



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on December 3, 2022

## Potential GOP Presidential Candidates Ramp Up Dark-money Operations

With eyes already on the 2024 presidential race, potential Republican candidates are laying the groundwork with millions of dollars' worth of undisclosed donations to their nonprofit groups.

The law allows for "social welfare groups" to go years without disclosing their donors, even when these donors make individual contributions in the millions. A number of Republicans who hope to claim the party's nomination to take on Joe Biden in 2024 are making full use of this system to fund activities intended to keep them in the public eye and keep their personnel infrastructure together in preparation for the inevitable bid for office.



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A report by [Politico](#) details the cash that has been collected by some of the Republicans most likely to put their hats in the 2024 ring.

Nikki Haley, the former governor of South Carolina who served as UN ambassador under President Donald Trump, is on that list. Although she previously maintained she would not run if it meant going against Trump (who has now made his 2024 candidacy official), she has reportedly had a change of heart in light of the midterms and said she will come to a decision over the Christmas break.

Haley's nonprofit, Stand for America Inc., took in approximately \$8.6 million in 2021, per IRS filings. That money has been used for purposes like direct mail, message development, and the creation of digital content.

This is in line with rules regarding these specific types of nonprofits. Their political activity is limited and they must confine their focus to policy. But their authorization to engage in issue advocacy means that, even if they can't directly electioneer in favor of the candidate they're aligned with, these nonprofits can still effectively operate as a "pre-campaign" by doing research, cultivating mailing lists, and promoting the name of the future candidate as a thought leader.

And they do all this without having to disclose the names of their donors.

Former Vice President Mike Pence has also established himself as a likely 2024 contender, and has publicly put distance between himself and his former boss. According to the filings of his group, Advancing American Freedom, they raised \$7.7 million in 2021. An aide told [Politico](#) that the group and an associated organization together plan to spend \$35 million in 2023.

Another prominent Trump critic from within the GOP, Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan, has a group named An America United, which raised approximately \$2 million in 2021, which it has spent on "audience building," "supporter acquisition," and "research."



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*Politico* further notes:

The group affiliated with South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott (R), Opportunity Matters Network, raised about \$1 million in 2021, during which it gauged “different target audiences’ potential response” to policy initiatives, cultivated its email list, and developed advertising. Two of the group’s directors are former Rep. Trey Gowdy (R-S.C.) and businessman Ben Navarro, who has given millions to a pro-Scott super PAC....

Champion American Values Fund, the group affiliated with former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, reported just \$126,000 raised between August 2021 and the end of that year. A CAV Fund official maintained that the group raised millions in 2022, but declined to provide a specific figure. The person added that the group has run ads in Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina, and the Washington D.C.-metro area.

President Trump is not one to get left behind. His nonprofit outfit, a 501(c)(3) known as the America First Policy Institute, reported bringing in \$14.2 million in 2021.

And these numbers don’t take into account the non-dark money these candidates and potential candidates are raising via more-conventional methods like PACs and super PACs.

Scott, for example, has a super PAC on his side named the Opportunity Matters Fund, which from the beginning of 2021 until now has raised \$36 million, most of which has come from Oracle chairman Larry Ellison. Pompeo’s super PAC raised almost \$7.6 million within the same period. And the pro-Trump super PAC Make America Great Again Inc., which is only one organization in the broad Trump network, has raised \$32 million this year alone.

It remains to be seen whether Trump will maintain his hold over the GOP, or whether any of the potential challengers will pose a significant threat to his aims.

But one thing is for certain, all of these candidates are going to spend a lot of money in their attempts to make their presidential aspirations come true.



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