



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on October 26, 2023

Bernie Sanders Funnels Another \$75K to Family's Nonprofit

Bernie Sanders is raking in the cash.

In the latest example of a prominent progressive politician leveraging the privilege of office to enrich himself and those close to him, Senator Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) has been found to have funneled a new \$75,000 to the nonprofit of his wife and stepson — a sum that is in addition to the \$200,000 he was discovered to have funneled earlier this year.

According to a report by [Fox News](#), the lawmaker and two-time presidential candidate made a transfer of \$75,000 from his campaign account to his family members' nonprofit during the third quarter.



AP Images
Bernie Sanders

The money from the campaign went to the Sanders Institute on August 8, per a newly released filing from the Federal Election Commission. The institute was launched by Senator Sanders' wife, Jane, along with stepson David Driscoll, six years ago with the purpose of serving as a think tank to cultivate progressive voices.

When the Institute launched in 2017, Jane Sanders told *The Washington Post* that the aim would be to support "democracy" and boost left-wing institutions. Arguing that a democracy needs an "informed electorate" and "bold thinking," Jane Sanders explained "we put together this team to focus on issues, but not in a partisan way, not in a way that just focuses on the latest crazy thing. It will not be about [former President Donald] Trump; it will be about the issues facing the country."

Scrutiny of the organization, however, suggests that little work is being done even while Driscoll collects a six-figure salary from the Institute.

Kendra Arnold, executive director of the Foundation for Accountability and Civic Trust, spoke with Fox News Digital and told the outlet these actions could potentially constitute a campaign finance violation:

The facts present in this case and the family ties involved certainly raise legitimate concern. Obviously, a senator is not allowed to use his campaign to simply transfer large sums of money to family members — regardless of the route the dollars take.

... While on its face, the percentage the nonprofit paid out in salary alone is not necessarily problematic, legally the issue hinges on whether the salaries were paid for bona fide services at fair market value. In other words, if the nonprofit and its executive director are truly producing work and actually earning the money, it is not illegal, but it is frowned upon. On the other hand, if nothing or very little is being done to earn the money legitimately, then it is highly likely a serious campaign finance violation has taken place.



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In 2019, when Senator Sanders entered the Democratic presidential primary, his family members' nonprofit paused its operations to avoid the "appearance of impropriety," but has since resumed its work.

Per public tax forms from 2021, the Institute spent almost 40 percent of its contributions on salaries while performing a small amount of work of questionable measurable results. Specifically, the nonprofit raised approximately \$717,000 that year, but spent \$257,000 of that on wages. Of that amount, \$152,653 went to Driscoll, who serves as executive director.

Another \$160,000 was spent on The Timeline Project, a "policy-focused resource based on Bernie Sanders' work over four decades" intended to serve as one of the "key pillars [sic] of the website."

They also gave \$89,000 to a news website, spent another \$89,000 on social-media and content creation, and spent \$17,000 for an event that was ultimately scrapped due to Covid-19.

Fox News notes that there appears to be little return for all that investment: "Its website does not appear to contain a 'policy-focused resource' defined as its top program expense, and its fellows' blog posts are primarily cross-posted from other sources. Its YouTube page uploaded just three videos this year. Its profile on X, formerly Twitter, largely pushes outside news and opinion pieces from its fellows."

Moreover, despite the Institute's insistence that its goal is to support other progressive organizations, it has made no grants.

In 2021, Sanders' campaign transferred \$350,000 to the Institute — nearly half of the \$716,000 it raised that year. Nearly 40 percent of that money was spent on wages, including Driscoll's \$150,000 salary.

A recent report by [The New American](#) details the ways in which the spouses/fiancés of Democratic Representatives Ayanna Pressley (Mass.), Cori Bush (Mo.), Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (N.Y.), and Ilhan Omar (Minn.) have accumulated millions of dollars since their wives have been in the Capitol.

For instance, Bush's husband, Cortney Merritts, is a private security guard and has received regular paychecks from his wife's campaign. The payments began before they were legally married this February; since January 2022, Merritts has been paid over \$92,000 in bimonthly \$2,500 installments from Bush's campaign committee, per Federal Election Commission records.

Pressley's husband, Conan Harris, is a convicted felon who served 10 years in prison for drug trafficking. Prior to the start of his wife's stint in Congress in 2019, Harris was a public-safety advisor to then-Boston mayor Marty Walsh (D.) making \$92,000 per year. Once Pressley took office, her husband left the mayoral gig and started his own consulting firm.

Per Pressley's financial disclosures, Harris tripled what he had been making with the mayor by 2021. And by 2022, his consulting gig brought in up to \$1.05 million.

Progressive politicians may publicly condemn the rich, but they have no qualms about living richly at the expense of those they were elected to represent.



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