

August 14, 2008

As Donors, Lobbyists Often Favor One Party

By [RON NIXON](#) and [ROBERT PEAR](#)

[WASHINGTON](#) — Before Congress adopted a new ethics law requiring lobbyists to detail their campaign giving, the conventional wisdom had been that most lobbyists hedged their bets by donating freely to members of both parties.

But the first filings under the law show that party loyalty often wins out. More than three-fourths of the federally registered lobbyists making campaign contributions in excess of \$25,000 this year have showered money mainly on one political party or the other, according to the reports they filed with Congress at the end of last month.

Campaign finance experts say the reports, which cover the first half of 2008, do not fully reflect the lobbyists' influence because they do not disclose all the ways lobbyists can help politicians raise money. But the reports do provide a detailed look at special-interest giving and the way money nurtures relationships between lobbyists and politicians in Washington.

All told, 50 lobbyists reported contributions totaling more than \$25,000 each in the first six months of the year. Nearly half, 24 of the 50, made more than 80 percent of their contributions to Democrats, while 16 gave more than 80 percent to Republicans.

Over all, lobbyists gave about \$190 million. The 50 biggest contributors gave \$1.8 million, a relatively modest sum for a campaign in which individual contributions to presidential and Congressional candidates are likely to reach \$2 billion.

About \$1 million of the top lobbyists' contributions, or 57 percent, went to Democrats, while \$715,000, or 40 percent, went to Republicans. (In addition, some money went to political action committees that focus on specific issues and contribute to candidates of both parties.)

Fourteen of the top 50 lobbyists made all their contributions to Democrats, while only four gave all their contributions to Republicans.

The top 50 include seven onetime members of Congress, among them former Senators [Alfonse M. D'Amato](#), Republican of New York, and [John B. Breaux](#), Democrat of Louisiana, and former Representative [Robert L. Livingston](#), Republican of Louisiana; [Ken Mehlman](#), former Republican national chairman; and at least 30 former Congressional aides, including Kenneth J. Kies, a Republican who was once the top tax lawyer for Congress, and Steven A. Elmendorf, for more than a decade a top aide to House Democrats.

In interviews, some lobbyists said they had longstanding personal and professional relationships with politicians of one party, so it was natural to bestow money on them. Other lobbyists said they had to work

with lawmakers of both parties, so their contributions reflected pragmatism rather than partisan loyalty.

Jeffrey J. Peck, a top Democratic lobbyist, gave \$46,925, all to Democrats, including Senator [Joseph R. Biden Jr.](#) of Delaware, for whom he used to work. His biggest contribution, \$28,500, went to the campaign committee for Senate Democrats.

“I’m a creature of the Senate,” said Mr. Peck, whose clients include drug companies and private equity firms. “The more Senate Democrats there are, the better for business, and the better for the country.”

While individual lobbyists may funnel money to members of one party, they often work under the same roof with lobbyists who curry favor with the other. This is a selling point for lobbying firms that can deliver votes on both sides of the aisle.

At Quinn Gillespie & Associates, the chairman, Jack Quinn, was White House counsel for President [Bill Clinton](#) and contributes heavily to Democrats, while the firm’s president, J. David Hoppe, is equally loyal to Republicans. Mr. Hoppe was chief of staff to the Senate Republican leader from 1996 to 2002. Ed Gillespie, a co-founder of Quinn Gillespie, cut his ties to the firm last year to become counselor to President Bush.

Senator [John McCain](#) of Arizona, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, took in about \$1.9 million from lobbyists in the first half of the year. His Democratic counterpart, Senator [Barack Obama](#) of Illinois, received nearly \$50,000 from lobbyists, even though he says he does not want their money.

Nancy M. Zirkin, executive vice president of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, who gave a total of \$33,800 to Congressional campaigns, said she was annoyed that Mr. Obama and the [Democratic National Committee](#) had a policy against accepting donations from Washington lobbyists.

“I understand their sensitivity,” she said. “But it has gone too far when individuals who have raised tremendous amounts of money for the party over many years are no longer welcome at political events. I have been helping candidates, especially women, for more than 20 years.”

One of the biggest lobbyist-donors was Ed Rogers, a Republican insider who worked in the White House for President [Ronald Reagan](#) and the first President Bush. He reported giving a total of \$59,100, almost all of it to Republicans.

Mr. Rogers said his goal was to “max out” in support of Mr. McCain. He gave \$2,300 to the McCain campaign and \$37,500 to the McCain Victory Committee, a joint fund-raising effort by the campaign and the [Republican National Committee](#). Mr. Rogers lobbies for diverse clients, including the Lorillard Tobacco Company, Raytheon and the Kurdistan Regional Government.

Senator [Maria Cantwell](#) of Washington was the only Democrat who received money from Mr. Rogers. He said Michael Meehan, a member of his firm, “made me give” to Ms. Cantwell. Mr. Meehan was once her chief of staff.

Another top Republican contributor was Mr. Mehlman, the former Republican national chairman, who recently became a managing director of the private equity firm [Kohlberg Kravis Roberts](#). He gave a total of

\$43,535, all to Republicans, including \$28,500 to the national committee. He felt a special obligation to contribute because as party chairman he had repeatedly asked others for money.

Democrats had particular reason to be grateful to Heather and Anthony Podesta, a power couple who run separate lobbying businesses. She contributed \$40,500, and he \$36,900. In addition, they often hold fundraisers at their Washington home for Democrats. Just before Congress began its summer recess, Mr. Podesta sent out e-mail invitations to five more events in September.

Causes favored by black and Hispanic lawmakers benefited from the largess of some of America's biggest consumer product companies.

The Congressional Black Caucus Foundation received \$285,000 from Coca-Cola, \$270,000 from the drug manufacturer AstraZeneca and \$155,122 from Anheuser-Busch. In total, the [Congressional Black Caucus](#) and affiliated organizations got more than \$1.5 million from companies.

AstraZeneca, which makes drugs like [Crestor](#) for high cholesterol and Nexium for heartburn, was also a top contributor to the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute, with a gift of \$115,000.

Tony Jewell, a spokesman for AstraZeneca, said the contributions were a way of "building relationships and supporting worthwhile causes," including efforts to improve the health of minorities and increase their participation in clinical trials.

Copyright 2008 The New York Times Company

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [RSS](#) | [First Look](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Site Map](#)