



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on May 23, 2016

Trump Lines up Financial Backers, Gains NRA's Endorsement

In a brazen but brilliant marketing move, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump made public his list of potential Supreme Court nominees, which were analyzed and pronounced “acceptable” by many of those not yet in Trump’s corner. [He managed to secure the blessings](#) — including financial — of several wealthy supporters. He spent time calling on Republican Party insiders, including House Speaker Paul Ryan, in his attempts to enlist their support for his campaign. And then, to cap off the week, [he secured the endorsement of the National Rifle Association \(NRA\)](#) at its annual convention even before he had said a single word.



In preaching to the choir at the NRA’s convention Friday evening, he took the opportunity to make clear — if clarity was necessary for that partisan audience — how much of a threat he thinks Hillary Clinton would be to gun ownership and the Second Amendment:

The Second Amendment is under attack like never before. Crooked Hillary Clinton is the most anti-gun ... candidate ever to run for office ... she wants to abolish the Second Amendment. She wants to take your guns away. She wants to abolish [the Second Amendment].

He also promised the crowd that, if elected, he would abolish “gun-free” zones:

If you look at Paris — 130 people killed, hundreds of people still in the hospital.... These guys came in ... they just stood there and just shot everybody....

If you would have had guns on the other side ... I promise there wouldn’t have been 130 people killed and hundreds of people lying in the hospital to this day.... If we had guns on the other side, it wouldn’t have been that way....

Gun-free zones — we’re getting rid of gun-free zones, OK, I can tell you.

Trump had already secured endorsements from billionaires T. Boone Pickens and Sheldon Adelson, [as noted here](#). Pickens is hosting a fundraiser while Adelson is writing a big check. So big, in fact, that Jonathan Swan, writing in *The Hill*, called Adelson “one of the few donors in America who can single-handedly alter the course of an election.”

Phil Ruffin, another Las Vegas casino owner (along with Adelson), put a million dollars into Trump’s nascent campaign last summer, recognizing the value of early money in a political campaign. Carl Icahn, the activist investor with a net worth of \$17 billion, hasn’t given a dime to Trump, but that’s only because, again according to Swan, he hasn’t been asked to yet.

Stanley Hubbard, chairman and CEO of Hubbard Broadcasting with a net worth estimated in excess of



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\$2 billion, is one of the most generous donors to Republican Party candidates. He maxed out his contributions to every Republican running for president, except Trump. He even gave a small check to an outfit working to overturn Trump's campaign. But now he's in Trump's camp, helping a super PAC support his campaign.

Thomas Barrack, a multimillionaire investor from California and a longtime friend of Trump's, is scheduled to kick off his West Coast fundraising efforts at his home on Wednesday. Joining Barrack will likely be another California real estate investor, "Papa" Doug Manchester, who wrote a check to Trump at the start of his campaign and who reportedly will be a key component of Trump's fundraising efforts in the Golden State.

One of Trump's biggest catches was securing Lew Eisenberg as the finance chairman of his Trump Victory committee. Although not as wealthy as some of the others in Trump's camp, he lends enormous credibility to the campaign. In 2002 and then again in 2004, Eisenberg chaired the finance committee for the Republican National Committee. He founded and then ran the Republican Leadership Council. After that he was heavily involved in running the GOP's presidential campaign in 2008. In other words, Eisenberg is like the 500-pound canary: When he speaks, everyone listens.

Everyone, that is, except the Koch Brothers who, at this writing, are keeping their hands off and their powder (an estimated war chest of \$900 million) dry, intending instead to support down-line Republican candidates.

Following Trump's meeting with House Speaker Paul Ryan last week, his campaign staffers have been making regular trips to Washington to meet with members of Ryan's staff in order to, as the *Wall Street Journal* expressed it, "make sure that we are unifying around our commonly-held principles and policies." What that means in terms of ideological or political policy changes remains unclear; however, all of this, according to the *Journal*, means that "Republican leaders and donors, who for months took a frosty, hands-off view of Donald Trump, this week significantly warmed to the New York real-estate mogul."

This strategy is already having an impact among the electorate, as polls are showing Trump closing the gap on Clinton. She continues to try to fend off her rival Bernie Sanders, who is making inroads on her credibility. The longer Sanders hangs on, the more he appears to be doing the work for Trump, giving Trump time to arrange the financing for his campaign going into the fall.

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