



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on July 23, 2023

Energy Industry Donors Who Once Supported Trump Now Fund His Rivals

While some groups have remained unshakeable in Donald Trump's column, others have decided to jump ship and throw their support somewhere else.

Donors in the energy industry, once a notable part of Trump's financial support, are flocking to his competitors in the GOP primary, reportedly due to the controversies and legal woes currently facing the 45th president.

"The simple explanation is that Trump has issues," Texas lobbyist Bill Miller told [Politico](#).



AP Images

"It's kind of like a car that's not quite in good shape and it's got to go on a road trip. There are gonna be problems," Miller added. "As a consequence, donors are spreading their wealth."

The outlet notes that a number of industry titans have donated to various candidates in the Republican primary field. Harold Hamm, an oil and gas magnate, for instance, has thus far donated to both Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley.

[Politico](#) further reports how Hamm, once one of Trump's chief energy allies, turned his sights elsewhere:

Hamm, whom Trump reportedly considered for a job in his Cabinet as Energy secretary back in 2016, contributed to Haley — the former South Carolina governor and ambassador to the U.N. — back in March, donating the maximum combined \$6,600 to her campaign for the primary and general election.

... Hamm is also backing DeSantis, the disclosures show. Hamm contributed a total of \$6,600 to the Florida governor's campaign in June.

Hamm, a billionaire and prolific GOP donor, previously plowed \$70,000 into a pro-Trump joint fundraising committee in the 2020 campaign cycle. But the man once known as "Trump's energy whisperer" later appeared to have soured on his former ally. Hamm told the *Financial Times* in 2022 that the former president was disloyal to "everyone around him that worked hard."

DeSantis has also received cash from pipeline mogul Kelcy Warren and Midland Energy Inc. CEO Syed Javaid Anwar.

And North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum's longshot campaign for president has received donation funds from energy executive Jeffery Hildebrand.

Surprisingly, Kelly Craft, who served as UN Ambassador under Trump (after Nikki Haley), and her coal-



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executive husband, Joe Craft, have not given any money to Trump in this cycle — but they *have* donated DeSantis, former Vice President Mike Pence, businessman Vivek Ramaswamy, and even former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie.

Not one of the above-mentioned donors has sent cash Trump's way.

While it's not unheard of at this early stage of the race for donors to spread their donations among multiple candidates, former allies of Trump told *Politico* that, this time around, they'd prefer to see someone else represent the party against Joe Biden.

One of the few energy names to still grace the Trump campaign with donations is John Catsimatidis, a billionaire businessman and owner of the oil refinery United Refining Co. Both he and his wife each gave \$3,300 to Trump's campaign committee in May of this year.

During his term in the White House, Trump made an effort to expand the production and export of fossil fuels, pushing back against Democratic efforts to restrict them on the grounds of combating climate change. Under Trump, natural gas expanded. He peeled back over 100 federal environmental regulations, including those that supposedly curbed greenhouse gas emissions.

Trump also signed an executive order allowing the Keystone XL pipeline (which Biden later killed) to move forward, and signed Executive Order 13771, which directed that, for every new regulation, federal agencies "identify" two existing regulations to be eliminated.

Yet, Miller said, the problem energy donors have is not Trump's record. Rather, it's Trump himself. "It's every bit about the person, not the policy," the Texas lobbyist said.

But Trump isn't getting left behind in the dust for lack of these donors' support. He remains the top small-dollar fundraiser in the current GOP field. As *Politico* [notes](#):

But Trump continues to dominate the rest of the GOP field when it comes to small-dollar donors. DeSantis reported raising just \$2.8 million from donors giving less than \$200; Trump's campaign reported receiving \$14.6 million in unitemized contributions transferred from his joint fundraising committee.

Trump remains ahead in the polls, with the [RealClearPolitics](#) average showing him at 52.4 percent, while DeSantis is down by more than 30 points, at 21.5 percent.

And while Trump's detractors point to the various legal ordeals and controversies surrounding him as negatives, the reality is that he often uses them to his advantage to effectively raise funds from small-dollar donors. For example, his team immediately [sent out a fundraising email](#) minutes after the public learned about his federal indictment.

In a sense, then, Trump has gotten stronger — at least as far as fundraising and enthusiasm from the Republican base — the more his rivals attack him.

Given this penchant to create triumph out of seeming setbacks, it's possible that the loss of most big energy donors won't be enough to derail the Trump train, and the New York mogul will leverage his personal brand to make up the difference with small-dollar donations from an energized base.



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