

POLITICS

A Decade Of Influence: A&B Has Given More Than \$600K To Politicians

Honolulu Mayor Kirk Caldwell is the biggest single beneficiary of the longtime real estate and agriculture company's donations.

APRIL 22, 2016 · By Nick Grube   

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Editor's Note: *An earlier version of this story incorrectly reported how much money the Hawaii Community Foundation spent on lobbying from Jan. 1, 2013 to Feb. 29, 2016 due to the nonprofit mistakenly including more expenses than necessary in its filings with the Hawaii Ethics Commission. The mistakes resulted in the Hawaii Community Foundation being listed as one of the state's top lobbying organizations. A spokesperson for the nonprofit says it has since submitted accurate numbers to the state ethics commission. The article has been updated to reflect the change.*

Alexander & Baldwin and its employees, including those working at subsidiaries, have contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars to political candidates in Hawaii over the past several election cycles, a Civil Beat analysis of state campaign spending data shows.

The data shows that from Nov. 8, 2006, through Dec. 31, 2015, A&B, its board and its top executives have given more than \$600,000 to political candidates running for state and local office, from county council to governor.

Honolulu Mayor Kirk Caldwell, who is running for re-election in 2016, has been the biggest beneficiary, taking in more than \$80,000. That's more than twice what former Hawaii Gov. Neil Abercrombie and former Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann each received from A&B while politicking in the Aloha State. Abercrombie and Hannemann were the next biggest beneficiaries, each getting about \$34,000 from the A&B contingent.

The longtime real estate developer and agriculture business has been in the news recently in connection with water rights that are the subject of [House Bill 2501](#), which would extend water leases for companies around the state. A&B's off-and-on inclusion in the bill is seen by critics as a way around a recent court ruling that found the company's diversion of East Maui streams for commercial agriculture in Central Maui was illegal.

RELATED STORY



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APRIL 22, 2016

A&B President and CEO Chris Benjamin was flanked by legislative leaders at a Capitol news conference this week when he said his company [would permanently restore](#) as many as eight streams for taro farms.

Much of the money donated to candidates goes through A&B's political action committee, which, the data shows, has given out \$275,575 in contributions to candidates from Jan. 1, 2008, to Dec. 31, 2015. That makes A&B's PAC one of the most active in the state, although far from the top of the list.

Political Action Committee	Amount Donated to Candidates
Realtors Political Action Committee of Hawaii	\$688,825
ActBlue Hawaii	\$591,105
Hawaii Ironworkers Stabilization Fund PAC	\$490,094
Hawaii Carpenters Political Action Fund	\$476,970
Plumbers & Pipefitters Political Action Committee	\$438,050
ILWU Hawaii Political Action Committee	\$352,450
HSTA Government Relations Committee	\$344,360
Hawaii Laborers-Employers Cooperation and Education Trust	\$301,700

Alexander & Baldwin Inc. HiPAC	\$275,575
Hawaii Government Employees Association	\$267,897
Hawaii Operating Engineers Industry Stabilization Fund	\$259,900
Local Union 1186 IBEW PAC Fund	\$251,525
Hawaii Laborers' Political Action Committee	\$245,325
Committee on Political Education-General Fund & Political Contributions	\$197,398
Painters Local Union 1791 PAC	\$187,398
Local Union 293 State Legislature Fund	\$180,000
United Public Workers, AFSCME, Local 646 AFL-CIO, PAC	\$166,656
American Resort Development Association Resort Owners Coalition PAC (ARDA ROC-PAC)	\$157,632
Local #1 – Political Action Committee	\$152,575
Monsanto Company	\$149,000

But A&B's [board members](#) and [top executives](#) have donated a significant amount in their own right, donating nearly \$324,000 to candidates from Nov. 8, 2006, to Dec. 31, 2015.

The top donors by far among A&B's elite are executive chairman Stanley Kuriyama and David Hulihee, who is the president and CEO of Grace Pacific, which was acquired by the company in October 2013. Records show that Kuriyama gave at least \$111,150 to state and local candidates from Nov. 8, 2006 to Dec. 31, 2015 while Hulihee gave at least \$72,250.

Alexander & Baldwin also spent nearly \$51,000 on lobbying from Jan.1, 2013, to Feb. 29, 2016, according to data from the Hawaii State Ethics Commission. The company's lobbyists are Paul Oshiro and Meredith Ching.

The amount A&B spends on lobbying puts the company in the top 100 in the state, but pales in comparison to heavy hitters like the the Hawaii Children's Action Network, Altria Client Services (a parent company of tobacco giant Philip Morris) and Corrections Corporation of America, all of which have spent more than half a million dollars each trying to sway state lawmakers.

Organization	Total Lobbying Expenses
Hawaii Children's Action Network SPEAKS	\$891,212

Altria Client Services LLC	\$631,820
Hawaii State Teachers Association (HSTA)	\$631,386
Equality Hawaii	\$617,078
Corrections Corporation of America	\$535,993
Turtle Bay Resort	\$525,405
American Civil Liberties Union of Hawaii	\$367,511
Hawaii Medical Service Association	\$334,037
United Public Workers, AFSCME, Local 646, AFL-CIO	\$291,323
Outrigger Enterprises Group	\$281,527
Queen's Health Systems	\$260,936
AARP Hawaii	\$246,958
Kauai Island Utility Cooperative	\$241,077
VISA	\$237,754

Large sums of A&B money goes to candidates running for governor, mayor and county council, particularly in Honolulu and on Maui, where candidates have received \$62,800 and \$67,700, respectively for their races.

The data shows legislative candidates have received at least \$148,125 from A&B and its affiliates from Nov. 8, 2006, through Dec. 31, 2015. Senate candidates received at least \$71,800 flowing in to their campaign accounts. House candidates received at least \$76,325.

State Senate Candidate	A&B Contributions
Kim, Donna	\$10,350
Dela Cruz, Donovan	\$8,900
Galuteria, Brickwood	\$8,500
Baker, Rosalyn	\$6,800
Kouchi, Ron	\$6,000
Chang, Stanley	\$5,500

English, Kalani	\$3,400
Keith-Agaran, Gilbert	\$2,400
Takamine, Dwight	\$2,400
Nishihara, Clarence	\$1,650
Kahele, Gilbert	\$1,600
Hanabusa, Colleen	\$1,500
Taniguchi, Brian	\$1,500
Solomon, Malama	\$1,350
Tokuda, Jill	\$1,200
Herkes, Robert	\$1,100
Wakai, Glenn	\$1,050
Garcia, Nestor	\$1,000
Gabbard, Mike	\$900
Espero, William	\$850
Kidani, Michelle	\$850
Cabanilla, Rida	\$650
Ihara, Les	\$550
Inouye, Lorraine	\$500
Shimabukuro, Maile	\$500
Ruderman, Russell	\$250
Meyer, Colleen	\$200
Sonson, Alex	\$200
Chun Oakland, Suzanne	\$150

State House Candidate	A&B Contributions
Souki, Joseph	\$5,350

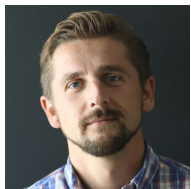
Kawakami, Derek	\$5,200
Tokioka, James	\$4,900
Keohokalole, Jarrett	\$4,700
Yamashita, Kyle	\$4,400
Say, Calvin	\$3,200
Har, Sharon	\$3,100
Tsuji, Clifton	\$2,650
Luke, Sylvia	\$2,500
McKelvey, Angus	\$2,400
Ito, Ken	\$2,250
Magaoay, Michael	\$2,250
Chong, Dwight	\$2,050
Oshiro, Marcus	\$1,750
Yamane, Ryan	\$1,700
Saiki, Scott	\$1,500
Choy, Isaac	\$1,350
Rhoads, Karl	\$1,275
Lee, Christopher	\$1,250
Cachola, Romy	\$1,200
Sagum, Roland	\$1,200
Chang, Jerry	\$1,050
Marumoto, Barbara	\$1,050
Morikawa, Daynette	\$1,050
Takumi, Roy	\$950
Mizuno, John	\$850
Takai, K. Mark	\$850

Brower, Tom	\$800
Thielen, Cynthia	\$800
Apana, James	\$750
Lee, Marilyn	\$750
Nishimoto, Scott	\$750
Woodson, Justin	\$750
Ward, Gene	\$700
Evans, Cindy	\$650
Morita, Hermina	\$600
Nakasone, Robert	\$600
Ching, Corinne	\$550
Fontaine, George	\$550
Nakashima, Mark	\$550
Carroll, Mele	\$500
Ing, Mark	\$500
Aquino, Henry	\$450
Coffman, George	\$450
Belatti, Della	\$400
Hanohano, Faye	\$400
Takayama, Gregg	\$350
Awana, Karen	\$300
Waters, Thomas	\$300
DeCoite, Lynn	\$250
Holt, Daniel	\$250
Cullen, Ty	\$200
Hashem, Mark	\$200

Jordan, Jo	\$200
Chun, Cory	\$150
Wooley, Jessica	\$150
Ichiyama, Linda	\$100
Johanson, Aaron	\$100
Kobayashi, Bertrand	\$100
Lowen, Nicole	\$100
Onishi, Richard	\$100

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Tom Dye · Yale University

A&B spends \$35,000 annually at the legislature to buy the East Maul water. I don't have any experience with that kind of thing, but it seems like a good business deal to me, at least for A&B.

Like · Reply · [2](#) · Apr 23, 2016 12:10am



Karen Chun · Game Developer at Redwood Games

They pay probably a \$million more to the entity that funds Forward Progress Super PAC. Still a fabulous deal to buy legislators.

Like · Reply · [2](#) · Apr 23, 2016 2:08pm · Edited



John Bond

Crooked Ledge Con Job

Like · Reply · 1 · Apr 25, 2016 5:20am



Charles Henning

Not even the "best politicians money can buy" either.

Like · Reply · 4 · Apr 23, 2016 12:53am



Pomai Emsley

Mahalo for this info.

Like · Reply · Apr 23, 2016 11:20am



Choon James

Is the State of Hawaii any different?

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/.../The-US-is-an-oligarchy...>

" The US government does not represent the interests of the majority of the country's citizens, but is instead ruled by those of the rich and powerful, a new study from Princeton and Northwestern Universities has concluded.

The report, entitled Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens, used extensive policy data collected from between the years of 1981 and 2002 to empirically determine the state of the US political system.

After sifting through nearly 1,800 US policies enacted in that period and comparing them to the expressed preferences of average Americans (50th percentile of income), affluent Americans (90th percentile) and large special interests groups, researchers concluded that the United States is dominated by its economic elite."

Like · Reply · 4 · Apr 23, 2016 1:27pm



Chris Profio · Works at Retired

IMO A&B has paid for the best legislature that money can buy. They have written the laws so as to allow A&B as much latitude to pretty much do whatever they want to do.

Like · Reply · 3 · Apr 23, 2016 1:28pm



Allan Robino

Thank you for the accounting. I believe that is why my contributions don't mean anything to these politician. Now I don't feel too bad if I don't contribute anymore; I'll just treat myself to a movie in the future

Like · Reply · 1 · Apr 23, 2016 2:06pm



Karen Chun · Game Developer at Redwood Games

People don't realize that Hawaii Carpenters Market Reinvestment Fund is funded by Developers and Construction companies who employ unionized carpenters. And the fund is co-managed by the developers.

A&B pays a ton of money into this fund (we don't know how much because HCMRF has

bamboozled the Campaign Spending Commission into allowing them to hide the source of their money.)

In turn HCMRF which formerly had \$14,000,000 in its coffers, totally funded Forward Progress Super PAC which attempted to replace those unfriendly to A&B with minions who would vote according to A&B's wishes.

HCMRF also funded PRP.

This year, I suspect that they'll have a new Super PAC since people have caught on to Forward Progresses pro-corporate, developer influence making their support the kiss of death.

Like · Reply ·  3 · Apr 23, 2016 2:06pm



Karen Chun · Game Developer at Redwood Games

Nick - some articles under the category of "Forward Progress" on KarenChun.com link to the original documents supporting the above info.

Like · Reply ·  1 · Apr 23, 2016 2:09pm



EK Flores · Professor at Hawai'i Community College - Pāalamanui

Thanks to Nick Grube of Civil Beat for the research and investigative reporting in showing who A&B is paying off in the legislature - just about everyone - so that they can continue their stealing of our public resources with HB 2501.

Like · Reply ·  4 · Apr 23, 2016 5:35pm



Rocky Kalani

When a commnty shares all we all benifit. For 124 years A&B have been stealing water. Others who steal usually go to jail. Evidently bribing politcans is legal. But worst of all is politicians granting favors for these "bribes". A&B wants to keep central Maui green while diverting water to those that have been left high and dry for 124 years. How fair is that? Maybe kalo farmer should bribe politicians too? Maybe thats the way they can get water where ke akua (God) intended it to be.

Like · Reply ·  4 · Apr 23, 2016 5:36pm



Carl Christensen · Works at Happily Retired

It's been said that "What killed the Republican Party in Hawaii was when Big Business found out how cheaply they could buy Democrats." How cheaply, indeed!

Like · Reply ·  3 · Apr 24, 2016 3:47pm

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