



Koch Brothers and Friends Pouring Millions Into Midterms

Americans for Prosperity, one of the Koch Brothers' key operating units, in its efforts to bring its conservative influence into national politics, is expected to spend [more than \\$125 million](#) in the 2014 elections.



AMERICANS FOR PROSPERITY

After getting thrashed in the 2012 elections, when the brothers and their friends spent nearly \$400 million with little to show for it, they have adopted much of the Left's political organizing strategy and database management strategies. They're determined not to make the same mistake twice.

In January, the Koch Brothers were able to raise nearly \$170 million from their conservative friends, and they expect another \$130 million from their California fundraising seminar held in June. The results are already being felt. Through its American Energy Alliance (AEA), it is pouring millions into ads targeting Democrats in close Senate and House races, criticizing them for their opposition to building the Keystone XL pipeline. Last year, thanks to those efforts, Congress ended a two-decade-old tax credit for wind energy companies, pushing them one step closer to standing or falling on their own without taxpayer subsidies.

Americans for Prosperity (AFP) just opened permanent state chapters in South Dakota and Alaska and has added new chapters in South Carolina, Louisiana, Tennessee, and West Virginia over the last 12 months. It now has 35 permanent state chapters and is looking to add more. At present AFP has more than 500 paid staff people coordinating their efforts with an increasingly sophisticated database management system that targets the voters most likely to be sympathetic to their message.

Iowa is the poster child for AFP. Two years ago, a 30-year-old Army Ranger Mark Lucas had just two people helping him with his startup operation. Lucas is now the regional director with nearly three dozen paid staff members in five field offices and runs operations in 11 states, including Iowa. So far this year, the local chapter volunteers have reached more than 80,000 Iowa voters and new volunteers are coming through the doors daily to help out.

Lucas is very quick to give credit to the Left for their success:

Basically, our field directors are community organizers. People used to make fun of President Obama's background, but community organizing works.

So does sophisticated database management. AFP now links through Data Trust, a private company that has an exclusive agreement with the Republican National Committee's database operator so that, as those person-to-person interviews take place, real-time information can be funneled back to headquarters. That helps refine future efforts in targeting those most sympathetic to the conservative message.

AFP is not concentrating on just the big national issues or vital Senate races, either. Although



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on October 7, 2014

canvassers in states such as Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, and North Carolina will be bringing pressure to bear against Democratic Senate candidates and incumbents, it is also getting involved in local political issues as well. Said Tim Phillips, AFP's national president:

We've got to get to the point where we're a deeper part of a community, and the left has done that for a lot longer, with a much bigger footprint.

It's about building a brand and a community. Then when the attacks come — "Oh, you're just a part of a Koch network or some national network" — it doesn't really ring true with what people are seeing.

Part of AFP's efforts to become a "deeper part of a community" is reflected by efforts of the Colorado AFP chapter which is running television advertisements in a small handful of state Senate districts. In Colorado, Democrats presently hold a one-vote majority in the state Senate, which makes it a prime target for the GOP. In Wisconsin, the AFP chapter is deeply involved in Governor Scott Walker's tough reelection fight, as well.

AFP is learning that local issues more readily draw in volunteers, who then can often be recruited into larger efforts both statewide and nationally. Said Phillips: "A lot of times a local property tax battle will bring a whole new group of people out. It's easier to get movement on the state level."

There's also the stated commitment by AFP leaders that those chapter offices will remain open, staffed, and politically active long after the November 2014 midterms are history. As Lucas put it, "All we're going to do is get bigger. After 2014, we're not shutting down our offices. You're going to see all these other guys pack up the day after the election, but we're going to stay open."

The Koch brothers got burned in 2012. From all reports, it appears that they have learned their lesson and will not repeat the same mistakes in 2014 and beyond.

A graduate of Cornell University and a former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at www.LightFromTheRight.com, primarily on economics and politics. He can be reached at badelman@thenewamerican.com.



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