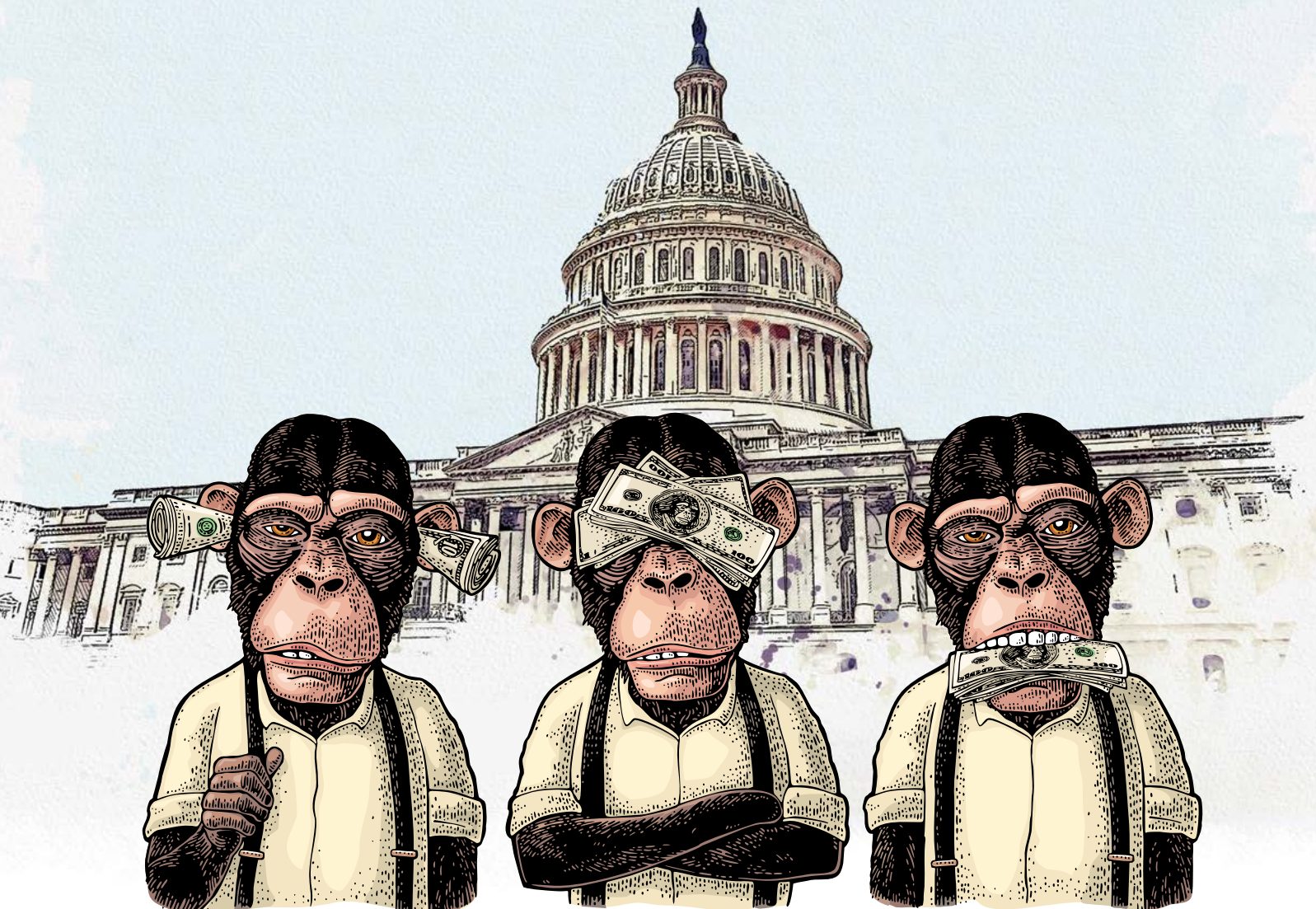


# THE CONGRESSIONAL FAVOR FACTORY LEGALIZED PAY-TO-PLAY

A STUDY OF FEDERAL GRANTS, CAMPAIGN CASH,  
INVESTMENTS, EMPLOYMENT, POWER & INFLUENCE

 OPENTHEBOOKS OVERSIGHT REPORT



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AMERICAN TRANSPARENCY

# THE CONGRESSIONAL FAVOR FACTORY

## LEGALIZED PAY-TO-PLAY

A STUDY OF FEDERAL GRANTS, CAMPAIGN CASH,  
INVESTMENTS, EMPLOYMENT, POWER & INFLUENCE

**PUBLISHED: OCTOBER, 2019**

By: Adam Andrzejewski - Founder and CEO of OpenTheBooks.com

Thomas W. Smith - Chairman of OpenTheBooks.com

“Open the Books is doing the work I envisioned when the Coburn-Obama bill became law. Their innovative app and other tools are putting sunlight through a magnifying glass.” March 11, 2014

**Dr. Tom Coburn, Honorary Chairman of OpenTheBooks.com**

## **OUR REPORT MADE POSSIBLE BY:**

**The “Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006”**

**Sponsors:** Sen. Tom Coburn (R-OK) & Sen. Barack Obama (D-IL)

(Public Law 109-282, 109th Congress)

*“Is the spending in the public interest or the special interest?”*

- U.S. Sen. Tom Coburn

*“I know that restoring transparency is not only the surest way to achieve results, but also to earn back the trust in the government...”*

- U.S. Sen. Barack Obama

# PROLOGUE

**Did you ever wonder why 97 percent of Congress gets reelected each year even though only 17 percent of the American people believe our representatives are doing a good job?**

It's called an incumbent protection system. That system has many features. For instance, most districts are gerrymandered by states to protect incumbents. In a real sense, politicians pick their voters as much as voters pick their politicians.

Another feature is that Members of Congress more or less write their own rules. It's no surprise they know how to play the game.

Our *OpenTheBooks Oversight Report: The Congressional Favor Factory: Legalizing Pay-To-Play – A Study Of Federal Grants, Campaign Cash, Investments, Employment, Power & Influence* includes eight case study examples – four Republicans and four Democrats.

These Members serve on the most powerful committees in Congress.

We followed the money and found a culture of conflict-of-interest. The confluence of federal money, campaign cash, private employment, investments, prestigious committee appointments, political power, nepotism, and other conflicts are a fact pattern.

Members of Congress own investment stock in, are employed by, and receive retirement pensions from federal contractors – to whom billions of taxpayer dollars flow. Moreover, Members sponsor legislation that affects these contractors. Then, the contractor's lobbyists advocate for the legislation that helps the Member and the contractor. Oftentimes, the contractor's lobbyist donates campaign cash to the Member, as well.

Our audit provides the details on how the game is played... with your tax dollars. We found the top donors to Members giving hundreds of thousands of dollars in campaign cash and receiving millions – if not billions of dollars – in federal subsidies and contracts.

Congress writes our laws. Nothing we uncovered in our oversight report is illegal.

In fact, it's all legal. Quite possibly, that is the scandal.

**Members of Congress are elected to oversee the federal activity in their districts. It's time to hold these politicians accountable.**

## WHO WE ARE

American Transparency (website: [OpenTheBooks.com](http://OpenTheBooks.com)) is a public charity. We do not accept government money. Our oversight reports present hard data so citizens, media, think tanks, politicians, and watchdogs can "follow the money." Our goal is to enhance public discourse with delineated facts.





# SCOPE & METHODOLOGY

Our OpenTheBooks Oversight Report: *The Congressional Favor Factory: Legalizing Pay-To-Play – A Study of Federal Grants, Campaign Cash, Investments, Employment, Power & Influence* provides an analysis on the relationship between federal contractors receiving grants and contracts and giving campaign donations to key Members of the 115th Congress (2017-2018).

The federal grant, contract, farm subsidy, and direct payment data was acquired from the U.S. federal government via the Freedom of Information Act and Public Law 109-282. The data spans the period FY2014-FY2018 with farm subsidy data over a longer period.

Our auditors acquired campaign donation data from OpenSecrets.org, Center for Responsive Politics, and the Federal Election Commission disclosures through August 7, 2019.

All campaign donation data is subject to the same disclaimer found on OpenSecrets.org:

**The organizations themselves did not donate**, rather the money came from the organizations' PACs, their individual members or employees or owners, and those individuals' immediate families. Organization totals may include subsidiaries and affiliates.

Every federal contractor (organization) cited in this report is based in the Member's congressional district. Each contractor was given a chance to respond and provide context, background, and further information before publication.

The Members of Congress highlighted in our report were given a chance to respond and provide context, background, and further information before publication.

Every statement of fact related to a Member of Congress or a federal contractor within this report has an underlying basis in public documents and sources.

Nothing in our report alleges illegal activity, a quid-pro-quo, etc. We view each of conflict-of-interest as distinct and separate events – all transactions are assumed at arms-length and therefore are legal.

#### About the cover:

The three wise monkeys are a pictorial maxim, embodying the proverbial principle "see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil." The three monkeys are Mizaru, covering his eyes, who sees no evil; Kikazaru, covering his ears, who hears no evil; and Iwazaru, covering his mouth, who speaks no evil.

**Sources:** *Midwestern Journal of Language & Folklore* and *Transactions and Proceedings of the Japan Society, London*.

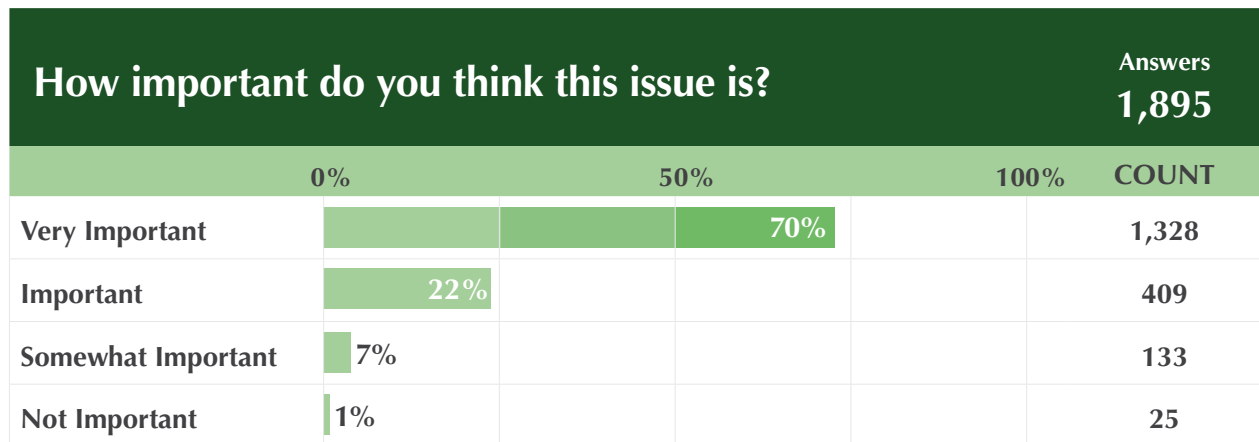
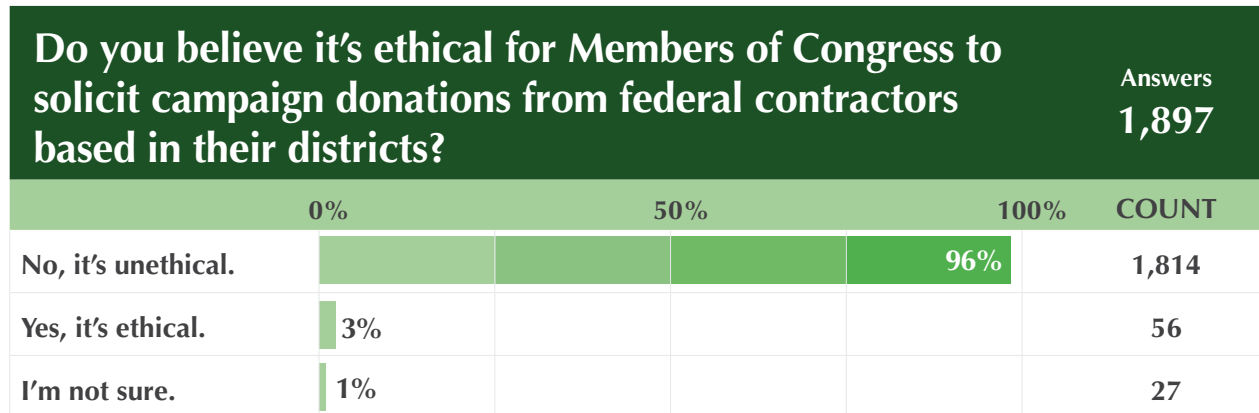


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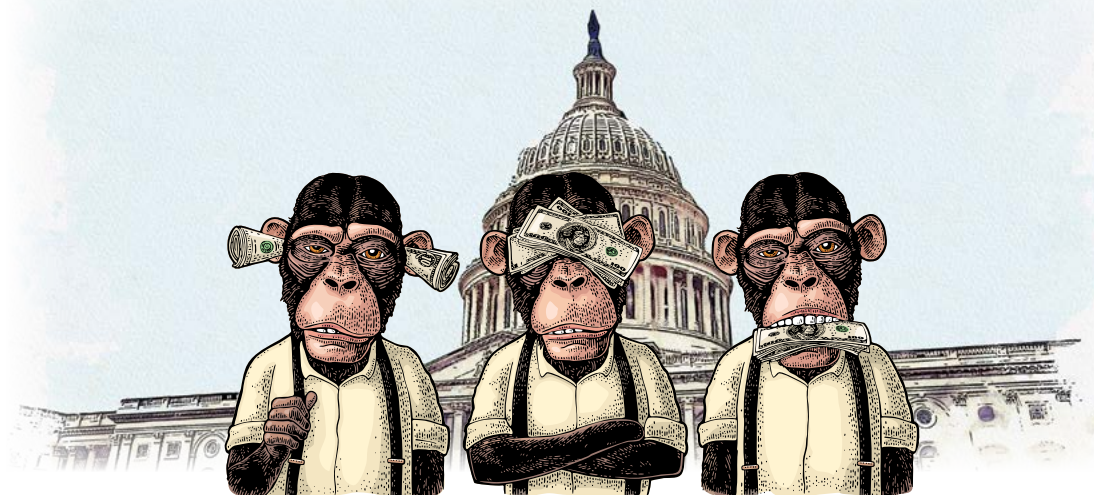
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# TOP 10 TAKEAWAYS

1. Ethics Poll: Our auditors at OpenTheBooks.com polled our subscriber email list. We asked the question: “Is it ethical for Members of Congress to solicit campaign donations from federal contractors based in their district?”



Source: OpenTheBooks.com poll question as of August 12, 2019, as released on C-Span’s Washington Journal Program on August 13, 2019.



2. Report summary: Campaign donations rendered to Members of Congress and federal checkbook payments received by the federal contractors:

MEMBER OF CONGRESS (FEDERAL CONTRACTOR)	CONTRACTOR				
	CAMPAIGN DONATIONS			FEDERAL PAYMENTS	
	Individuals	PAC	Affiliation Lobbyists	Contracts	Grants
Rep. John Larson (CT-1) United Technology	\$241,600	\$121,500	\$13,950	\$16.1B	\$83.8M
Rep. Tom Cole (OK-4) The Chickasaw Nation	\$161,461	\$38,500	\$58,500	-	\$700.1M
Rep. Jim Cooper (TN-5) Vanderbilt University	\$131,811	-	-	\$187.3M	\$2.3B
Rep. Kristi Noem (SD-At Large) Sanford Health	\$100,962	-	\$9,500	\$17.3M	\$53.9M
Rep. Erik Paulsen (MN-3) Cargill, Inc.	\$67,800	\$25,000	\$2,750	\$397.6M	\$3.5M
Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (WA-5) Schweitzer Engineering Labs	\$76,310	-	-	\$11.3M	\$12.7M
Rep. Debbie Dingell (MI-12) University of Michigan	\$61,502	-	-	\$160M	\$2B
Rep. Brenda Lawrence (MI-14) General Motors	\$1,000	\$30,000	\$2,600	\$1.7B	\$53.1M

Source: See Scope & Methodology - *OpenTheBooks.com Oversight Report*.

3. Powerful positions in Congress: Featured Members hold powerful committee assignments in the U.S. House of Representatives:

	Ways & Means Committee	Committee on Appropriations	Committee on the Budget	Committee on Oversight & Government Reform	Committee on Energy & Commerce
Rep. John Larson (CT-1)	✓				
Rep. Kristi Noem (SD-At Large)	✓				
Rep. Erik Paulsen (MN-3)	✓				
Rep. Tom Cole (OK-4)		✓			
Rep. Brenda Lawrence (MI-14)		✓		✓	
Rep. Jim Cooper (TN-5)			✓	✓	
Rep. Debbie Dingell (MI-12)					✓
Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (WA-5)					✓

Source: See *Individual Case Studies*, [OpenTheBooks.com Oversight Report](#).

4. Large campaign donations: all featured federal contractors are ranked within the respective Member’s Top 1-12 all-time campaign donors. Additionally, all of these federal contractors are located within the boundaries of the respective Member’s congressional district.

CAMPAIGN DONORS	
#1 LARGEST CAMPAIGN DONOR	Rep. John Larson   United Technologies Corporation Rep. Tom Cole   The Chickasaw Nation Rep. Jim Cooper   Vanderbilt University Rep. Kristi Noem   Sanford Health Rep. Debbie Dingell   University of Michigan
#4 LARGEST CAMPAIGN DONOR	Rep. Brenda Lawrence General Motors
#10 LARGEST CAMPAIGN DONOR FEDERAL CONTRACTOR	Rep. Erik Paulsen Cargill, Inc.
#12 LARGEST CAMPAIGN DONOR FEDERAL CONTRACTOR	Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers Schweitzer Engineering Laboratories, Inc.



5. Other benefits: Lobbying, Stock ownership, Influence, Employment, Board Memberships – this chart summarizes some of the other relationship benefits:

	Lobby Member Bills	Stock (Ownership)	Campaign Cash to Partnership*	Employed by Contractor or Affiliated Association	Board Member of Contractor	Other
Rep. John Larson (CT-1) United Technology	✓	✓				✓
Rep. Tom Cole (OK-4) The Chickasaw Nation	✓		✓			✓
Rep. Jim Cooper (TN-5) Vanderbilt University	✓			✓***		✓
Rep. Kristi Noem (SD-At Large) Sanford Health	✓					✓
Rep. Erik Paulsen (MN-3) Cargill, Inc.	✓			✓		✓
Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (WA-5) Schweitzer Engineering Labs	✓					✓
Rep. Debbie Dingell (MI-12) University of Michigan	✓				✓	✓
Rep. Brenda Lawrence (MI-14) General Motors	✓	✓**				✓

\*Rep. Cole is a partner in a consulting business hired by his campaign fund since 2002.

\*\*Rep. Lawrence's husband owned stock in 2015.

\*\*\*Rep. Cooper's employment at Vanderbilt University lasted between 2005-2017.

Sources: See *Scope & Methodology & Individual Case Studies, Open The Books Oversight Report*.

6. We found a correlation between the Members profiled in this report and their votes to increase federal spending. Over the last two-years, the over-whelming majority of these members voted for the omnibus budget bills, which increased federal spending to all-time highs.

BUDGET BILLS - VOTES TO INCREASE FEDERAL SPENDING 2018-2019				
MEMBERS	2018 HR1625		2019 HR3877 Bipartisan Budget Act	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Rep. John Larson (CT-1)	✓		✓	
Rep. Tom Cole (OK-4)	✓		✓	
Rep. Jim Cooper (TN-5)	✓			✓
Rep. Kristi Noem (SD-At Large)		✓		
Rep. Erik Paulsen (MN-3)	✓			
Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (WA-5)	✓			✓
Rep. Debbie Dingell (MI-12)	✓		✓	
Rep. Brenda Lawrence (MI-14)	✓		✓	

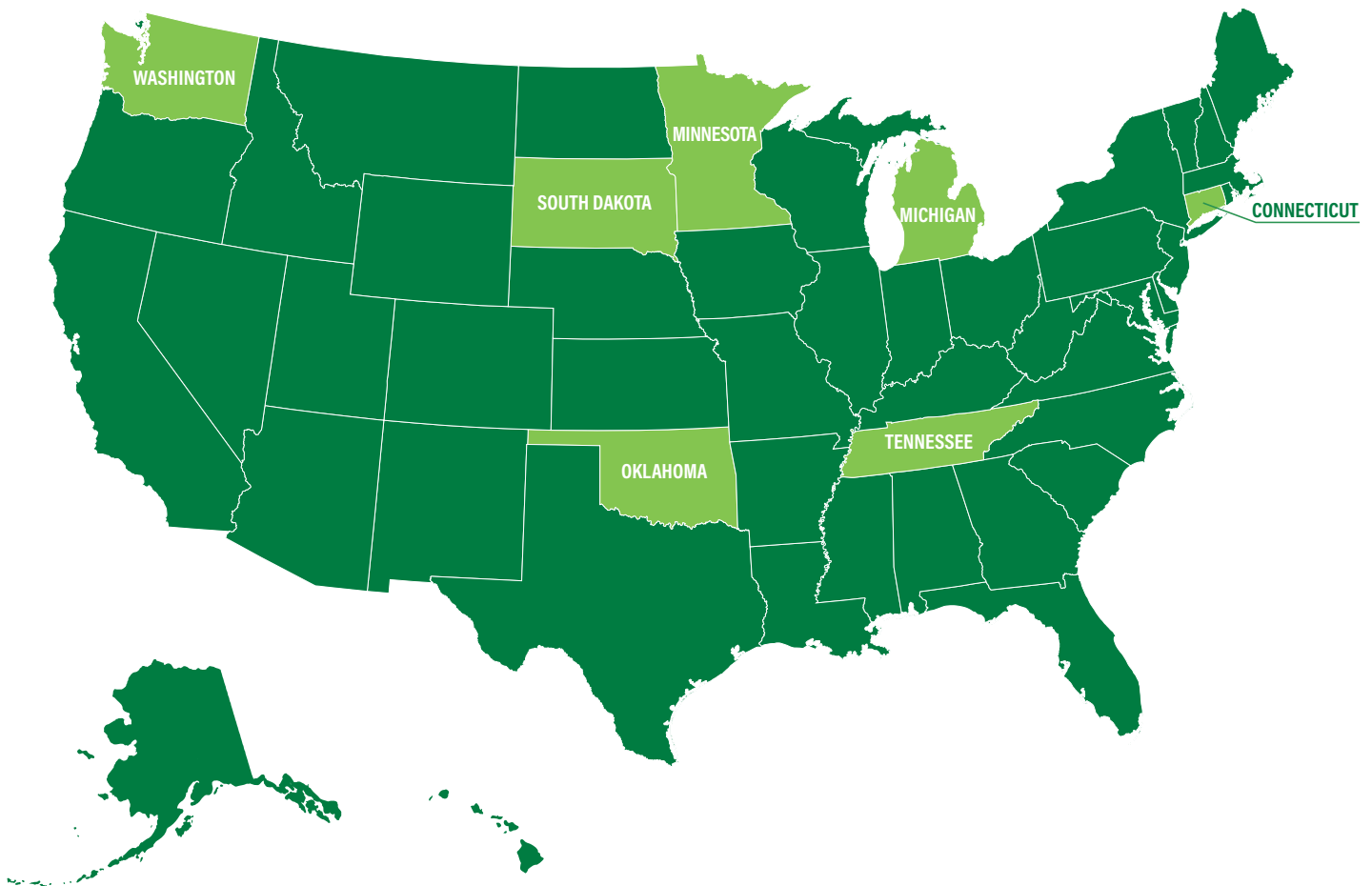


7. All Members were given an opportunity to answer questions before our publication and none choose to go on the record. Our requests for comment can be found in their case studies.

8. All federal contractors were given an opportunity to answer questions before publication and only three chose to go on the record. Our requests for comment can be found within the respective Member case studies.

9. State bans of “Pay-To-Play”: 15 states have an outright ban with Illinois, New Jersey and Connecticut having the strongest laws. Many other states require special disclosure of state contractor political contributions. Furthermore, two dozen local jurisdictions including New York City, Broward County, Florida and Los Angeles, California have pay-to-play laws. Source: Public Citizen [memo](#).

10. Geography: Members of Congress profiled in this report reside in districts from across the country:



# CASE STUDIES

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE

## JOHN B. LARSON (D)

CONNECTICUT DISTRICT 1 | ELECTED 1998

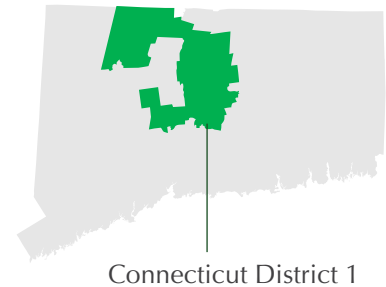
Rep. Larson serves on House Ways and Means Committee. He is Chairman of the Ways and Means Social Security Subcommittee, and also serves on the Subcommittee on Tax Policy.

The Committee on Ways and Means is the oldest committee of the United States Congress and is the chief tax-writing committee in the House of Representatives.

Larson is the former chairman of the House Democratic Caucus.



### FEDERAL CONTRACTOR: UNITED TECHNOLOGIES CORPORATION (UTX)



STATISTICS	RENDERED	RECEIVED
<p><b>Annual Revenue:</b> \$59.84B <b>Market Cap:</b> \$100.37B</p>	<p><b>Political Contributions to:</b> Rep. John Larson</p>	<p><b>Total Federal Checkbook Payments (FY2014-2018)</b> \$16.2B</p>
<p><b>Number of Employees</b> 202,797 (2017) <b>Listed</b> Fortune 100</p>	<p><b>Total (Career):</b> \$377,050</p>	<p><b>Federal Grants:</b> \$83.8M</p>
<p><b>Geographic Location</b> UTX Research Center: 411 Silver Lane, East Hartford, CT 06108 based in congressional district (CT-1).</p>	<p><b>Individuals:</b> \$241,600 <b>Company PAC:</b> \$121,500 <b>Affiliated Lobbyists:</b> \$13,950</p>	<p><b>Federal Contracts:</b> \$16.1B</p>

Source: [Open Secrets](#)

Source: [OpenTheBooks.com](#) audit of [USAspending.gov](#)



# CONNECTIONS SUMMARY

## POLITICAL BENEFIT

### #1 CAMPAIGN DONOR

UTX executives, employees, political action committee, and affiliated lobbyists are Larson's #1 campaign donor with donations totaling \$377,050. The #2 donor to Larson is more than \$135,000 behind UTX and their affiliates.

Union votes: A close public and private relationship with UTX helps bring across thousands of union worker votes on Election Day. The press releases, media coverage, and ribbon cutting ceremonies boost the name identification of the congressman.

## CONTRACTOR BENEFIT

### \$83.8 MILLION (GRANTS)

### 16.1 BILLION (CONTRACTS)

UTX, a Fortune 100 company, received \$83.8 million in federal grants (subsidies) and 16.1 billion in federal contracts (2014-2018).

During this period, key executives at UTX contributed large campaign donations, i.e., then-senior vice president for science & technology Michael McQuade [donated](#) \$14,000 to Larson's campaign committee (2013–2017) and the UTX political action committee gave \$30,000 (2013–2017). In total, all UTX affiliates gave \$65,900 during this period.

Most federal grants and tax credit legislation subsidized company research and development. Here are some examples:

In 2015, United Technologies Research Center benefited from the passage of the permanent extension of the Research & Development tax credit. Larson toured the facilities and took credit as a lead co-sponsor of the credit [via his press release](#).

In FY2016, United Technologies received \$6.2 million in grants from the federal government. These grants came from the Department of Defense, Department of Energy and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. The grants were for various purposes from "Thermal Storage Using Hybrid Vapor Compression

Absorption System" to "Integrated Whole Building Energy Diagnostics."

On September 14, 2016 Larson toured the research facilities and in his [press release](#), "applauded a major \$2.7 million federal grant from the U.S. Department of Energy's Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy... We work together in Congress to fight for research and development funding for Connecticut companies. This new federal grant is important seed money..."

"During 2015 and 2016, Larson said he won more than \$88 million for his district, including direct grants for the United Technologies Research Center..."

Hartford Courant, October, 25, 2016, editorial board interview [here](#).

In FY2017 & FY2018, UTX received approximately \$45.3 million in federal grants. These grants again came from the Department of Defense, Department of Energy, and the National Aeronautics, Space Administration and other agencies.

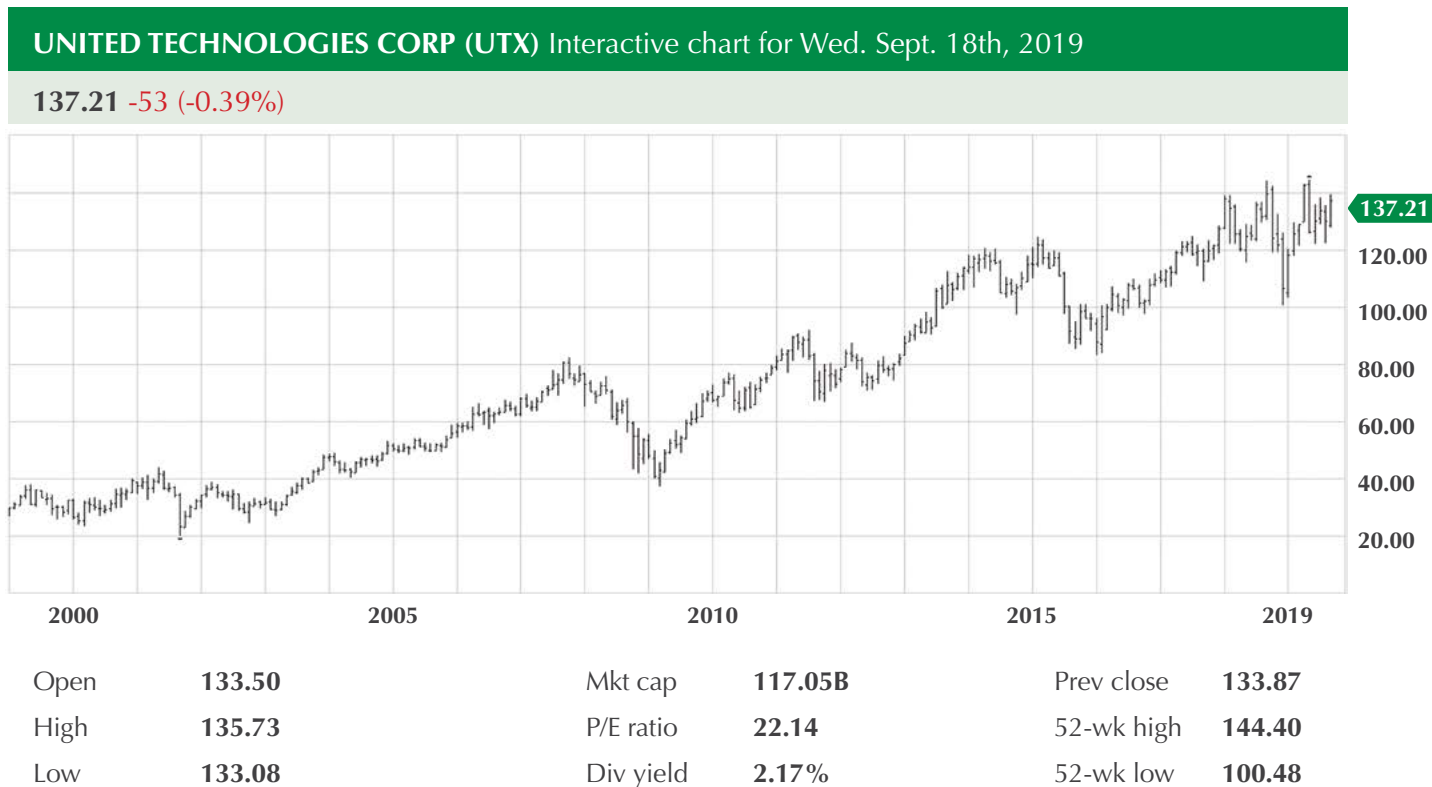
In 2019, Larson [issued a press release](#) saying he "voted for the FY2020 National Defense Authorization Act... **As co-chair Joint Strike Fighter Caucus, I have led the fight for continued production of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. The bill secures authorization for 90 F-35 Joint Strike Fighters (12 more than the President's Budget Request).**"

The F-35 Joint Strike Fighter is powered by Pratt & Whitney engines, a company owned by UTX.



## MEMBER BENEFIT: STOCK OWNERSHIP

Larson disclosed ownership of UTX stock during the period 2012-2018 and valued between \$1,000 and \$15,000.



Source: BarChart.com

## LEGISLATIVE BENEFIT: CORPORATE LOBBYING

19 bills were co-sponsored by Larson for which UTX registered lobbying activity (since 2010). Seven lobbyists hired by UTX [donated](#) \$13,950 to Larson's campaign fund. These lobbyists made more than 40 percent of their donations during the same year they lobbied Larson on behalf of United Technologies.

Since 2010, Larson co-sponsored 19 bills for which United Technologies registered lobbying activity. These bills include:

- The American Research and Competitiveness Act of 2015 ([H.R. 880](#)) allows for increased tax credits for large corporations that engage in research, a core component of the United Technologies mission. The research and development arm of UTX benefited greatly from passage. Larson was a lead co-sponsor of the bill, [press release](#).
- The Defend Trade Secrets Act of 2015 ([H.R. 3326](#)) allows the owner of a trade secret to file a civil action lawsuit in U.S. district court for "trade secret misappropriation" in interstate or foreign commerce.
- The Protecting American Jobs and Exports Act ([H.R. 4950](#)) sought to reauthorize the United States Export-Import Bank through FY2021, allowing corporations to fund their exports through a taxpayer-backed system.

## COMMENT REQUESTS

Review our request for comment to Rep. John Larson [here](#).

Review our request for comment to United Technologies Corporation [here](#).

**NO RESPONSES**

## ADDITIONAL CONFLICT-OF-INTEREST

**John Larson's wife, Leslie Larson, gets a state agency job – hired by Connecticut Innovations in 2012.**

### BRIEF SUMMARY

At Connecticut Innovations, many executives, board members, and the state agency itself (through funding of partners) benefit from federal payments. As the local congressman, John Larson was elected to oversee all federal activity in his district. The congressman's wife was hired in lieu of 198 other candidates for an administrative position at Connecticut Innovations. Since her hiring, Leslie Larson has earned over \$600,000 in cash compensation.

### DESCRIPTION

Connecticut Innovations, Inc. (CI) is a quasi-public state agency subject to open records laws and funded by taxpayers through state bond money. CI partners with innovative local companies and functions as an investment banker. Connecticut Innovations is based in John Larson's congressional district.

Current CI CEO Matt McCooe [admitted to federal financing](#) partner companies through the federal Small Business Innovation Research and Small Business Technology Transfer programs. In fact, our auditors found eleven of the 160 companies in the CI portfolio received \$8.2 million during the period 2014 through 2019.

According to [local news reports](#), in 2012, John Larson's wife, **Leslie Larson, applied for an executive assistant position that reported to CI's then-CEO Claire Leonardi.** Ms. Larson was one of **199 candidates** seeking the position. Ms. Larson was the **only candidate invited** to fill out an application. **Larson got the job.** Critics cried foul and howled that Larson's hire was political and her resume was thin.

Ms. Larson's salary [increased](#) from \$70,000 to \$80,663.95 (FY2018). **In total, Leslie Larson has [earned more than \\$600,000](#) in cash compensation during her employment with Connecticut Innovations.**

Local editorials [exposed](#) the close personal relationship between Claire Leonardi, her husband Thomas, and John and Leslie Larson. The husband of Claire Leonardi (then-CEO of CI) is Thomas Leonardi (then-Insurance Commissioner in Connecticut). They are longtime Larson friends and Thomas is a campaign donor. **Starting in 1997, Thomas Leonardi [donated \\$7,300](#) to John Larson's campaign fund.**

As the insurance commissioner in Connecticut, Thomas Leonardi was regulator in charge of [helping roll out](#) the Affordable Care Act. Our auditors quantified \$168 million in federal grants [that funded](#) the Connecticut insurance exchange (2010-2015). **This amount included \$465,840 in federal grant money paid directly to Leonardi's agency, the Connecticut State Department of Insurance.**

The state treasurer, commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), and the president of the board of Regents for Higher Education in Connecticut also [serve](#) on the board of CI. DECD receives millions of dollars in federal funding, as does the state of Connecticut, and their colleges and universities who receive billions of dollars in federal funding.



### COMMENT REQUESTS

Review our request for comment to Rep. John Larson [here](#).

**NO RESPONSE**

Review our request for comment to Connecticut Innovations and Leslie Larson [here](#).

**RESPONSE:**

*"Leslie Larson was hired more than seven years ago under a prior CEO and a prior HR manager. Unfortunately, we are unable to answer or provide any clarification on the topic."*

**- Lauren Carmody - Connecticut Innovations VP of Marketing & Communications**

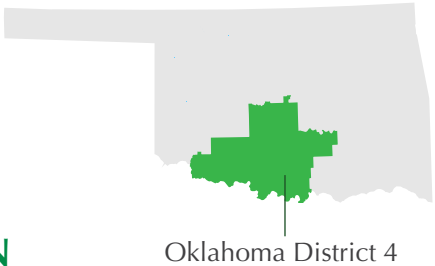
U.S. REPRESENTATIVE  
**TOM COLE (R)**

OKLAHOMA DISTRICT 4 | ELECTED 2002

“One of the sharpest minds in the House” – Time Magazine

Rep. Cole is the ranking Republican on the Rules Committee, which sets the rules for House order on legislation and debate. Cole is the vice ranking Republican on the Appropriations Committee. *This committee has jurisdiction over spending that funds all federal government agencies.*

Cole is the ranking Republican on the sub-committee on Labor, Health & Human Services, Education and Related Agencies. Cole is one of only four Native Americans currently serving in Congress.



**FEDERAL CONTRACTOR | THE CHICKASAW NATION**

STATISTICS	RENDERED	RECEIVED
<p><b>Annual Revenue</b> \$1.44B (2017) - gaming revenue</p>	<p><b>Political Contributions to:</b> Rep. Tom Cole</p>	<p><b>Total Federal Checkbook Payments &amp; Military Equipment (FY2014-2018)</b> \$700,534,000</p>
<p><b>Number of Employees</b> 10,000 (2017)</p>	<p><b>Total (Career):</b> \$258,461</p>	<p><b>Grants (FY2014-FY2017):</b> \$687.7M <b>Sub-Grants (FY2014-FY2017):</b> \$12.4M</p>
<p><b>Geographic Location</b> Headquarters: Ada, Oklahoma in Cole’s congressional district (OK-4)</p>	<p><b>Individuals:</b> \$161,461 <b>The Chickasaw Nation:</b> \$38,500 <b>Affiliated Lobbyists:</b> \$58,500</p>	<p><b>Program 1033 - Surplus Military Equipment</b> \$434,000</p>

Source: Open Secrets

Source: [OpenTheBooks.com](http://OpenTheBooks.com) audit of USAspending.gov & Department of Defense disclosures



# CONNECTIONS SUMMARY

## POLITICAL BENEFIT

### #1 CAMPAIGN DONOR

The Chickasaw Nation and affiliates are the #1 largest donor to Cole's campaign fund. Over the course of Cole's career, individuals affiliated with the Chickasaw Nation have donated \$161,461. The Chickasaw Nation, as an organization, has donated \$38,500 since 2002.

A strong relationship with The Chickasaw Nation is good politics. Cole does many co-hosted events. For example, in 2017, Cole participated in a [ribbon cutting ceremony](#) for a new bridge built on Chickasaw land.

## CONTRACTOR BENEFIT

### \$700.1 MILLION (GRANTS & SUB-GRANTS)

### \$434,000 IN MILITARY EQUIPMENT

The Chickasaw Nation, a Native American people based in the state of Oklahoma, received \$700.1 million in federal grants and sub-grants (FY2014-FY2017), plus approximately \$434,000 in surplus military equipment from the Department of Defense (2006-2017). Surplus military [gear includes](#) mine-resistant vehicles (MRV), night vision goggles, and mine-detecting sets.

## MEMBER BENEFIT

### CAMPAIGN'S USE OF COLE'S CONSULTING FIRM:

In four of the last nine election cycle's (since 2002), Cole's election opponent didn't raise a single dollar. Yet, Cole raised \$12 million in campaign cash.

Our auditors found thousands of dollars in campaign cash paid to a campaign consulting firm where the congressman is a partner.

Cole is [a partner](#) in the polling, campaign consulting firm of Cole, Hargrave, and Snodgrass. Since 2002, Cole's campaign fund hired this firm and [paid it](#) \$224,000. Cole has earned roughly \$320,000 in "management fees" from this firm since 2003.

Cole also has a significant equity stake in the partnership. On congressional disclosure forms, Cole estimates his interest in the firm is worth between \$250,000 and \$500,000.

Furthermore, Cole disclosed receiving dividends/capital gains amounting to a grand total of between \$175,000 and \$575,000 (2003-present).

## LEGISLATIVE BENEFIT

**LOBBYING:** 23 bills were either sponsored or co-sponsored by Cole for which The Chickasaw Nation registered lobbying activity (since 2010). Lobbyists hired the Chickasaw Nation donated another \$58,500 collectively to Cole's campaign fund.

Since 2010, Cole has sponsored five pieces of legislation and co-sponsored an additional 18 bills on which the Chickasaw Nation registered lobbying activity.

Many of these bills were specifically designed to aid the Chickasaw Nation and other Native American nations. All of these bills aided in the Chickasaw Nation's ability to gain maximum benefits and govern more independently. The bills included:

- The Tribal General Welfare Exclusion Act of 2014 ([H.R. 3043](#)) amended IRS code to allow Indian tribal government, and those affiliated with it, to deduct the value of "Indian general welfare benefit" from gross income for tax purposes.
- The Tribal Labor Sovereignty Act of 2017 ([H.R. 986](#)) excludes Native American tribes from the regulations put on employers under the National Labor Relations Act. This allows these nations to set their own rules as it applies to unions, collective bargaining, and collective action.
- The Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Reauthorization Act of 2014 ([H.R. 4329](#)) requires the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development to act within 60 days when an Indian tribes requests a taxation waiver regarding block grant programs for "affordable and self-determined housing activities."

## COMMENT REQUESTS

Review our request for comment to Rep. Tom Cole [here](#).

Review our request for comment to The Chickasaw Nation [here](#).

**NO RESPONSE**

**Federal Election Committee (FEC) Response to our Inquiry [here](#).**

## U.S. REPRESENTATIVE

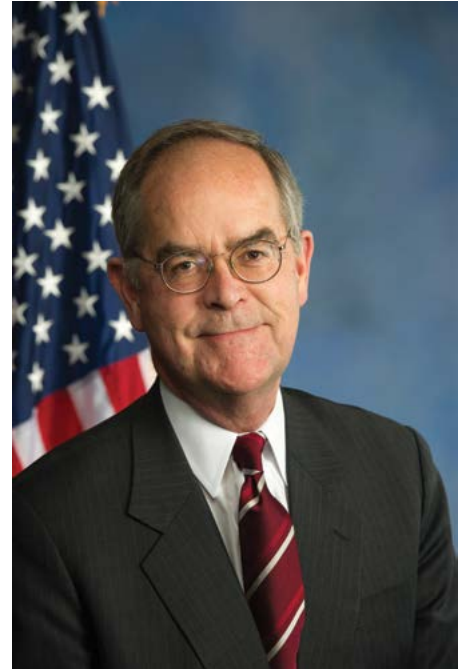
**JIM COOPER (D)**

TENNESSEE DISTRICT 5 | ELECTED 2002

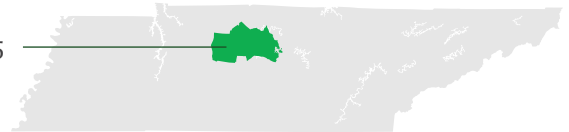
*“The House’s conscience.” – New York Times*

Rep. Jim Cooper serves on the Committee on Armed Services and Chairman on the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces. Cooper also serves on Committee on Oversight and Reform, the main investigative committee in the House with jurisdiction to investigate any federal program and any matter with federal policy implications.

He also serves on the Committee on the Budget.



Tennessee District 5

**FEDERAL CONTRACTOR | VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY**

STATISTICS	RENDERED	RECEIVED
<b>Annual Revenue</b> 1.27B (2017)	<b>Political Contributions to:</b> Rep. Jim Cooper	<b>Total Federal Checkbook Payments</b> \$2.6B
<b>Number of Employees</b> 6,437 (2017)	<b>Total (Career):</b> \$135,261	<b>Grants (FY2014-FY2018):</b> \$2.0B <b>Sub-Grants (FY2014-FY2018):</b> \$323.3M <b>Direct Payments(FY2014-FY2018):</b> \$31.2M
<b>Geographic Location</b> Based in Nashville, Tennessee in Cooper’s congressional district (TN-5).	<b>Individuals:</b> \$135,261	<b>Contracts:</b> \$155.2M <b>Sub-Contracts:</b> \$32.1M

Source: [Open Secrets](#)Source: [OpenTheBooks.com](#) audit of USAspending.gov

# CONNECTIONS SUMMARY

## POLITICAL BENEFIT

### #1 CAMPAIGN DONOR

Vanderbilt University executives and employees are the #1 largest donors to Cooper's campaign fund contributing \$135,261.

[Top executives](#) at Vanderbilt University [donated](#) more than \$30,000 to Cooper's campaign fund (career). The Vanderbilt University Chancellor Nicholas Zeppos donated \$21,200—with most of those donations between years 2013-2017. Jeffrey Balsler, the vice chancellor and dean of the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, donated \$9,600 between years 2009-2017.

In 2018, Vanderbilt University [distributed and published](#) Rep. Jim Cooper's "A College Student's Guide To Voting In Nashville" on the college website ahead of the mid-term elections.

## CONTRACTOR BENEFIT

### \$2.5 BILLION (GRANTS)

### \$187.3 MILLION (CONTRACTS)

Vanderbilt University [received](#) \$2.2 billion in federal grants (subsidies) (FY2014-2018), including \$180.4 million in grants to the medical center. Federal sub-grants amounted to an additional \$323.3 million. Federal contracts totaled \$155.2 million and subcontracts equaled \$32.1 million.

In 2013, Cooper gave a how-to secure federal funding address at Vanderbilt entitled, "Key To Federal Support." A summary of Cooper's talk [was published](#) on the school website. Vanderbilt University School Dean Philippe Fauchet lobbied Cooper on Capitol Hill for more funding, [here](#).

In 2017, Vanderbilt [admitted](#) that their congressional delegation – including Rep. Cooper – played a big role in securing omnibus federal funding for the university. "We are grateful to the members of our delegation who supported this important funding bill," said Chancellor Nicholas S. Zeppos.



## MEMBER BENEFIT

**EMPLOYMENT:** Cooper received approximately \$250,500 in salary from Vanderbilt until 2018.

Cooper [made](#) \$20,000-\$23,500 a year teaching a graduate level class in Vanderbilt's HealthCare MBA program at the Owen Graduate School of Management at Vanderbilt University as an adjunct professor. According to [news reports](#), Vanderbilt employed Cooper in 2005. By 2018, Cooper's congressional disclosures show that he ceased employment at Vanderbilt University.

## LEGISLATIVE BENEFIT

**LOBBYING:** 10 bills were either sponsored or co-sponsored by Cooper for which Vanderbilt University registered lobbying activity (since 2010).

Cooper has sponsored one bill, and co-sponsored nine others, that Vanderbilt University lobbied for between 2010 and 2018. The bills include:

- The Research for All Act of 2014 ([H.R. 4879](#)) aims at providing expedited review of drugs and biological products for safer and more effective treatments. It also seeks to amend the Public Health Service Act, looking to enhance considerations of sex differences in research.
- The Better On-line Ticket Sales Act of 2016 ([H.R. 5104](#)) proposes to continue to ensure equitable consumer access to tickets for any given event, by prohibiting certain software.
- The Federal Perkins Loan Program Extension Act of 2017 ([H.R. 2482](#)) aims to extend, temporarily, the Federal Perkins Loan Program.



## ADDITIONAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST: JIM COOPER'S FARM SUBSIDIES

Rep. Cooper has an estimated net worth of \$30.3 million (OpenSecrets.org) and disclosed a 33-percent stake in Cooper Bros. Land Company. Our auditors found that this land company received over \$108,000 in federal agricultural subsidies including payments from conservative reserve programs, conservation stewardship programs, tobacco transition payment programs (FY2009-FY2015).

## FLASHBACK

Jim Cooper (D-TN) introduced “No Budget No Pay” legislation, by [saying](#), “If taxpayers want better results from Congress, they must stop paying their elected officials for failure. After all, you get what you pay for.” However, Cooper had a side-job – employed back home by a federal contractor – Vanderbilt University. He was also a partner in a land company that received over \$108,000 in federal farm and conservation payments.



## COMMENT REQUESTS

Review our request for comment to Rep. Jim Cooper [here](#).

Review our request for comment to Vanderbilt University [here](#).

**NO RESPONSES**



FORMER U.S. REPRESENTATIVE

**KRISTI NOEM (R)**

**SOUTH DAKOTA-AT LARGE  
ELECTED 2009 CONGRESS  
ELECTED GOVERNOR 2018**

Former SD Representative and now-Governor Kristi Noem served in the U.S. House from 2010 to 2018. Noem served as the liaison to House Republican Leadership, as well as on the House Ways and Means Committee. The House Ways and Means Committee is primarily responsible for establishing tax code. In August 2013, Kristi Noem was among the “25 most influential women in the GOP” by Newsmax magazine.

Ms. Noem is currently Governor of South Dakota and the first woman to hold the office.



**FEDERAL CONTRACTOR | SANFORD HEALTH**



STATISTICS	RENDERED	RECEIVED
<p><b>Annual Revenue</b> \$4B est.</p>	<p><b>Political Contributions to:</b> Kristi Noem</p>	<p><b>Total Federal Checkbook Payments (FY2014-2018)</b> \$73.6M</p>
<p><b>Number of Employees</b> 29,300</p>	<p><b>Total (Federal Career):</b> \$110,462</p>	<p><b>Contracts:</b> \$17,323,217 <b>Sub-Contracts:</b> \$119,500</p>
<p><b>Geographic Location</b> Headquarters: Sioux Falls, South Dakota</p>	<p><b>Individuals:</b> \$100,962 <b>Affiliated Lobbyists:</b> \$9,500</p>	<p><b>Grants:</b> \$22,273,046 <b>Sub-Grants:</b> \$31,691,228 <b>Direct Payments:</b> \$2,307,906</p>

Source: Open Secrets

Source: OpenTheBooks.com [audit](#) of USAspending.gov

# CONNECTIONS SUMMARY

## POLITICAL BENEFIT

In total, Sanford Health's executives, employees and lobbyists were the #1 donor to Kristie Noem's congressional campaign fund and [gave](#) \$110,462 in campaign donations (career). This was significantly more than the runner-up, Moyle Petroleum (also located in South Dakota) who gave \$65,801.

Top executives at Sanford Health provided campaign donations to Noem – early in her congressional career (2010-2013). For example, Kelby Krabbenhoft, CEO, gave \$7,500. Adam Stys, Director of Cardiovascular Disease Fellowship, gave \$7,300. Maria Stys, Director of Women's Heart Program, gave \$5,800. Additionally, since 2010, Noem received \$9,500 in campaign donations from two individual lobbyists hired by Sanford Health.

In 2018, Kristi Noem was elected governor of South Dakota. Heading up Noem's transition team was a Sanford Health [lobbyist](#), Matt McCalley. After inauguration, Noem [gave](#) McCalley's law firm a \$129,000 state contract for legal services.

As governor, Noem appointed Sanford Health Dr. Greg DeSautel as secretary of Social Services. The past-chairman of the Sanford Health System Board of Trustees, Barb Stork, was appointed to the South Dakota Board of Regents. Sanford Health [also gave](#) \$5,000 to Noem's inauguration party. Sanford executives and key employees [gave large donations](#) to her gubernatorial campaign, including \$13,500 for one fundraiser.

## CONTRACTOR BENEFIT

In a five-year period (2014-2018), Sanford Health received \$53 million in federal grants and sub-grants (subsidies) and \$17.3 million in federal contracts.

Effective January 1, 2016, the federal Office of Personnel Management (OPM) [negotiated](#) benefits and rates for a Sanford Health Maintenance Organizations and point of service product for federal workers.

In the same year, Sanford Health, a nonprofit health care system, received \$292,576 in federal grants and Sanford employees gave Noem's campaign \$8,412. The following year, Noem [co-hosted an event](#) celebrating Sanford Health in Washington, D.C.

Sanford Health is one of only two companies providing health insurance coverage through the South Dakota state insurance exchange. In 2019, Sanford won a state and federally [approved rate hike](#) of 9.7% while its competitor Avera won a 2.5% premium increase. (Avera [isn't even in Noem's top 20 donors.](#))



In February, 2019, Sanford Health [finalized](#) its merger with Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society. In South Dakota, the Society managed 32 nursing homes. In January, 2019, Governor Kristi Noem [proposed aiding](#) the state's nursing home industry by raising the rate of Medicaid payments and providing \$5 million in grants to innovative facilities.

Noem proposed this state aid despite the fact that [Sanford Health](#) has annual revenues of \$3.7 billion and assets of \$2.8 billion. In the latest disclosed year (FY2017), Sanford's CEO Kelby K. Krabbenhoft made \$2.2 million. Sanford Health is organized as a public charity.

## LEGISLATIVE BENEFIT

Noem co-sponsored four federal bills on which Sanford Health registered lobbying activity. These bills include:

- The Sports Medicine Licensure Clarity Act of 2015 ([H.R. 921](#)) extends insurance coverage beyond the licensed state, to those professionals that are administering medical services to athletes, athletic teams, or team staff members.
- The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act ([H.R. 1](#)) states that the corporate tax rate would be reduced, standards deductions for individuals would double, the child tax credit would double, and many other provisions.



## COMMENT REQUESTS

Review our request for comment to then-U.S. Representative & current Governor Kristi Noem [here](#).

**NO RESPONSE**

Review our request for comment to Sanford Health [here](#).

### RESPONSE:

*“Kristi Noem is the current governor and former, singular, U.S Representative of South Dakota – the state in which Sanford Health is headquartered. Sanford Health is also one of the largest employers in the state. There is no ethical violation for Sanford Health registering federal lobbying activity – regardless of who is sponsoring a bill. There is no conflict of interest caused by employees contributing to Noem’s campaign in their personal capacities. It is great that our employees and physicians are individually and personally actively involved and invested in their government and their elected officials.”*

**- Micah Abernson - Sanford Health Executive Vice President**

## FORMER U.S. REPRESENTATIVE

# ERIK PAULSEN (R)

MINNESOTA DISTRICT 3  
ELECTED: 2008  
LOST ELECTION: 2018

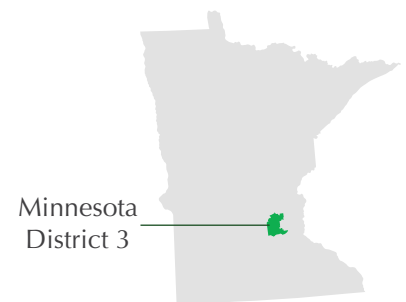
Fmr. Representative Erik Paulsen served from 2009-2019 in the U.S. House of Representatives. He served on the House Ways and Means Committee and the Bicameral Joint Economic Committee.

Today, Mr. Paulsen is a lobbyist for Pass USMCA Coalition, an ad-hoc group of trade associations lobbying congress to pass President Trump's U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement on trade.



### FEDERAL CONTRACTOR | CARGILL, INC.

Cargill, Inc. is the largest privately held company in US and trades, produces and distributes grain and other agricultural commodities. It's Minnesota's largest company based on revenue.



STATISTICS	RENDERED	RECEIVED
<b>Annual Revenue:</b> \$109.7B (2017) <b>Market Cap:</b> \$55B <a href="#">valuation</a> by Reuters (2011)	<b>Political Contributions to:</b> Rep. Erik Paulsen	<b>Total Federal Checkbook Payments (FY2014-2018)</b> \$402M
<b>Number of Employees</b> 155,000 (2017)	<b>Total (Career):</b> \$96,050	<b>Grants:</b> \$3,473,388
<b>Geographic Location</b> Receives all federal grants at 15407 McGinty Road, Wayzata, MN 55391- a facility located in the Third Congressional District.	<b>Individuals:</b> \$67,800 <b>Company PAC:</b> \$25,000 <b>Affiliated Lobbyists:</b> \$2,750	<b>Contracts:</b> \$397,609,288 <b>Sub-Contracts:</b> \$951,687

Source: [Open Secrets](#)

Source: [OpenTheBooks.com](#) [audit](#) of [USAspending.gov](#)



# CONNECTIONS SUMMARY

## POLITICAL BENEFIT

Cargill affiliates are the 10th [largest](#) donor to Paulsen's campaign fund during his career. Donations came from company employees (\$67,800) and company affiliated political action committee (\$25,500). Cargill CEO Gregory Page donated \$27,000.

Lobbyists hired by Cargill donated personally to Paulsen's campaign totaling an additional \$2,750. On two occasions, these lobbyists contributed while engaging Paulsen in an official lobbying capacity on behalf of Cargill in the same year.

## CONTRACTOR BENEFIT

In 2011, Cargill [pushed for a free-trade agreement](#) with South Korea and Mr. Paulsen was credited with taking the lead and was [named](#) co-chair of the working group for Korea Free Trade Agreement.

During the period 2014-2018, Cargill received federal grants (\$3.5 million) and contracts (\$397 million). In FY2016 alone, Cargill, Inc. received \$2 million in federal grants.

## MEMBER BENEFIT

Today, Paulsen is a hired lobbyist by USMCA Coalition – a group of 200 major corporations [including](#) Cargill. The purpose of the group is to lobby Congress to pass the U.S.-Mexico-Canada trade agreement. No disclosures are yet available.

## LEGISLATIVE BENEFIT

Rep. Paulsen formerly served on the House Ways and Means Committee and its corresponding subcommittee on trade. Cargill executives [testified for the committee](#), as the company has business interests in Asia and around the world and Paulsen lauded the company. Further, in 2011, Paulsen participated in a [business roundtable](#) hosted by Cargill.

Since 2010, Paulsen co-sponsored three pieces of legislation for which Cargill, Inc. registered lobbying activity. These bills include:

- The S Corporation ESOP Promotion and Expansion Act of 2009 ([H.R. 3586](#)) amends the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to expand stock ownership to employees in S corporations.
- The Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 ([H.R. 2194](#)) aims to enhance United States diplomatic efforts regarding Iran by expanding sanctions, specifically economic, against Iran.
- The Wireless Telecommunications Tax and Fee Collection Fairness Act ([H.R. 1625](#)) is part of the larger Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018, which is a government-spending bill.

## COMMENT REQUESTS

Review our request for comment to former Rep. Erik Paulsen [here](#).

### NO RESPONSE

Review our request for comment to Cargill, Inc. [here](#).

### RESPONSE:

*"Cargill's Political Action Committee, an employee-funded bipartisan group, is responsible for oversight and day-to-day decision making related to political contributions."*

*We make every effort to assess and lend political support in a conscientious and responsible manner, working with legislators and policymakers who are relevant to our business, farmers, customers and communities. That support is not based on a single issue. Our support for any candidate does not suggest that we agree with their positions on every issue."*

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE

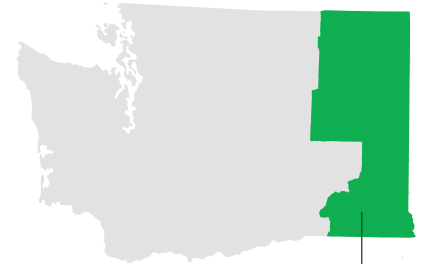
**CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS (R)**

WASHINGTON DISTRICT 5 | ELECTED 2004

Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers is currently a member of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. She also was the Chair of the House Republican Caucus from 2013-2019.

McMorris is the highest-ranking Republican woman in Congress.

In December 2013, the Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE) referred a complaint to the Committee on Ethics. OCE stated, in part: "... *there is substantial reason to believe that Representative McMorris Rodgers improperly combined congressional resources and campaign resources to produce a mailing and video for her leadership race.*" McMorris Rodgers emphatically denied any wrongdoing, [here](#).



Washington District 5



**FEDERAL CONTRACTOR:  
SCHWEITZER ENGINEERING LABORATORIES (SEL)**

SEL designs, manufactures, and supports products and services from generators and transmission protection to distribution automation and control systems.

STATISTICS	RENDERED	RECEIVED
<p><b>Annual Revenue</b> \$1B est.</p>	<p><b>Political Contributions to:</b> Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers</p>	<p><b>Total Federal Checkbook Payments (FY2014-2018)</b> \$24M</p>
<p><b>Number of Employees</b> 3,800 (2015)</p>	<p><b>Total Contributions (career)</b> \$76,310 Individuals: \$76,310</p>	<p><b>Contracts:</b> \$8,481,198 <b>Sub-Contracts:</b> \$2,847,136</p>
<p><b>Geographic Location</b> Headquarters: Pullman, Washington in the state's 5th Congressional District</p>		<p><b>Grants</b> \$12,738,363</p>

Source: [Open Secrets](#)

Source: [OpenTheBooks.com](#) [audit](#) of [USAspending.gov](#)

# CONNECTIONS SUMMARY

## POLITICAL BENEFIT

Schweitzer Engineering Laboratories (SEL) key executives and employees are the 12th [largest](#) campaign donor to Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers during her congressional career.

Since 2005, SEL affiliates donated \$76,310 to Rodgers's campaign. Founder of SEL, Edmund Schweitzer, chairman of the board and the chief technology officer at SEL, individually [donated](#) \$25,800.

Many of these donations occurred during periods when SEL received federal aid.

McMorris Rodgers has maintained a close relationship with SEL over the years, [hosting forums](#) at their facilities, publicly [praising](#) their expansion, [meeting](#) with the CEO, and [promoting](#) the company on Facebook.

## CONTRACTOR BENEFIT

During a five-year period, SEL received \$24 million in federal contracts and grants. Noted: roughly half of the federal payments during this period were grants (aid): \$12.7 million.

During this same period, key executives at SEL made substantial campaign donations to McMorris Rodgers. For example, company chairman Edmund Schweitzer gave \$8,100; David Whitehead, Chief Operating Officer, donated \$5,000 (2018); and Robert Morris, the director of engineering services, gave \$5,400 (2018).

The federal grants (subsidies/aid) that SEL procured during this period were primarily earmarked for research, development, and analysis. In addition, taxpayers also subsidized SEL's research and development in other ways. An article published at *Forbes* explored SEL's advantageous tax treatment. Because SEL is employee owned (ESOP), [100% of company profits](#) can be reinvested without paying current income taxes.



In 2012, McMorris Rodgers [gave a House floor speech](#) and compared the very talented and successful CEO & Founder Edmund Schweitzer to Benjamin Franklin.

## LEGISLATIVE BENEFIT

In 2017, McMorris Rodgers co-sponsored two bills for which SEL registered lobbying activity. These bills include:

- The Promotion and Expansion of Private Employee Ownership Act of 2017 ([H.R. 2092](#)) is a bill that amends Internal Revenue code to expand the availability of employee stock ownership plans (ESOP) in S corporations. SEL is a 100% employee owned an ESOP.
- The Workflex in the 21st Century Act (H.R.4219) amends the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, having it include a voluntary option for qualified flexible workplace arrangements.

## COMMENT REQUESTS

Review our request for comment to Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers [here](#).

Review our request for comment to Schweitzer Engineering Laboratories [here](#).

**NO RESPONSES**

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE

**DEBBIE DINGELL (D)**

MICHIGAN DISTRICT 12 | ELECTED 2014

Representative Debbie Dingell is currently a member of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce and the House Committee on Natural Resources, as well as being a senior whip and co-chair of the House Democratic Policy and Communications Committee.

A member of the Dingell family has held MI-12 congressional seat for 86-years with John Dingell, Sr; John Dingell, Jr; and currently Debbie Dingell.



Michigan District 12

FEDERAL CONTRACTOR | UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

STATISTICS	RENDERED	RECEIVED
<p><b>Annual Revenue</b> \$8.9 billion (2018-2019)</p>	<p><b>Political Contributions to:</b> Rep. Debbie Dingell</p>	<p><b>Total Federal Checkbook Payments (FY2014-2018)</b> \$2.3B</p>
<p><b>Number of Employees</b> 51,269 (2017)</p>	<p><b>Total (Career):</b> \$61,502 from individuals affiliated with the University of Michigan</p>	<p><b>Contracts:</b> \$160,065,476</p> <p><b>Grants:</b> \$2,034,557,026</p> <p><b>Sub-Grants:</b> \$2,395,833</p>
<p><b>Geographic Location</b> Headquarters: Ann Arbor, Michigan in the state's Twelfth Congressional District</p>		<p><b>Direct Payments</b> \$113,082,308</p>

Source: [Open Secrets](#)

Source: [OpenTheBooks.com](#) [audit](#) of [USAspending.gov](#)



# CONNECTIONS SUMMARY

## POLITICAL BENEFIT

Employees of the University of Michigan (U-M) are the #1 campaign contributor to Rep. Debbie Dingell during her congressional career. All of the donations are from key executives and employees of U-M.

For example: Dingell is a member of the university's prestigious [Ford School of Public Policy Committee](#) and works to **assist the university with fundraising** and networking to policymakers and policymaking arenas, and provides counsel on higher education and public policy.

Marina Whitman, a [professor](#) at the Ford School of Public Policy, contributed \$6,650 to Dingell's campaign fund. In 2017, Dingell [recognized](#) Marina Whitman for her distinguished career in remarks on the House floor and published in the Congressional Record.

Furthermore, Dingell is an advisory board member for the University of Michigan's [Depression Center](#). Marianne Udow-Phillips is a trustee on the same board, an employee of U-M, and has donated \$5,700 to Dingell's campaign.

In 2018, Dingell [hosted](#) a healthcare forum in Dearborn and Udow-Phillips was a panelist. When Dingell introduced Udow-Phillips, the congresswoman [admitted](#) that Udow-Phillips helped markup key legislation.

Frequently, U-M provides a forum to host Dingell for speaking events on campus. Here are a couple recent examples:

On September 18, 2018, U-M hosted Dingell for a round table [discussion](#) on information privacy and security. Promoting the event on social media.

On April 17, 2019, when Dingell addressed the Detroit Economic Club, the networking and policy event [was hosted](#) at the U-M – Dearborn.

On August 29, 2019, Dingell [sponsored](#) the "Take On Hate" Event hosted by U-M, University Center, in Dearborn.

## CONTRACTOR BENEFIT

In the last five-years, U-M received federal payments of \$2.3 billion. The vast majority of these payments are comprised of \$2 billion in federal grants. U-M has significant claims on federal payments: contracts, grants, and direct payments

On Twitter in 2018, Dingell [admitted](#) that as a member of Congress, she fights to bring federal funding to the U-M.

Here are a couple of examples of Dingell earmarking federal funds to U-M:

On February 1, 2019, Dingell [issued](#) a press release announcing a \$2.6 million grant for automated vehicle research to U-M from the Department of Transportation.

On March 21, 2019, Dingell, alongside other members of the Michigan congressional delegation, [wrote an earmark letter](#) to the Department of Transportation (USDOT) in support of \$7.5 million more in grants to the U-M and other partners regarding research on self-driving cars. Via [press release](#), Dingell took credit that USDOT authorized the grant in August 2019.



## POLITICAL BENEFIT

Dingell co-sponsored four bills on which the U-M registered lobbying activity (2014-2018). These bills include:

- The Federal Perkins Loan Program Extension Act of 2017 ([H.R. 2482](#)) aims to temporarily extend the Federal Perkins Loan Program. University of Michigan and their students benefit from this loan program.
- The Families of Flint Act ([H.R. 4479](#)) aims to establish a 10-year grant program ensuring that Flint's drinking water is up to clean standards.
- The 21st Century Cures Act ([H.R. 6](#)) aims to make funds available for biomedical research.

## COMMENT REQUESTS

Review our request for comment to Rep. Debbie Dingell [here](#).

### NO RESPONSE

Review our request for comment to University of Michigan [here](#).

### RESPONSE:

*"As I am sure you know, it is not at all uncommon for members of congress to be strong advocates for and supportive of the major institutions in their congressional districts or in their home states. The University of Michigan is a world-class institution of higher education. Both the main campus in Ann Arbor and the UM-Dearborn campus are within Rep. Debbie Dingell's district.*

*Rep. Dingell often participates in various ways at U-M, including, as you have noted, serving on the Ford School of Public Policy Committee and serving on the national advisory board for the U-M Depression Center.*

*You also note that your research has found that individual U-M employees are well represented as campaign contributors to Rep. Dingell.*

*U-M is one of the state's largest employers – with more than 50,000 employees across the state – and two of the three academic campuses, along with the Michigan Medicine main campus, are located within her district. Our employees are free to make personal campaign contributions to any elected official they may wish to support."*

**- Mark Schlissel, University of Michigan President**

## ADDITIONAL CONFLICT-OF-INTEREST GENERAL MOTORS (GM)

GM is the 6th largest campaign donor during Dingell's career with \$42,650 in [contributions](#). These donations are from the company political action committee (\$30,500) and company employees (\$12,150). Furthermore, company-affiliated lobbyists donated \$2,750 in campaign funds.

\$1.7 billion in federal checkbook payments flowed to GM – a Fortune 100 company – during fiscal years 2014 through 2018.

GM is not based in Dingell's district (MI-12), however, the connections with Congresswoman Debbie Dingell merit our inclusion in this report.

Dingell is a descendant of a Fisher brother., founders of Fisher Body, a part of GM. Previously, Dingell [worked](#) as a GM executive: President of the GM Foundation; Executive Director of Global Community Relations; and as Executive Director of Government Relations – in other words, a top GM lobbyist.

As of 2018, Dingell [lists](#) five GM retirement savings plans: two plans are valued at \$50,000 to \$100,000; two plans are valued between \$100,000 and \$250,000; and one plan is valued at \$500,000 to \$1 million.

Congressional disclosures [show](#) that Dingell collects a \$90,719.88 annual pension from her previous employment at GM.



### COMMENT REQUESTS

Review our request for comment to Rep. Debbie Dingell [here](#).

Review our request for comment to General Motors [here](#).

**NO RESPONSES**



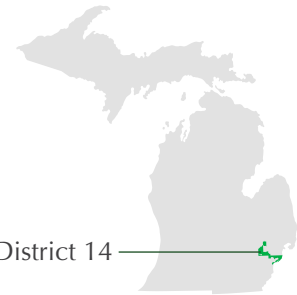
## U.S. REPRESENTATIVE

**BRENDA LAWRENCE (D)**

MICHIGAN DISTRICT 14 | ELECTED 2014

Representative Brenda Lawrence serves on the House Appropriations Committee and the House Oversight and Reform Committee.

Previously, Lawrence served as the mayor of Southfield, MI (2001-2015). Lawrence worked for the U.S. Post Office in human resources for 30-years.



Michigan District 14

**FEDERAL CONTRACTOR | GENERAL MOTORS**

STATISTICS	RENDERED	RECEIVED
<b>Annual Revenue:</b> \$145.59B (2017) <b>Market Cap:</b> \$49.26B	<b>Political Contributions to:</b> Rep. Brenda Lawrence	<b>Total Federal Checkbook Payments (FY2014-2018)</b> \$1.7B
<b>Number of Employees</b> 180,000 (2017)	<b>Total (Career):</b> \$33,600	<b>Grants:</b> \$49,528,864 <b>Sub-Grants:</b> \$3,641,773
<b>Geographic Location</b> Headquarters: Detroit, Michigan in the state's Fourteenth Congressional District	<b>Individuals:</b> \$1,000 <b>Company PAC:</b> \$30,000 <b>Affiliated Lobbyists:</b> \$2,600	<b>Contracts:</b> \$1,665,384,557 <b>Sub-Contracts:</b> \$401,863

Source: [Open Secrets](#)Source: [OpenTheBooks.com](#) [audit](#) of [USAspending.gov](#)



# CONNECTIONS SUMMARY

## POLITICAL BENEFIT

General Motors (GM) has donated \$33,600 during the short congressional career of Lawrence and ranks as her [fourth largest donor](#). The vast majority of the donations (\$30,000) are directly from the GM political action committee (PAC).

One individual lobbyist, lobbying on behalf of GM, donated \$2,600 to Rep. Lawrence for the 2014 election cycle. This lobbyist worked for GM at the time of the donation.

## CONTRACTOR BENEFIT

GM, a Fortune 100 Company, received \$1.7 billion in federal contracts, grants, and sub-grants (FY2014-FY2018). Previously, the U.S. government spent \$50 billion to bailout General Motors as a result of its 2009 bankruptcy. In 2014, the Treasury Department [admitted](#) to losing \$11.2 billion on the bailout.

Here's an example of a potential conflict-of-interest: 1. In FY2016, GM received \$13.2 million in grants; and 2. Rep. Brenda Lawrence's campaign received \$10,000 and ranked as a top 4 donor to Lawrence that same year.

Both the company and member did not respond to our requests for comment.

## MEMBER BENEFIT

Lawrence's husband, McArthur Lawrence, owned GM stock (between \$1,001 and \$15,000 in value), according to Lawrence's [2015 Financial Disclosure Report](#). The stock was sold as described on Lawrence's FY2016 congressional disclosures.

## LEGISLATIVE BENEFIT

Lawrence has co-sponsored four bills since her start in the House of Representatives in 2015. GM lobbied for all four of these bills. The bills include:

- The Vehicle-to-Infrastructure Safety Technology Investment Flexibility Act of 2015 ([H.R. 910](#)) aims to install vehicle-to-infrastructure communication equipment, under certain highway programs.
- The Fighting Occupied Cell Use So Everyone Drives More Safely Act of 2015 ([H.R. 1392](#)) aims to reduce federal highway funding to states that do not put forth laws that prohibit the use of certain communication device while operating a motor vehicle. GM has a vested interest in safer driving, due to their business surrounding vehicles.
- The Middle Class Health Benefits Tax Repeal Act of 2015 ([H.R. 2050](#)) repeals of tax on high cost employer-sponsored health coverage.

{See also General Motors (GM) & Rep. Debbie Dingell (MI-12).}



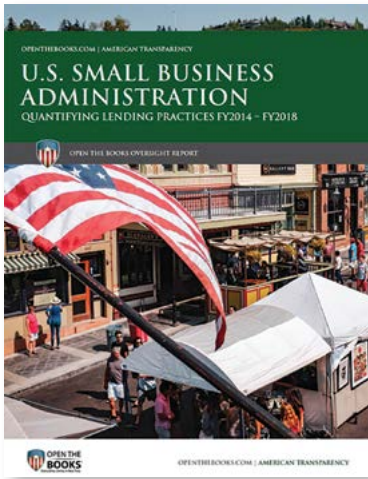
## COMMENT REQUESTS

Review our request for comment to Rep. Brenda Lawrence [here](#).

Review our request for comment to General Motors [here](#).

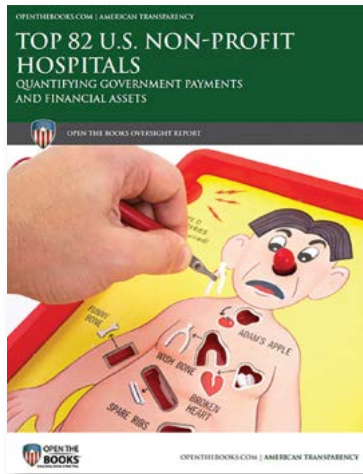
**NO RESPONSES**

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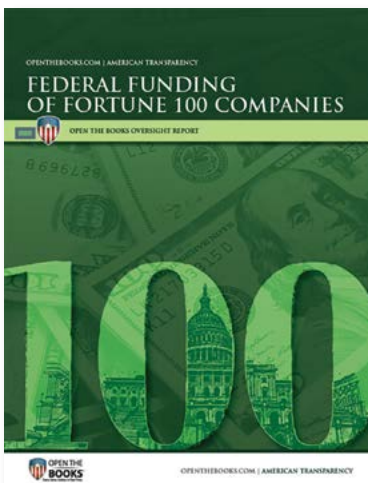
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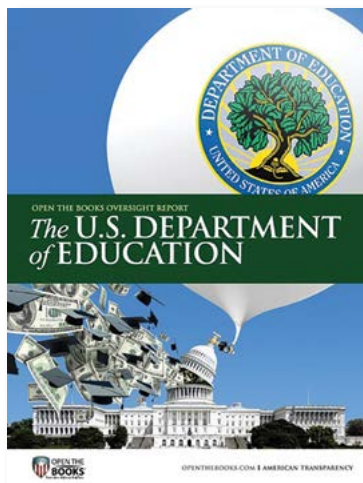
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**Adam Andrzejewski**, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, authored this report. **Matthew Tyrmand**, Deputy Director at Large, disseminated this report to national media. **Craig Mijares**, Chief Operating Officer, assembled and organized datasets. **Madalen Strumpf**, Oversight Manager, spearheaded our data investigation and oversight teams. **Sejzelle Erastus**, Graphic Designer - Media Associate, designed the report.

This report quantifies federal transactions compiled at [www.OpenTheBooks.com](http://www.OpenTheBooks.com) as a result of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006. To the extent the government makes mistakes in reporting inaccurate or incomplete data, our report will reflect these same mistakes.



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