and union contribution bans remain on sound constitutional footing, despite numerous challenges over the years.

In Maine, the rules governing contributions from corporations and unions are the same as those governing contributions from individual contributors. Both corporations and individuals can make contributions directly to candidates, parties, ballot question committees (BQCs), and political action committees (PACs). Contributions from corporations are all subject to the same contribution limits that apply to individuals (where applicable) — \$400 per election for state legislative candidates and \$1,675 per election for gubernatorial candidates. A candidate with both a primary election and general election can accept double these amounts per election cycle from each contributor. Additionally, both corporate and individual donors can make unlimited contributions when donating directly to a political party or PAC in Maine. In contrast, some states apply different contribution limits to different sources or entirely prohibit corporations and/or unions from making any contributions to candidates or political parties.<sup>2</sup>

Corporations don't give only to candidates. They also contribute significant amounts of campaign cash to political action committees, including those known as Caucus PACs. Each legislative caucus in Augusta — House Democrats, House Republicans, Senate Democrats, and Senate Republicans — has its own Caucus PAC, which legislators use to protect and increase the political power of their respective caucuses. Caucus PACs are managed by a small number of senior legislators in each chamber who use these funds to recruit candidates and promote the election or re-election of as many caucus members as possible.

Leadership PACs are smaller and more numerous than Caucus PACs and are run by individual legislators who aspire to positions of leadership within the Legislature. A Leadership PAC allows a legislator to raise money to support the caucus or to directly assist friendly candidates. These legislators may also use their PAC to pay for travel and meals as they recruit people to run for the legislature or as they travel the state courting members of their caucus to support their bid for a leadership position. Leadership PACs are one way a legislator demonstrates their ability to help their fellow partisans and thus earn support heading into crucial leadership elections held before the start of each Legislature.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Corporations and unions have other ways of exerting their influence, notably through contributions to political action committees (PACs) and by making independent expenditures. And between elections they deploy lobbyists to work directly with legislators to shape policy. In turn, many lobbyists contribute to candidates and campaign entities. These activities are mutually reinforcing.

<sup>2</sup> The National Conference of State Legislatures compiled the various contribution rules in place around the country for the current election cycle. <https://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/Documents/Elections/Contribution-Limits-to-Candidates-2019-2020.pdf?ver=2019-10-02-132802-117>

<sup>3</sup> The Maine Legislature has ten formal leadership positions: Speaker of the House, House Majority Leader, House Assistant Majority Leader, House Minority Leader, House Assistant Minority Leader, Senate President, Senate Majority Leader, Senate Assistant Majority Leader, Senate Minority Leader, and Senate Assistant Minority Leader.

It is not uncommon for a legislator to be involved simultaneously in their own campaign committee, a Leadership PAC, and a Caucus PAC. But only the legislator's own campaign committee is subject to fundraising restrictions.

Corporations and other interests with financial means often find it advantageous to connect to legislative leadership early and often. Those relationships ensure that their business or industry remains in good standing with policymakers, regardless of party affiliation. Without limits on the size of contributions to Caucus PACs or Leadership PACs, wealthy individuals, corporations, and unions can write large checks and thereby play a major role in shaping the political fortunes of recipients. They can also influence legislative control and the outcome of individual legislative battles.

The two major political parties also have their own fundraising operations. Most of their fundraising is done by the state party committee, but county and municipal committees occasionally raise funds to pay for staff, campaign communications, voter registration, get-out-the-vote, and independent expenditures throughout the election cycle.

## TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS FROM CORPORATE SOURCES 2008\* CYCLE TO PRESENT

|   |                                    |                        |
|---|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Corporate Contributions to Candidates</b>                          | Democratic Candidates              | \$1,153,176.13         |
|   | Green Independent Candidates       | \$2,597.15             |
|   | Republican Candidates              | \$5,029,174.28         |
|   | Unenrolled Candidates              | \$1,681,441.21         |
| <b>Corporate Contributions Directly to Political Party Committees</b> | Democratic Party                   | \$2,168,096.37         |
|   | Green Independent Party            | \$6,970.68             |
|   | Republican Party                   | \$2,472,087.43         |
| <b>Corporate Contributions to PACs and BQCs</b>                       | Ballot Question Committee          | \$19,662,271.89        |
|   | Regular Political Action Committee | \$46,563,173.01        |
|   | Democractic-Affiliated Committee   | \$5,413,287.44         |
|   | Republican-Affiliated Committee    | \$6,196,472.29         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  |                                    | <b>\$90,348,747.88</b> |

\*Data from the years prior to 2012 may contain anomalies due variations in how the data from those early years was recorded into the Ethics Commission's databases.

This report analyzes corporate contributions in Maine political campaigns. It is based on a review of contributions given to state-level candidates, political parties, Caucus PACs, and Leadership PACs. We reviewed contributions directly from corporate or commercial sources, as well as from PACs operated by corporations. This report is based on campaign finance data that candidates, parties, and PACs are legally required to report to the Maine Commission on Governmental Ethics and Election Practices (Ethics Commission).<sup>4</sup> We obtained data directly from the Ethics Commission and additional data through the nonpartisan FollowTheMoney.org website, operated by the National Institute on Money in Politics.<sup>5</sup>

This data allows us to shine a light on the industries and individual corporate donors that have put the most money into the political system and contributed to the electoral fortunes of Maine candidates, political parties, and their PACs.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The Ethics Commission designates corporate contributions as “commercial sources.”

<sup>5</sup> The National Institute on Money in Politics categorizes contributors by the industry or sector with which they are most closely aligned. We acknowledge and appreciate the work of NIMP in organizing and offering this data to the public.

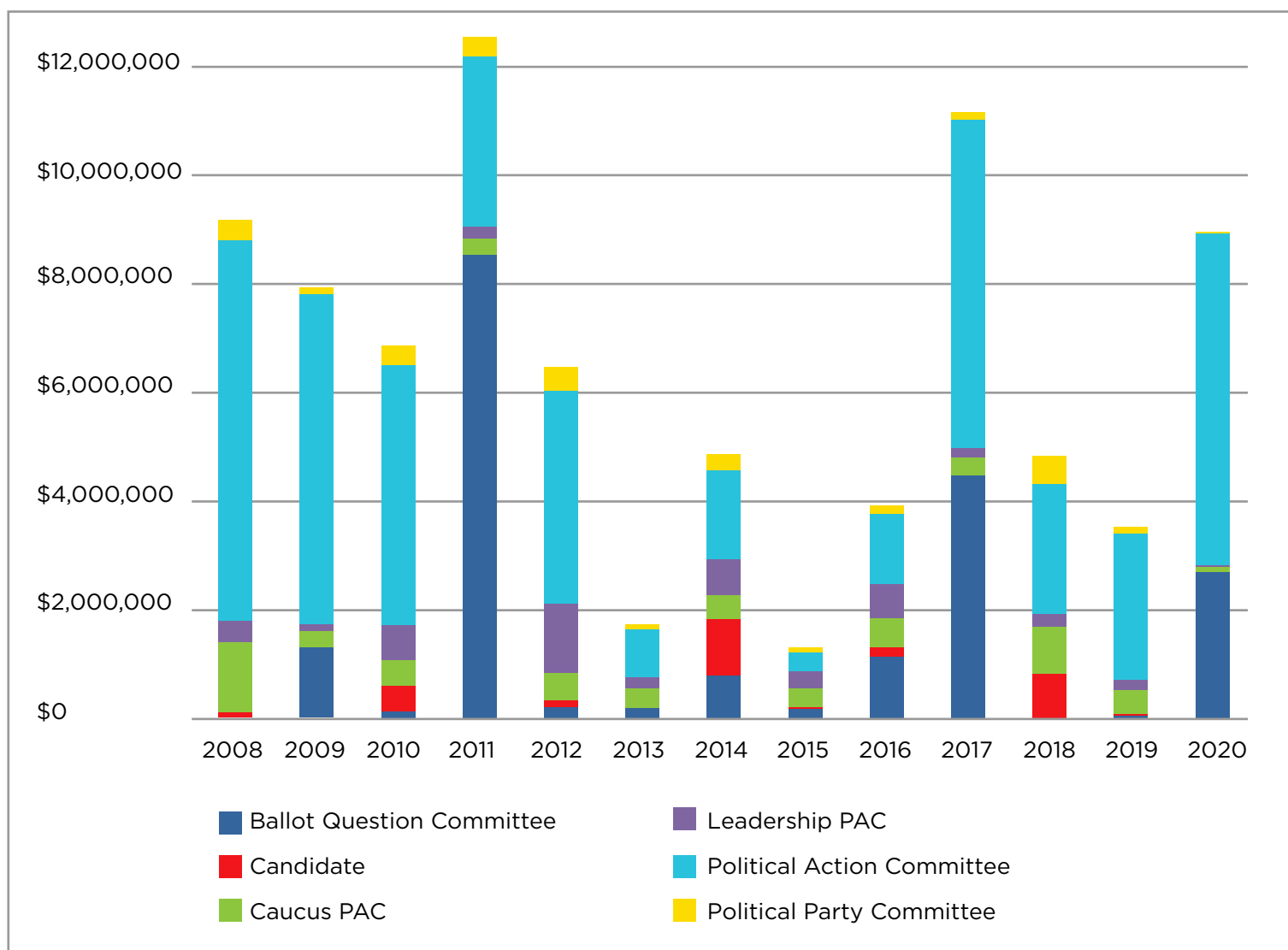
<sup>6</sup> This report does not consider contributions made by lobbyists hired by these corporations – a substantial additional funding source meriting its own separate analysis. Contributions to candidates for U.S. Congress are also not included in this report.



# 1. OVERVIEW OF CORPORATE CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS

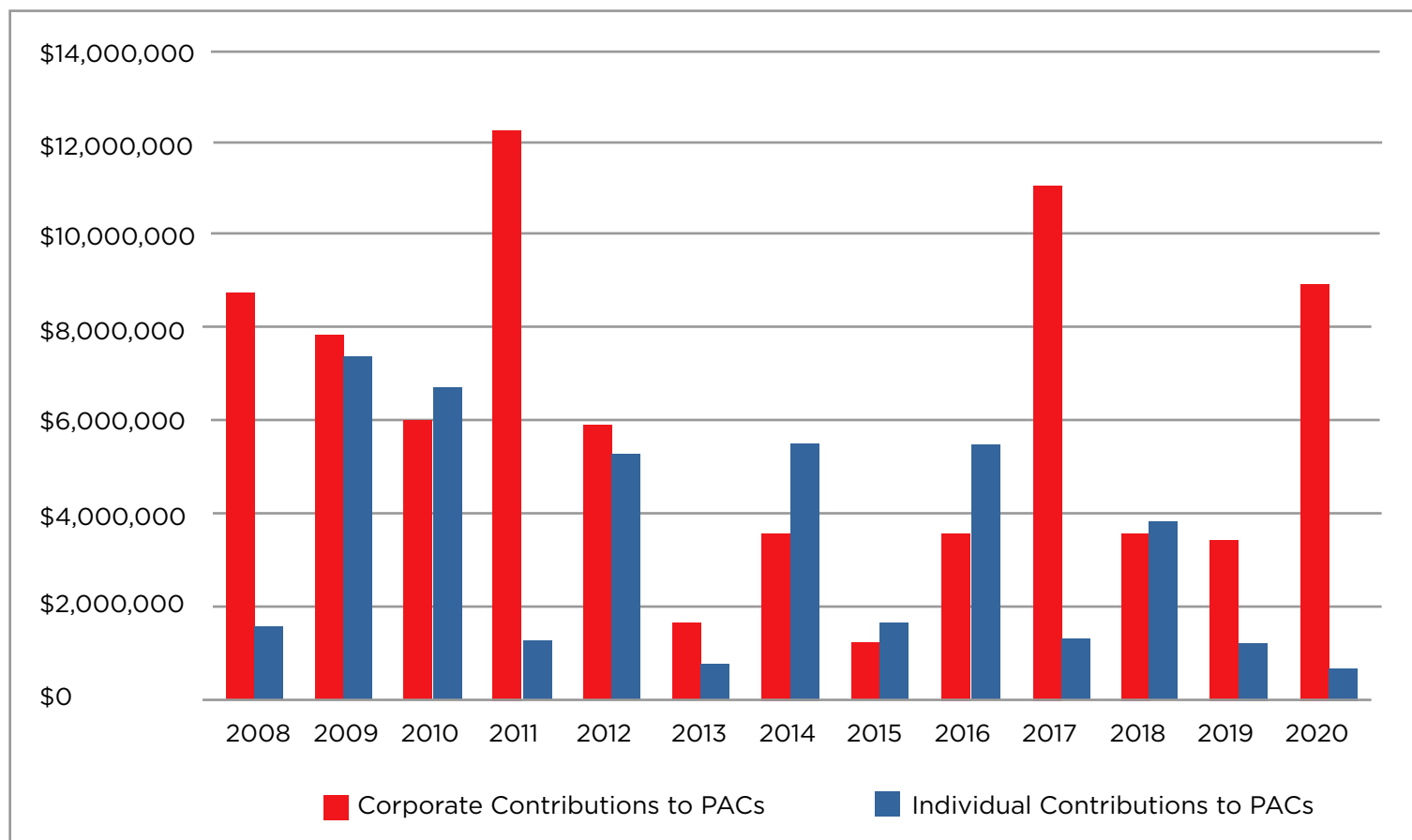
In most recent years, corporations have given more than \$6 million in connection with Maine campaigns. Most of that money goes to PACs and BQCs (see *Graph 1*).

**GRAPH 1** | Corporate Contributions by Election Cycle



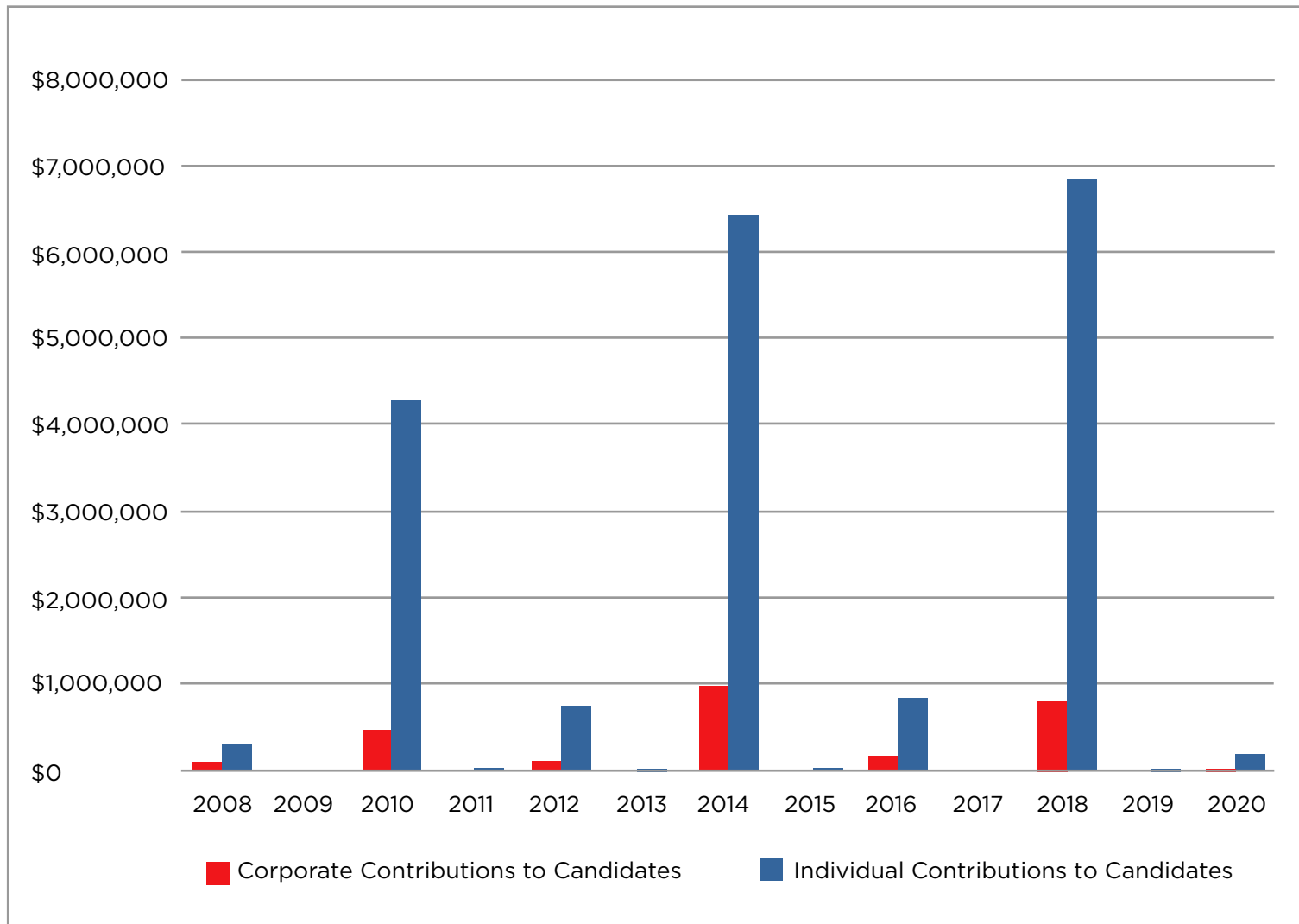
Some citizen initiative campaigns bring in large amounts of corporate money, and in the years when a question is on the ballot, corporate contributions to PACs and BQCs can easily exceed individual contributions to PACs and BQCs. This graph shows a surge of corporate spending on gaming-related ballot questions (2011 and 2017), and another peak in 2020 relating to a possible ballot question regarding an electric utility line to Quebec. With more than six months remaining in this 2020 campaign at the time of the most recent filings, this total will undoubtedly rise (see *Graph 2*).

**GRAPH 2** | Individual and Corporate Contributions to BQCs and PACS



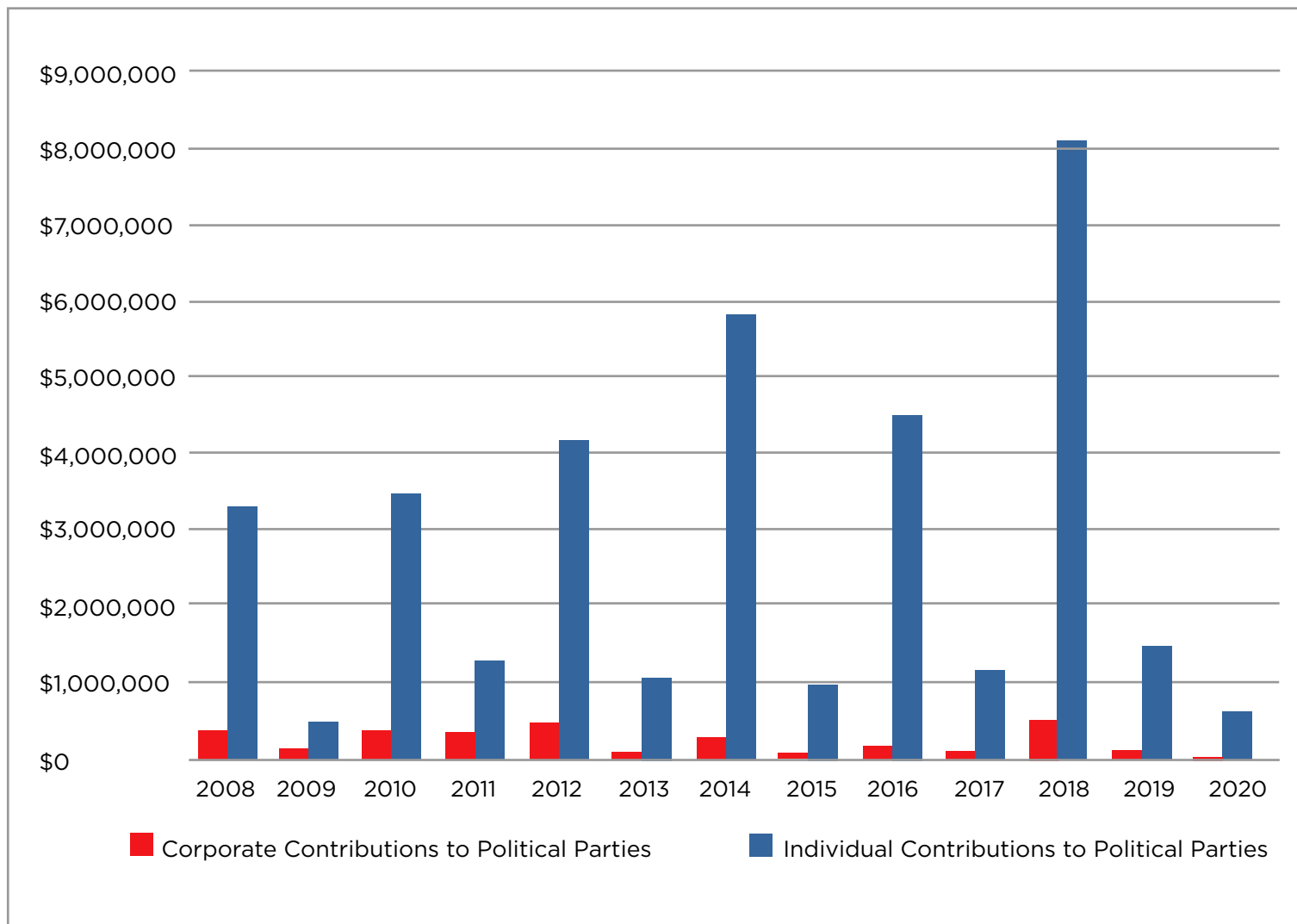
Gubernatorial candidates receive a great deal of funding from individual contributors, both in their primaries and in the general election. Graph 3 shows this quadrennial surge in contributions from individuals to candidates. Legislative candidates receive far less corporate money, in part because a majority run using the Clean Elections program (See *Graph 3*).

**GRAPH 3** | Individual and Corporate Contributions to Candidates



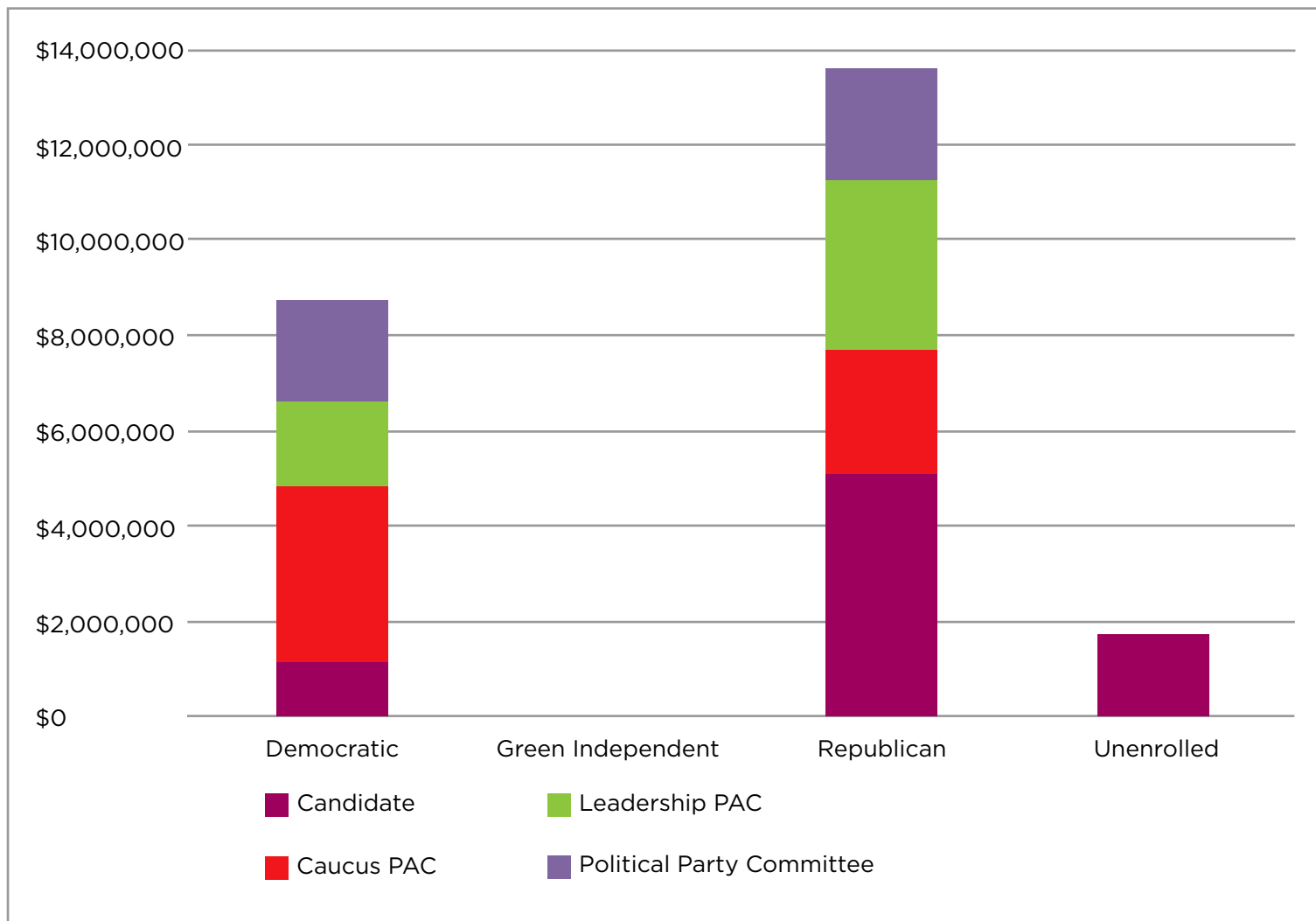
In election years, the political parties hire staff and make expenditures for party activities and legislative elections. They receive substantial amounts from individuals, and far less from corporate sources (*See Graph 4*).

**GRAPH 4** | Individual and Corporate Contributions to Political Parties



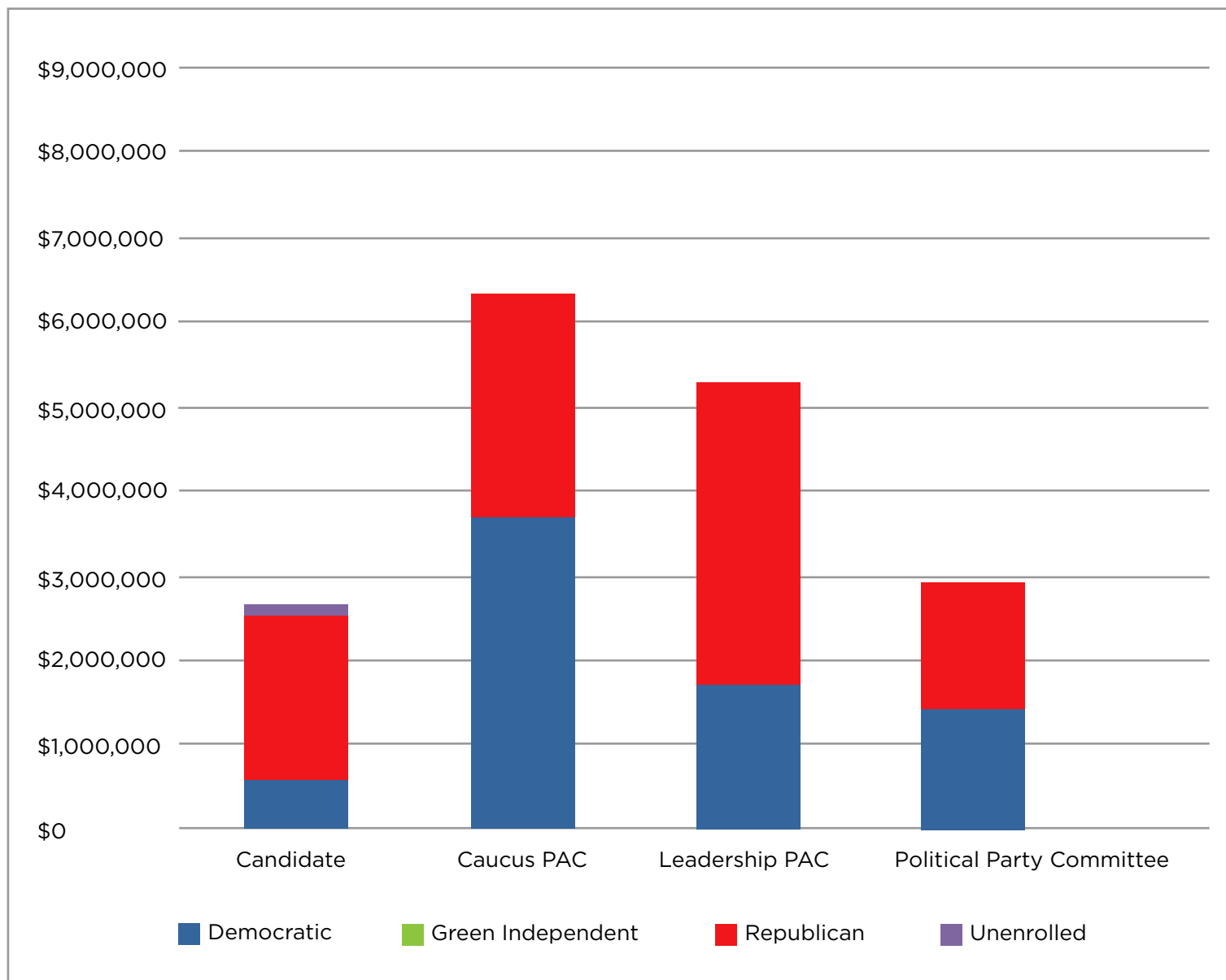
Corporations are equal-opportunity players; they give to both Democratic- and Republican-leaning recipients. Republican candidates receive more than Democratic candidates, but Democratic Caucus PACs receive more corporate financial support than Republican Caucus PACs. Green Independent Party corporate fundraising is negligible (See *Graph 5*).

**GRAPH 5** | Coporate Contributions by Recipient's Party Affiliation



Most corporate campaign donations go to candidates, but caucus PACs and party committees receive substantial support from corporate givers (Graph 6).

**GRAPH 6** | Corporate Contributions by Recipient Type



Informed by this overview, Part II analyzes five specific corporate sectors in more detail, revealing a consistent, concerted effort to use corporate money to influence elections and public policy.



## 2. SELECTED INDUSTRIES' CONTRIBUTION ACTIVITY IN MAINE

Corporations are in business for specific reasons — usually to make a profit by delivering a service or a product. As legal entities, corporations are subject to rules and regulations that affect their ability to achieve their objectives. Most corporations understand that government policy sets the rules that affect them in a variety of ways, from benefits they provide to employees, to restrictions on their ability to contaminate the air and water around them. To advance their interests, many corporations engage with the political process, including making contributions to candidates and others involved in election campaigns.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> A small but significant number of businesses place strict limitations on their management's engagement with the political process, including campaign contributions and expenditures. Scholars debate the propriety of corporate political spending. See, e.g., Alzola, M. (2013). Corporate Dystopia: The Ethics of Corporate Political Spending, *Business & Society*, 52(3), 388–426. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650312474952>. ("What is wrong with the current system of regulation of corporate lobbying and campaign finance is that it is inconsistent with the principles of political equality and consent. By taking advantage of this unfair regulatory framework, business firms are making a contribution to undermine the basis of a robust democratic regime at both the societal and the corporate level.")



**CONTRIBUTIONS FROM SELECTED INDUSTRIES TO MAINE CANDIDATES,  
PARTIES, AND POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEES 2012 — 2018**

|  | <b>Candidates</b> | <b>Leadership PACs</b> | <b>Political Parties</b> | <b>Combined</b>    |
|--|-------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Finance, Insurance, Real Estate</b> | \$232,474         | \$199,175              | \$798,549                | \$1,230,197        |
| <b>Healthcare</b>                      | \$118,199         | \$66,350               | \$350,700                | \$545,250          |
| <b>Pharmaceuticals</b>                 | \$41,300          | \$104,125              | \$269,250                | \$415,775          |
| <b>Construction</b>                    | \$136,075         | \$66,238               | \$192,330                | \$394,644          |
| <b>Energy, Natural Resources</b>       | \$51,482          | \$75,050               | \$207,125                | \$333,657          |
| <b>TOTALS</b>                          | <b>\$579,530</b>  | <b>\$510,938</b>       | <b>\$1,827,954</b>       | <b>\$2,919,523</b> |

This section examines campaign contributions made by corporations in five selected industries. It also describes some of the pressing policy initiatives that matter greatly to individual corporations within those industries.

Due to limitations in the availability of older data, this section focuses on just the last four election cycles — the years 2012 to 2018. We identified contributions from these industries totaling \$2,919,523 during those years, which represents about 3.2 percent of overall corporate giving described in the preceding section.



## A. Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate

In 2012-18, these three high-powered industries combined to give over \$1.23 million to Maine candidates, parties, Caucus PACs, and Leadership PACs. With contribution limits in place for candidates, only \$230,000 of this total went to candidates themselves.

However, corporations in these industries gave nearly \$800,000 to party committees and Caucus PACs. Republican party committees and Caucus PACs received about 57 percent of this money — or over \$450,000 — compared with the Democrats' \$340,000. About \$200,000 contributed by corporations in these industries went to Leadership PACs run by legislators of both major parties.

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In 2019 the Legislature considered a number of bills seeking to expand health insurance coverage. LD 1611 — “An Act to Support Universal Health Care” — was intended to establish the Maine Health Plan to provide universal health care coverage to all state residents. The bill was modeled on legislation from Minnesota. Also in 2019 the Legislature considered LD 1617 — “An Act to Create a Single-payer Health Care Program in Maine.” This bill would have required State agencies to create an implement a single-payer health insurance program beginning in 2022 for residents not eligible for the MaineCare program. Neither bill was enacted.

Of the \$1.23 million contributed by the finance, insurance, and real estate industries, over \$850,000 (70 percent) came from just five contributors. The Maine Association of Realtors (MAR) contributed nearly \$250,000 to candidates, parties, and their PACs in 2012-2018. According to their website, MAR strives to enhance “members’ ability to successfully conduct business; ensures the integrity and competency of realtors; and promotes the preservation of the right to own, transfer and use real property.”

The second largest contributor from these industries is the widely known insurance company, Anthem, which contributed more than \$180,000 over the seven-year period. Anthem focused on contributing to Caucus PACs and Leadership PACs of both parties.

The next two largest contributors from these industries are trade associations that also represent wealthy interests. The Maine Bankers Association and the Maine Credit Union League each contributed slightly more than \$150,000. Both contributors gave heavily to candidates, although they also gave to parties and Caucus PACs. Republican candidates benefited more from these contributors, which is partly due to Democrats’ higher rate of participation in the Clean Elections public funding system which strictly prohibits private contributions from any source including corporate contributions. Across the board, these contributors gave more to incumbents and candidates running in open seats than to challengers.

The fifth and final top contributor from these major industries was Oppenheimer & Co., a multinational investment banking company. This New York-based company only made two contributions, both in 2012. One contribution was an extraordinary \$100,000 donation to the Maine Republican Party, while the other was \$10,000 to a Republican Leadership PAC. We were unable to uncover any specific information that would explain this contributor’s interest in the 2012 Maine legislative races.



## B. Healthcare

Players in Maine's healthcare sector made substantial contributions from 2012 to 2018. Hospitals, physicians, and others with legislative and policy interests used campaign contributions to support candidates and causes of their choosing. (Contributions from pharmaceutical interests are addressed in C., below.)

In 2012-2018, the healthcare industry combined to give nearly \$550,000 to Maine candidates, parties, Caucus PACs, and Leadership PACs. Almost \$120,000 of this went to candidates, with Republicans receiving about 63 percent of that total. On the other hand, \$360,000 went to party committees and Caucus PACs, with Democrats receiving 58 percent of that total. The remaining money contributed by the healthcare industry — just under \$70,000 — went to Leadership PACs on both sides of the aisle.

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For at least the last two decades, every Legislature has grappled with complex issues around health care. Hospitals, health care providers, and their legislative allies have long been players in Augusta and in elections across the state. In 2020 the Legislature considered LD 2110 — “An Act to Lower Health Care Costs.” This bill was intended to establish the Maine Commission on Affordable Health Care to monitor health care spending growth, to set health care quality benchmarks, and to establish health care spending targets for public payors. The bill was still pending when the Legislature adjourned due to the Coronavirus emergency.

Approximately one-half of the money contributed from the healthcare industry in 2012-2018 came from just four major contributors. The top contributor from this industry — Spectrum Healthcare Partners — gave over \$95,000 to a variety of candidates, Caucus PACs, and Leadership PACs across party lines. According to its website, Spectrum “is the largest multispecialty, physician-owned group practice serving the entire state of Maine.”<sup>8</sup>

The second largest contributor from the healthcare industry, the Maine Dental Association, gave nearly \$70,000. The final two major contributors are also trade associations; the Maine Health Care Association (MHCA) and the Maine Hospital Association each gave about \$50,000 over the seven-year period. The MHCA represents over 200 nursing and assisted living facilities in the state, while the Maine Hospital Association represents 36 community-governed hospitals and considers itself “the primary advocate for hospitals in the Maine State Legislature, the U.S. Congress and state and federal regulatory agencies.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Spectrum Healthcare Partners. 2020. Spectrum Healthcare Partners. April. <https://www.spectrumhpc.com/>

<sup>9</sup> The Maine Hospital Association. n.d. About Us. Accessed April 2020. <http://www.themha.org/About-Us>



### C. Pharmaceutical Industry

The pharmaceutical industry has been in the sights of Maine policymakers for over two decades, and every session of the Legislature sees many bills attempting to rein in the cost of prescription drugs. The industry has an intense interest in decisions made in Augusta and pursues that interest in the halls of the State House as well as in litigation relating to state statutes.

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The Maine Legislature has frequently considered legislation to reduce prescription drug prices, often generating opposition from drug manufacturers. One bill debated in 2019 was LD 1387 — “An Act to Increase Access to Safe and Affordable Prescription Drugs.” This bill would have enacted the Maine Pharmaceutical Drug Safety Act to allow individuals in Maine to import prescription drugs from Canada, with some restrictions and limitations. The bill was not enacted, but other measures affecting the pharmaceutical sector did move forward.

As with the industry sectors discussed above, in the pharmaceutical sector, a small number of contributors were responsible for a large portion of the industry’s political giving. In this case, the four largest contributors gave about 78 percent of the roughly \$415,000 contributed by the pharmaceutical industry.

The largest contributor was AstraZeneca, which gave \$105,000 in 2012-2018. AstraZeneca is a British-Swedish multinational corporation that has many interests directly affected by state and federal laws. AstraZeneca has been mired in controversies and has settled several lawsuits for hundreds of millions of dollars. For instance, in 2010, AstraZeneca paid \$520 million to settle a lawsuit that alleged the company had defrauded Medicare, Medicaid, and other government healthcare programs.<sup>10</sup> Any company potentially exposed to such challenges has strong interests in the actions of elected leaders, regulators, and other state officials.

The second largest contributor -- the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers Association of America (PhRMA) -- gave just over \$90,000 during the seven-year period. According to its website, PhRMA “represents the country’s leading biopharmaceutical research companies.”<sup>11</sup> PhRMA’s leadership and board of directors consists of CEOs and other executives of major multinational pharmaceutical companies. In 2019, the company spent nearly \$30 million on lobbying at the federal level. Maine and PhRMA have also fought each other in court over several public policy issues over the years.<sup>12</sup>

The next largest pharmaceutical contributor — Pfizer -- gave over \$85,000 in 2012-2018. Pfizer is one of the world’s largest multinational pharmaceutical corporations and is headquartered in New York City. Pfizer is also one of the most aggressive lobbying companies working on federal policy issues, spending over \$219 million to lobby Congress and federal officials between 1999 and 2019.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, the fourth largest contributor -- Merck and Co. -- gave over \$40,000 in 2012-2018. Merck and Co., with headquarters in New Jersey, is also one of the largest multinational pharmaceutical companies in the world. In 2008, Merck agreed to pay more than \$650 million to settle a lawsuit that alleged the company routinely overbilled Medicaid.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs. 2010. Pharmaceutical Giant AstraZeneca to Pay \$520 Million for Off-label Drug Marketing. April 27. Accessed April 2020.

<https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/pharmaceutical-giant-astrazeneca-pay-520-million-label-drug-marketing>.

<sup>11</sup> The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) . n.d. About PhRMA . Accessed April 2020. <https://phrma.org/>.

<sup>12</sup> For example, the Maine Rx program requiring drug manufacturers to discount their prices was vigorously contested until decided by the United States Supreme Court in 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Pfizer, Amgen, Lilly spent most to lobby Congress, study finds, Biopharmadive, March 4, 2020, <https://www.biopharmadive.com/news/pharma-lobbying-congress-jama-study/573496/>.

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, 2008. Merck to Pay More than \$650 Million to Resolve Claims of Fraudulent Price Reporting and Kickbacks. February 7. Accessed April 2020. [https://www.justice.gov/archive/opa/pr/2008/February/08\\_civ\\_094.html](https://www.justice.gov/archive/opa/pr/2008/February/08_civ_094.html).



## D. Construction

Most construction work in Maine — whether for the government or private sector — is performed by local companies. These businesses are also major players in politics. From 2012 to 2018, corporations associated with the construction industry contributed nearly \$400,000 to Maine candidates, parties, Caucus PACs, and Leadership PACs. They gave nearly \$140,000 to candidates, while parties and Caucus PACs pulled in nearly \$200,000, and Leadership PACs took in just over \$60,000. About \$275,000 went to Republican candidates, parties, and Caucus PACs and the balance of this construction industry giving went to Democrats.<sup>15</sup>

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The construction industry usually favors large bond packages that include funds for roads, bridges, and related infrastructure. In 2017 construction interests supported LD 1552 authorizing a public vote on bond issues totalling \$100 million in both 2017 and 2018. Another bond in 2020 proposes an additional \$105 million for transportation infrastructure. The bond money is to be used for the construction, reconstruction, and rehabilitation of highways and bridges, and for facilities or equipment related to ports, harbors, marine transportation, freight and passenger railroads, aviation, transit, and bicycle and pedestrian trails.

Perhaps the best-known construction company in Maine is Cianbro Corporation which is responsible for just over \$85,000, or about 22 percent, of these contributions. The Associated Builders and Contractors of Maine, the Maine chapter of a national association representing non-union construction-related firms, contributed \$68,000 or about 17 percent of the total industry contributions. Finally, the Associated General Contractors of Maine, another chapter of a national association that claims to have “led the charge in Maine for contractors on legislative policy [and] regulatory reform,” donated nearly \$64,000 or 16 percent of the total.

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<sup>15</sup> The difference between Republicans’ total receipts and those of Democrats is partly explained by Democratic candidates’ higher rate of participation in the Clean Elections public funding system which strictly prohibits private contributions from any source, including corporate contributions.



## E. Energy and Natural Resources

Over the same seven-year period, the energy industry contributed just over \$330,000 to candidates, parties, Caucus PACs, and Leadership PACs. Corporations in the energy industry gave over \$50,000 directly to candidates in 2012-2018. Two-thirds of this money went to Republican candidates. Democratic interests also benefited from the energy industry, mostly through nearly \$120,000 of contributions to Caucus PACs and party committees, about 58 percent of the total contributions of \$205,000 given to these groups from the industry. About \$75,000 from the energy industry went to Leadership PACs run by legislators.

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The 129th Legislature saw many bills intended to improve service and reduce costs for customers of electric utilities. LD 1646 was entitled “An Act to Restore Local Ownership and Control of Maine’s Power Delivery Systems.” This bill would have created a large consumer-owned electric utility and required the state’s two large investor-owned utilities to sell their assets to the new entity. It would have ended our large utilities as we know them and positioned the state for expansion of renewable energy. The bill was pending when the Legislature adjourned in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Of the \$330,000 contributed by the energy industry, about 62 percent came from just five contributors. The Independent Energy Producers of Maine contributed just over \$50,000, mostly to Democratic candidates and PACs. Spectra Energy, a natural gas transmission company headquartered in Houston, TX, contributed over \$40,000 to both the Republican and Democratic side. The Maine Energy Marketers Association, a trade association representing heating oil, propane, biofuel, and motor fuel providers in the state, contributed just under \$40,000 in 2012-18. According to their website, their members account for more than 90 percent of the propane sold in Maine each year.

The fourth largest contributor in this industry sector was Waste Connections which gave about \$37,000 to candidates, parties, Caucus PACs, and Leadership PACs. Waste Connections describes itself as “an integrated solid waste services company that provides solid waste management, collection, transfer, disposal, dumpster rental and recycling services.”

Finally, the fifth largest contributor from the energy industry is Central Maine Power. CMP contributed about \$36,000 over the same time period to candidates, parties, and PACs of both parties. In 2020 CMP has made substantial contributions relating to a possible citizen initiative, and has also previously given to candidates and other PACs. Caucus PACs. In recent years CMP’s business practices have been one of the most hotly discussed topics in the State House and news media.



### 3. CORPORATION CONTRIBUTIONS FOR 2018 INAUGURATION

The 2016 citizen initiative strengthening the Clean Elections system also instituted the first requirement that incoming governors report fundraising conducted to pay for their inauguration and expenses associated with their transition into office.

Previous governors were not required to report such fundraising. At least one previous transition effort – the LePage inauguration and startup in 2010 – apparently recognized the public interest in this information and made limited voluntary disclosures including a list of contributors but not amounts given. The list included individuals as well as many corporations – large and small.<sup>16</sup> The LePage inaugural and transition fund eventually morphed into a political operations organization named Maine People before Politics, and conducted some political activities during his administration.<sup>17</sup>

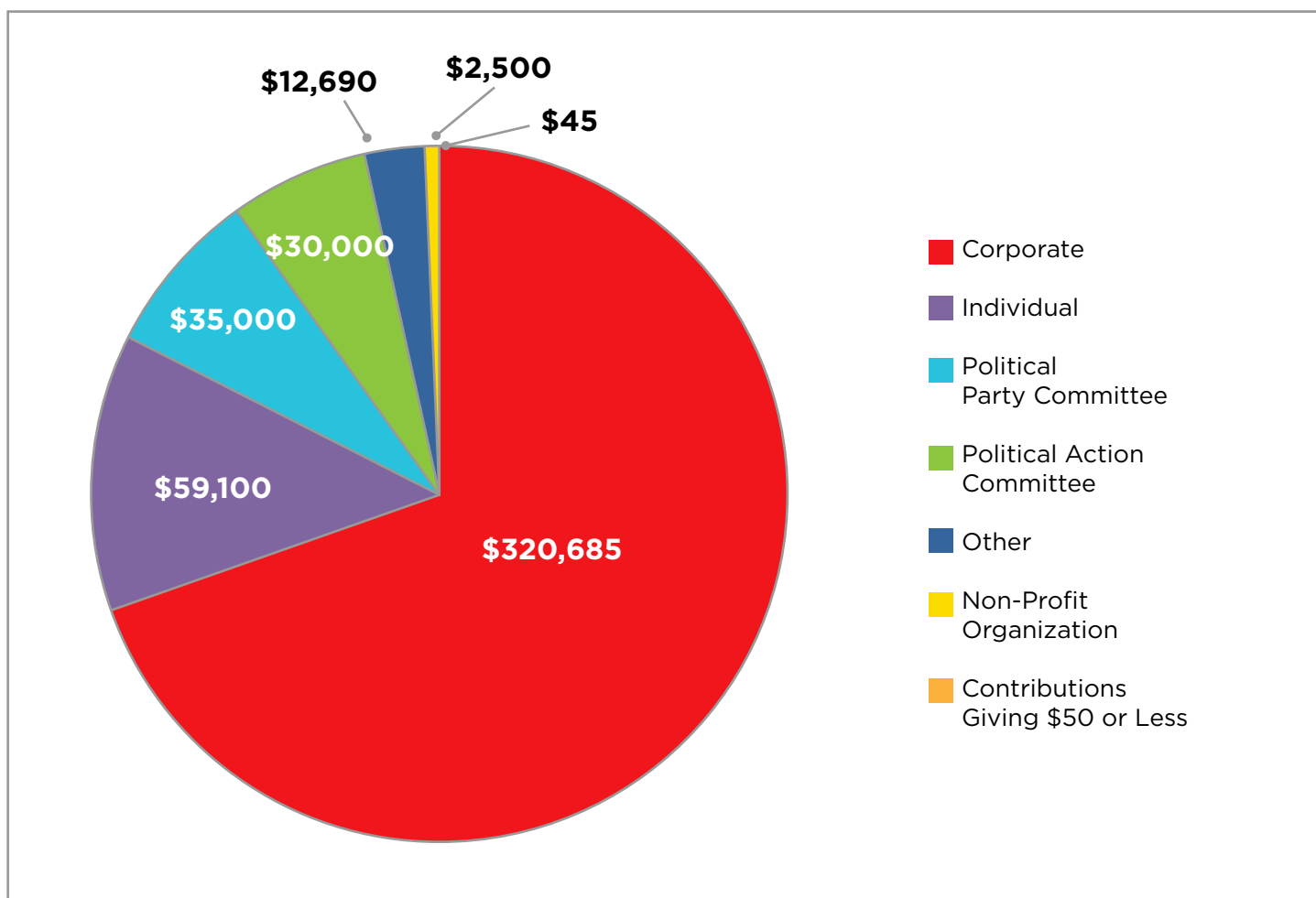
Starting in 2018, gubernatorial transition and inaugural committees have been subject to reporting requirements similar to those for candidates and committees. The transactions reported are not considered campaign contributions under the law, so this information is not part of the databases used for the preceding sections of this report. Nonetheless, it reflects another pathway through which corporations may exercise their influence and build relationships with leaders in Augusta.

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<sup>16</sup> The LePage transition was funded in part by payments for a VIP reception held in conjunction with inaugural activities. <https://www.scribd.com/doc/248942862/Governor-Paul-LePage-Inauguration-VIP-Donor-Reception-for-Paul-LePage>. A list purporting to identify the donors voluntarily disclosed by Governor LePage can be found here: <https://web.archive.org/web/20111118015928/http://www.lepagetransition.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/LePage-Transition-2010-donors.htm>

<sup>17</sup> Rob Meiksins, “For a Maine Social Welfare Agency, Some Things Never Change,” *Maine Nonprofit Quarterly*, March 15, 2019. <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/for-a-maine-social-welfare-agency-some-things-never-change/>

**GRAPH 7** | Contributions totalling \$460,020 toward 2018 Inauguration



Fundraising for an inauguration is of special interest, since the justification for the contribution is no longer the same as for a campaign contribution. In the inaugural fundraising context, the contributor is not assisting the candidate's political campaign or expressing support for that person as a candidate. Instead, the contributor is building or enhancing a relationship with a new chief executive about to begin a four-year term. In some cases, inaugural fundraising creates opportunities to make amends for contributors who supported a different candidate in the election. The opportunity to provide this financial support comes at a particularly auspicious time, when the governor is choosing cabinet members, creating their first budget, establishing their legislative agenda, and setting the policy direction for their administration.

Reports of the 2018 inauguration fundraising for incoming governor Janet Mills reveal several corporate contributors at the \$10,000 level or higher, including Bernstein Shur, Anthem, Charter Communications, Hollywood Casino, L.L. Bean, Maine Credit Union League, Remedy Compassion Center, Sazerac Company, Unum Group, Oxford Casino, Spectrum Healthcare, Pierce Atwood, Maine Organic Therapy, ND Paper, Enbridge, MEMIC, Wellness Connection, Sappi, Harvard Pilgrim, AT&T, and Idexx Laboratories.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.maine.gov/ethics/sites/maine.gov.ethics/files/inline-files/3%20-%20Mills%20Inaug%20Cmte.pdf>



# CONCLUSION

In a democracy, it is important for the public to understand the forces that shape our self-governance. Corporate money plays a large role in Maine politics, relied upon by candidates, PACs, parties, and ballot question committees. The data reveal substantial contributions from industries with strong vested interests in public policy decisions that will be made by the recipients of those contributions. This report illustrates this phenomenon with data from five specific industries, but the same analysis could be applied to any industry sector, labor organization, or other entity with interests before the legislature.

Like all contributors, these corporate interests are participating in a system of mutual benefit. They do not give from unvarnished generosity – they give because they know the recipient needs and appreciates the funds, and that the exchange builds a relationship that benefits the contributor after the election, when the House and Senate take up questions that can impact the corporate bottom line.

Leadership PACs and Caucus PACs spend these contributions to build political power — usually by supporting candidates in their respective parties. Thus, even if certain candidates expressly state that they do not accept money from certain industries, it is possible that they benefit indirectly from political allies who raise and spend money to help them get elected.

The imbalance this money brings to the law-making process and the indirect effect it has on Maine citizens are topics of considerable public importance. If Maine intends to maintain a democracy of the people, by the people, and for the people, the state should carefully consider whether contributions from corporate interests merit the same privileged legal status as contributions made by real people.