



BUYING THE BENCH

**Uncovering Dark Money Donors
in the 2024 Race for
Ohio Supreme Court**

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the 2024 Ohio Supreme Court election, outside groups unaffiliated with any candidate spent nearly \$6 million on political advertising to influence voters. But that number doesn't provide a complete picture. This report examines the broader and more difficult questions: *Who is trying to influence Ohio voters—and why?* It also seeks to demonstrate how successfully dark money activities are kept secret, and how difficult it is—even for the most experienced researchers—to figure out who is behind political ads, including those in judicial campaigns.

Why Transparency Matters

Transparency in campaign finance allows voters to consider the source behind political messages. It raises the essential questions:

- What do the people funding these ads want from voters?
- What groups or interests do the ads seek to benefit?

When voters know who is spending money to influence their decisions, they can make more informed choices. Transparency fosters accountability and helps guard against corruption. Yet in recent years, uncovering this information has become increasingly difficult.

The Rise of Dark Money

It was not always this hard. In the past, voters and journalists could trace political money through public filings with the Secretary of State or the Federal Election Commission. That changed with the 2010 U.S. Supreme Court's [Citizens United v. FEC](#) decision, which dismantled key campaign finance laws and opened the floodgates to secret, unlimited spending by corporations and billionaire-backed political nonprofit organizations.

Citizens United ushered in the era of “[dark money](#)”—political spending by groups that are not required to disclose their donors. These groups often include 501(c)(4) nonprofit organizations or 527 political organizations that obscure where their money comes from and what their funders want.

Even though Super PACs are legally required to disclose their donors to the Federal Elections Commission, they can receive money from dark money groups, effectively hiding the true source of their funding. These opaque financial structures make it extraordinarily difficult to “follow the money.” In addition, right-wing donors are increasingly using **donor-advised funds (DAFs)**—like DonorsTrust or Schwab Charitable—as pass-throughs to obscure funding sources even further.

II. WHY DARK MONEY IN JUDICIAL ELECTIONS MATTER

Dark money is a threat to our judicial system. It is not just a problem in legislative or presidential races—it is reshaping judicial elections, including those for state supreme courts. When wealthy individuals and interest groups spend millions to influence who sits on the bench with no real transparency, judicial independence is at risk.

Many of those spending money on ads in judicial races have economic interests that may come before the court. Although 2009’s [Caperton v. A. T. Massey Coal Co.](#) determined judges shouldn’t hear the cases of those who substantially supported their campaigns (including major donors to political advertisements), the public is unlikely to be able to track these political dollars. And in Ohio, judges are not required to recuse themselves from the cases of their contributors or those who financially support their election. This creates the potential for serious conflicts of interest that can erode public trust in the judiciary.

Dark money is not just a campaign finance issue—it is a judicial integrity issue.

As historian Nancy MacLean noted:

“The flow of dark money from excessively wealthy individuals has allowed court capture by special interest groups whose values diverge from the majority—on everything from women’s health and workers’ rights to corporate regulation and environmental protection.”

In addition, [research](#) from the Brennan Center for Justice shows that judges are more likely to rule in favor of donors and political parties in election years and more likely to rule against criminal defendants out of fear of being portrayed as “soft on crime.”

What’s at stake:

- **Judicial Independence:** Wealthy interest groups increasingly fund judges whose decisions may align with their economic or ideological goals.
- **Public Trust:** When courts appear influenced by secretive outside funding, faith in the rule of law erodes.
- **Access to Justice:** Decisions may tilt in favor of corporate or political elites rather than average citizens.

III. OHIO SUPREME COURT ELECTION, 2024

Ohio Supreme Court races are critically important because those who are elected make decisions that impact the daily lives of all Ohioans. The state’s highest court determines:

- Whether utility companies can raise their rates and by how much, and how insurance laws are interpreted.
- Which government records are available to the public and the constitutionality of voting districts.
- If someone is to live or die because, when a defendant is sentenced to death, the case is appealed directly to the Ohio Supreme Court.

A seat for the Ohio Supreme Court is decided by an election with a six-year term. This was just the second election, and the first presidential election, in which candidates for the Ohio Supreme Court appeared on the general election ballot with partisan labels. In 2021, the state legislature passed [a law](#) requiring the partisan affiliations of the candidates for the Ohio Supreme Court and the Appeals Court on the November ballot for the first time in more than 100 years.

In 2024, three seats were on the ballot. The Democratic candidates were incumbent Justices Michael Donnelly and Melody Stewart, along with Eighth District Appellate Court Judge Lisa Forbes.

The Republican candidates included incumbent Justice Joe Deters, Hamilton County Common Pleas Court Judge Megan Shanahan, and Franklin County Common Pleas Court Judge Dan Hawkins. Justice Deters chose to challenge Justice Stewart rather than running to retain his own seat, leaving an open seat. Governor Mike DeWine [appointed](#) Deters to the Ohio Supreme Court in January 2023 upon the mandatory retirement of Chief Justice Maureen O’Connor. All three Republican candidates won, increasing the GOP majority from 4-3 to 6-1.



This report seeks to uncover the source of funding for ads placed by outside groups in the 2024 Ohio Supreme Court elections.

We identified five outside groups that spent money on judicial ads in 2024:



The **Republican State Leadership Committee Judicial Fairness Initiative (RSLC-JFI)** spent over

\$1 million to support Republican candidates Joe Deters, Megan Shanahan, and Dan Hawkins. The Judicial Fairness Initiative runs ads in state supreme court races and is an arm of the Republican State Leadership Committee.

group contributed \$1 million to Ohioans for a Healthy Economy Action Fund.



David Frecka entirely funded the eponymous Frecka PAC which backed three conservative candidates for the court.



Ohioans for Judicial Integrity was funded in part by former New York City mayor and billionaire **Michael Bloomberg** and spent just over \$2 million backing Democratic candidates Michael Donnelly, Melody Stewart, and Lisa Forbes.



Ohioans for a Healthy Economy Action Fund (OHE-AF): Affiliated with

the Ohio Chamber of Commerce, Ohioans for a Healthy Economy Action Fund spent the most on political advertisements attacking Democratic candidates for Ohio Supreme Court. Billionaire Dick Uihlein is the main funder of the Super PAC Fair Courts America. This



Ohioans United for Public Education's funding picture is unclear. It did not file as a political action committee, nor did it file campaign finance reports.

Many of the ads sponsored by these outside groups used misleading “[soft on crime](#)” messaging—even though the Ohio Supreme Court rarely rules on criminal law issues. The goal of these ads was to shift public opinion with emotionally charged content while masking who’s behind the message. For example, the well-known Ohio Chamber of Commerce created an obstacle to easy transparency with its affiliate Ohioans for Healthy Economy, Inc., a 501(c)(4) nonprofit. This nonprofit was a major funding source of the Super PAC Ohioans for a Healthy Economy Action Fund, which ran the 2024 ads.

(Note, for a deeper dive into an analysis of the ads in the 2024 Ohio Supreme Court races, please take a look at the website [JudgeTheAds.org](#), a joint project of Common Cause Ohio and the Ohio Fair Courts Alliance.)

In the **working example** we provide below, and, in the **appendix**, you can see a complete breakdown of what we were and were not able to find out about outside spending on political ads during the 2024 races for the Ohio Supreme Court.

IV. TRACKING THE MONEY: A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

Step 1: Identify Political Actors and Dark Money Groups Unaffiliated with the Candidate Campaigns

Start by mapping the political landscape. Some of the most active organizations in judicial races include:

- **The Republican State Leadership Committee Judicial Fairness Initiative (RSLC-JFI)**
- **Richard Uihlein’s Fair Courts America**
- **U.S. Chamber of Commerce** and affiliated state chambers
- **Leonard Leo’s Concord Fund** is one of the Republican State Leadership Committee’s largest funders. A new group tied to Leo, First Principles PAC, launched in November 2024, has become active in state court races.

These organizations often telegraph their involvement through press releases or election strategy documents posted online.

The simplest way to identify most political organizations and dark money groups is by looking at the “paid for by” [disclaimer](#) included on political advertisements. This disclaimer provides the



name of the organization and tells the public whether the ad is paid for by the candidate, a political party, or an organization. All ads must include this disclaimer whether they’re distributed via mail, social media, or television.

You can also find an organization through their ad spending using tools such as:

- **Vivvix/CMAG:** used by the Brennan Center for Justice to help track TV ad spending. However, such services are costly and not always comprehensive.
- The Federal Communication Commission’s [public inspection files](#) are free and the public can see spending in real time. It is necessary to inspect all the files to ensure that you capture all the spending. Though labor-intensive, it’s especially useful for identifying late-breaking ad campaigns during an election’s final stretch.
- Some social media ads can be found via [Facebook’s ad library](#) and [Google’s ad transparency center](#).

Step 2: Investigate the Groups

Once a group is identified:

- Look up its **business filings** with the Secretary of State (Ohio or other). The business filings provide information about organizations including nonprofits that are incorporated in the state and provide at least an address and a registering agent.
- Search for details such as **addresses, phone numbers, board members, and treasurers**.
- Run basic internet searches on those identifiers—often this reveals connections to other political groups or shared infrastructure.

Step 3: Use Databases to Trace Funding

The following databases have information that can help you trace a group's funding sources behind ads in judicial races.

Federal Resources:

- **Federal Elections Commission:** original source for campaign finance filings by federal groups (e.g., Frecka PAC)
- **ProPublica's Nonprofit Explorer:** For IRS Form 990s (e.g., Ohioans for a Healthy Economy, Inc. –501(c)(4))
- **ProPublica's 527 Explorer:** Pulls IRS [8872 filings](#) for 527 groups like Republican State Leadership Committee (RSLC) and its Judicial Fairness Initiative (RSLC-JFI)
- **OpenSecrets.org:** Easier to navigate than the FEC site but confirm figures with the original FEC database
- **Others:** [Guidestar](#), [CitizenAudit](#), and the [IRS](#) also directly publish Form 990s for organizations

Note: While nonprofits must disclose disbursements (grants), they do **not** publicly disclose donors on Form 990s. To trace funders, examine the outgoing grants listed on other nonprofits' 990s.

State Resources:

- **Ohio Secretary of State's campaign finance portal:** For state-level contributions and expenditures
- **Secretary of State's Business filing databases:** Ohio's site is helpful, but [Virginia's](#) provides unusually rich data and is worth checking for national groups.
- **OpenCorporates:** Aggregates data from state business registries

V. A WORKING EXAMPLE

It is extremely challenging to uncover the original source (and intentions) of the \$6 million dollars spent on political advertisements in the 2024 Ohio Supreme Court election.

Take a look below as we break down what we were (and were not) able to find out.

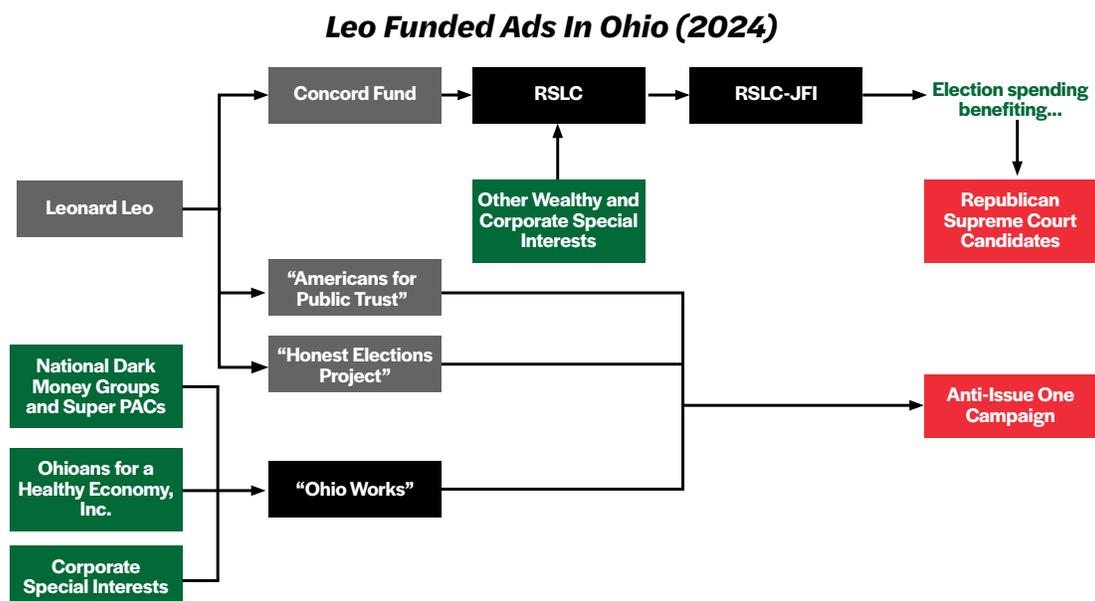
Note: The Republican State Leadership Committee Judicial Fairness Initiative and Ohioans for Judicial Integrity are used below as working examples; the remaining three can be found in the appendix.

A. Republican State Leadership Committee Judicial Fairness Initiative (RSLC-JFI)

Step 1: Identification: identified from prior knowledge of the political landscape.

Step 2: Investigation: utilized previous research, business filings, database and internet searches, news reporting, press releases.

- The Republican State Leadership Committee Judicial Fairness Initiative, a 527 group, [states](#) that it is the largest organization of Republican state leaders in the country. In 2014, RSLC created its [Judicial Fairness Initiative](#) (JFI), also a 527 group, to support the election of conservative judges to state courts. Since then, Ohio has routinely been one of RSLC-JFI's target states.
- In 2024, the group spent approximately \$1M:
 - » \$633,676 spent on TV ads confirmed.
 - » \$357,639 spent on mailers not confirmed. It is unclear which of the mailer expenditures were Ohio - it could be the two mailer expenditures from Majority Strategies - which amounted to \$357,639. It helps that both RSLC and the Columbus Dispatch reported that RSLC's Ohio mailers would be an amount close to \$400,000.



- The Judicial Fairness Initiative itself is fully funded via the Republican State Leadership Committee, so it is impossible to know for certain who is underwriting RSLC’s judicial ads, but there are indications as to some of the funders:
 - » RSLC’s largest donor in recent years is the [Concord Fund](#) (also known as JCN and formerly the Judicial Crisis Network), a 501(c)(4) tied to the right-wing judicial activist who helms a \$1.6 billion trust, [Leonard Leo](#). RSLC [frequently transfers](#) large sums to RSLC-JFI shortly after receiving similarly sized contributions from the Concord Fund.
 - » Other notable Republican State Leadership Committee funders: the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Charles Koch’s Koch Industries. Ohio corporate donors: Marathon Petroleum, American Electric Power Service Corporation, Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company, the Ohio Farm Bureau, and Elevance Health.

Step 3: Databases Used to Trace RSLC-JFI Funding

IRS form 8872s filings: ProPublica’s 527 Explorer

RSLC

[Post-general](#) (posted 12/9/24)

[Q3 report](#): RSLC funding into RSLC-JFI:

- 10/8: \$633.6K
- 10/10: \$55.1K
- 10/16: \$2K
- 10/17: \$6K
- 10/18: \$505K
- 10/23: \$669K
- 10/28: \$192.6K

RSLC-JFI

Post-general covering 10/1-11/25 (posted 12/5/24)

- Expenditures \$2,063,471
 - » 10/8: \$633,676 to Matchstick Media (Ohio-based) for media
 - » 10/10: \$55,125 to Majority Strategies LLC for media
 - » 10/16: \$2000 to Matchstick Media (Ohio-based) for media
 - » 10/17: \$6000 to Arena LLC for media
 - » 10/18: \$505,000 to Arena LLC for media
 - » 10/23: \$50,000 to Majority Strategies LLC for media
 - » 10/23: \$136,397 to Majority Strategies LLC for direct mail expenses
 - » 10/23: \$192,634 to Majority Strategies LLC for direct mail expenses
 - » 10/23: \$165,005 to Majority Strategies LLC for direct mail expenses
 - » 10/23: \$50,000 to Arena LLC for media
 - » 10/23: \$75,000 to Ascent Media for media
 - » 10/28: \$192,634 to Arena LLC for direct mail expenses

- Revenue: \$2,063,462 (Entirely from RSLC)
- Quarter 3 covering 7/1-9/30 (posted on 10/15/24): no reported expenditures or revenue

Ohio Filings: Ohio Secretary of State's campaign finance portal

Filed a miscellaneous independent expenditure report (30-E) on 10/16/24 – uploaded on 10/18/24:

- 10/8/24: \$211,225.33 to Matchstick Media (PO Box 124 Dublin, OH) for TV ad placement/production in support of Dan Hawkins
- 10/8/24: \$211,225.33 to Matchstick Media (PO Box 124 Dublin, OH) for TV ad placement/production in support of Joe Deters
- 10/8/24: \$211,225.34 to Matchstick Media (PO Box 124 Dublin, OH) for TV ad placement/production in support of Megan Shanahan
- 10/16/24: \$666.67 to Matchstick Media for TV ad production in support of Dan Hawkins
- 10/16/24: \$666.67 to Matchstick Media for TV ad production in support of Joe Deters
- 10/16/24: \$666.66 to Matchstick Media for TV ad production in support of Megan Shanahan

News reporting: Internet search

- [Election 2024: Outside GOP group puts \\$600K into TV ads in Ohio Supreme Court races](#), The Columbus Dispatch, October 30, 2024

RSLC press release: [Post-election press release](#)

Even with all this information, it is *still* impossible to find the original source of Republican State Leadership Committee Judicial Fairness Initiative (RSLC-JFI) funding.

B. Ohioans for Judicial Integrity (OJI)

Step 1: Identification: identified from [political ad](#) “paid for by” disclaimer.

Step 2: Investigation: utilized business filings, federal and state databases.

- [Ohioans for Judicial Integrity](#) was a new “dark money” organization. The entity was [funded](#) by billionaire Michael Bloomberg, majority owner and founder of Bloomberg L.P., and former mayor of New York City, and other liberal-aligned groups. It spent just over \$2 million in Ohio backing the Democratic candidates.
- OJI ran four attack ads against the Republican candidates, focusing on [corruption](#), [voting rights](#), and Ohio’s [reproductive rights amendment](#) approved by voters in 2023.
- In 2024, Ohioans for Judicial Integrity raised \$2,025,000. Of that, \$2,022,000 was spent on Ohio Supreme Court election ads:
 - » \$1,000,000 from Michael Bloomberg
 - » \$400,000 from the Ohio Progressive Collaborative
 - » \$325,000 from Educators for Ohio
 - » \$300,000 from the National Redistricting Action Fund

Step 3: Databases Used to Trace Ohioans for Judicial Integrity Funding

Ohio filings: Ohio Secretary of State's website and campaign finance portal

- Filed a statement of organization in Ohio on 10/18/24
- On 10/18/24 it filed its Oct. 15th Quarterly filing detailing \$2,022,000 in expenditures and no contributions
 - » 8/30: \$1,022,000 paid to AI Media (222 W. Ontario St. Ste 600, Chicago, IL) for non-federal Ohio statewide
 - » 9/30: \$1M paid to AI Media (222 W. Ontario St. Ste 600, Chicago, IL) for non-federal Ohio statewide

Federal Elections Commission filings: FEC website

- 8/9/24: filed its statement of organization
 - » Name: Jeffrey A. Rupert
 - » Address: 35 E. Gay Street Suite 502, Columbus, OH
- 10/14/25: filed its October quarterly detailing \$2,024,560.50 in total disbursements and \$2,025,000 in revenue
 - » 9/20/24: \$1 million from Michael Bloomberg
 - » 8/22/24: \$300,000 from National Redistricting Action Fund
 - » 8/29/24: \$400,000 from Ohio Progressive Collaborative
 - » 8/22/24: \$325,000 from Educators for Ohio
 - » 8/30/24: sent \$2,500 to the Rupert Co., LLC for compliance consulting
 - » 8/30/24: \$1,022,000 to AI Media for non-federal independent expenditure (Ohio-statewide)
 - » 9/30/24: \$1 million to AI Media for non-federal independent expenditure (Ohio-statewide)
 - » 12/6/24: filed its post-general filing detailing \$11,076 in disbursements and \$46,803.01 in revenue
 - > 11/5/24: \$5,000 from Alliance for Justice (501(c)(4))
 - > 10/25/24: \$30,803.01 from Ohio Progressive Collaborative
 - > 11/1/24: \$11,000 from Ohio Progressive Collaborative
 - > 11/1/24: \$11,000 to AI Media for non-federal independent expenditure (Ohio-statewide)
 - » 1/22/25: filed its year-end filing (covering Nov 26-Dec 31) detailing \$60.50 in disbursements and no revenue

The information available enables the public to identify one major donor, Michael Bloomberg, but beyond that the public is left to connect the dots between organizations. The original source of funding is shielded from the public eye.

Takeaways: Left in the Dark

This project took seasoned professionals many hours of research, and yet, we are only able to determine how the money was coordinated and some general donors. We are still left in the dark about where a vast majority of the funding for these ads originated.

From the five groups, only *one* individual donor was identified, David Frecka, the sole funder of the Frecka PAC.

However, our research enabled us to better understand the landscape. Even incomplete information helps provide some context for voters. Case in point: Ohioans for a Healthy Economy, Inc. This 501(c)(4) organization is an affiliate of the Ohio Chamber of Commerce, a 501(c)(6) trade association. From that, the public can understand that a pro-business organization favors/disfavors specific candidates and question why the ads don't mention the business climate or their motivation. The Chamber of Commerce has long sought to influence who sits on the Ohio Supreme Court. It's been 25 years since the Chamber first created an organization, Citizens for a Strong Ohio, to run political ads about a candidate for Ohio Supreme Court. This effort made the Chamber's role in Election 2000 more opaque. Although the affiliates' names change, these organizations provide a buffer making it harder for voters to connect the dots.

VI. CONCLUSION: WHAT CAN BE DONE?

We need:

- ➔ Stronger **disclosure laws**: Nothing in the *Citizens United v. FEC* decision prohibits federal or state officials from requiring disclosure of the funders of political ads or electioneering communications. In fact, at the time that *Citizens United* was decided, the court overwhelmingly (8-1) supported transparency and the ability to “follow the money.” Justice Anthony Kennedy writing for the majority stated: “... *prompt disclosure of expenditures can provide shareholders and citizens with the information needed to hold corporations and elected officials accountable for their positions and supporters. Shareholders can determine whether their corporation’s political speech advances the corporation’s interest in making profits, and citizens can see whether elected officials are “in the pocket” of so-called moneyed interests... This transparency enables the electorate to make informed decisions and give proper weight to different speakers and messages.*”
- ➔ More **real-time reporting** of political spending to the Ohio Secretary of State and the Federal Elections Commission. If voters were able to explore political ad spending before the election, they would have the information they need to ask more questions enabling them to be more critical judges of the advertising they see. Timely campaign finance reports would allow voters to question what major donors might be seeking by trying to elect certain candidates.
- ➔ Mandatory **recusal rules** for judges. This would ensure that judges aren’t hearing the cases of their contributors and those who support them through independent expenditures. Ohio should adopt common sense recusal rules similar to those recommended by the [American Bar Association](#).
- ➔ Greater **public awareness** of the role dark money plays in shaping courts. Voter guides should encourage the public to examine political disclaimers and encourage voters to question who is funding political ads.

The judiciary should be a place of impartiality, not influence. As dark money continues to flood judicial elections, particularly in states such as Ohio, the fight for transparency and accountability has never been more urgent.

VII. JUDGE THE ADS PARTNERS

[Common Cause Ohio](#) is a non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization that works to strengthen public participation in our democracy and ensure that public officials and public institutions are accountable and responsive to citizens. Through a powerful combination of coalition building, lobbying and litigation, grassroots organizing, policy development, research, and public education, we spotlight local, state, and national issues that affect every Ohioan.

Common Cause Ohio is a founding member of the [Ohio Fair Courts Alliance](#), a diverse network of organizations, community leaders and concerned citizens. The Ohio Fair Courts Alliance is dedicated to creating a court system that exemplifies and protects equity, fairness, and justice for all.

Research was provided by [True North Research](#). Thank you to executive director Lisa Graves, and researchers Evan Vorpahl and Caitlin Mahoney for their invaluable assistance.

Support was provided by the Piper Fund, an initiative of the Proteus Fund, and we would like to thank program officer Kathy Bonnifield for her leadership on fair courts in Ohio and nationwide.

The report was written by Catherine Turcer, Common Cause Ohio executive director, Jessica Dickinson, Ohio Fair Courts Alliance manager, and Mia Lewis, Common Cause Ohio associate director.

VIII. APPENDIX

Below see data about spending in Ohio's 2024 Supreme Court race from three additional entities, Ohioans for a Healthy Economy Action Fund, Ohioans United for Public Education, and Frecka PAC.

Ohioans for a Healthy Economy Action Fund (OHE-AF)

Step 1: Identification: identified from [political ad](#) "paid for by" disclaimer.

Step 2: Investigation: utilized business filings, federal and state databases.

- Ohioans for a Healthy Economy Action Fund ran political ads attacking the Democratic candidates and supporting the Republican candidates for Ohio Supreme Court.
- Total Spending by Ohioans for a Healthy Economy Action Fund in 2024: \$2,355,479.42
 - » The Super PAC also contributed heavily to a separate entity (Ohio Works, Inc.) attacking 2024 Issue 1, which proposed to replace politicians with a citizens redistricting commission.
 - » Ohioans for a Healthy Economy, Inc. was a major donor to Ohioans for a Healthy Economy Action Fund. This 501(c)(4), [says their mission](#) is to "promote the common good and general welfare of the people of Ohio. We carry that mission out by helping the public learn about issues and elections that impact Ohio's business climate, as well as issues of economic competitiveness. That mission includes promoting and encouraging the adoption of public policies that foster greater job creation, economic growth, and free enterprise."
- [Ohio's charity database](#) reveals that in 2024, Ohioans for a Healthy Economy, Inc. received \$5,831,193 and spent \$5,785,637.
- As a 501(c)(4) dark money group, it does not report who funds it. However, Ohioans for a Healthy Economy Action Fund did provide information to the Federal Elections Commission:
 - » According to FEC filings, OHE-AF received \$600,000 from Ohioans for a Healthy Economy, Inc.
 - » \$1 million came from Illinois Republican mega donor Richard Uihlein's Fair Courts America. In 2023, Uihlein also funded the bulk of the campaign aimed at thwarting a constitutional amendment on abortion in Ohio.
 - > According to its 2024 form 990, Ohioans for a Healthy Economy, Inc. contributed \$1 million to a 501(c)(4) tied to Uihlein's Fair Courts America ("Foundations for Fair Courts") in 2024, the same amount Fair Courts America sent to OHE-AF, around the same time period. This appears to be a roundabout way for Ohioans for a Healthy Economy, Inc. to give money to its own Super PAC via Fair Courts America, making it look like the funds came from multiple sources, a common method used to obscure a donor's identity.
- Ohioans for a Healthy Economy Action Fund had other wealthy backers including the Haslam family (which owns the Cleveland Browns) and billionaire politician Vivek Ramaswamy.

Step 3: Databases Used to Trace Ohioans for a Healthy Economy Action Funding

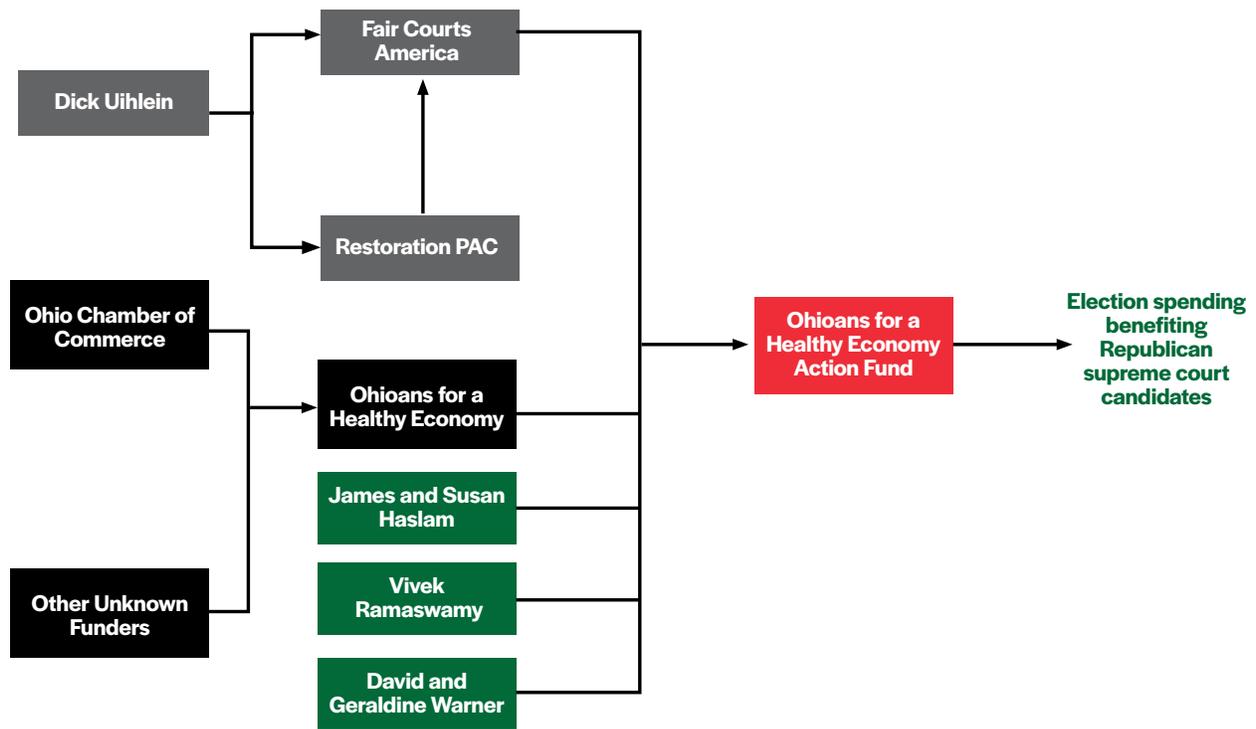
Ohio Filings: Ohio Secretary of State's website and campaign finance portal

- 10/24/24: filed its statement of organization in Ohio
- 10/24/24: filed its 12- day pre-general detailing \$1,958,505.60 in expenditures and no revenue:
 - » 10/7/24: \$333,333.33 to Strategic Media Placement, Inc for a media buy
 - » 10/7/24: \$333,333.33 to Strategic Media Placement, Inc for a media buy
 - » 10/7/24: \$333,333.34 to Strategic Media Placement, Inc for a media buy
 - » 10/8/24: \$62,500 to Red Rock Strategies (9500 W. Flamingo Road, Las Vegas, NV) for media placement services
 - » 10/8/24: \$62,500 to Red Rock Strategies (9500 W. Flamingo Road, Las Vegas, NV) for media placement services
 - » 10/8/24: \$62,500 to Red Rock Strategies (9500 W. Flamingo Road, Las Vegas, NV) for media placement services
 - » 10/9/24: \$194,501.87 to Strategic Media Placement, Inc for a media buy
 - » 10/9/24: \$194,501.87 to Strategic Media Placement, Inc for a media buy
 - » 10/9/24: \$194,501.86 to Strategic Media Placement, Inc for a media buy
 - » 10/16/24: \$62,500 to Red Rock Strategies for media placement services
 - » 10/16/24: \$62,500 to Red Rock Strategies for media placement services
 - » 10/16/24: \$62,500 to Red Rock Strategies for media placement services
- 12/5/24: Filed its 30-day post-general detailing \$396,973.82 in expenditures and no revenue:
 - » 10/23/24: \$54,166.67 to Strategic Media Placement, Inc for a media buy
 - » 10/23/24: \$54,166.67 to Strategic Media Placement, Inc for a media buy
 - » 10/23/24: \$54,166.67 to Strategic Media Placement, Inc for a media buy
 - » 10/31/24: \$10,000 to Red Rock Strategies for media placement service
 - » 10/31/24: \$10,000 to Red Rock Strategies for media placement service
 - » 10/31/24: \$10,000 to Red Rock Strategies for media placement service
 - » 10/31/24: \$54,166.66 to Strategic Media Placement Inc for a media buy
 - » 10/31/24: \$54,166.67 to Strategic Media Placement Inc for a media buy
 - » 10/31/24: \$54,166.67 to Strategic Media Placement Inc for a media buy
 - » 11/4/24: \$13,991.27 to the Strategy Group for Media, Inc for media production
 - » 11/4/24: \$13,991.27 to the Strategy Group for Media, Inc for media production
 - » 11/4/24: \$13,991.27 to the Strategy Group for Media, Inc for media production

IRS filings: ProPublica's Nonprofit Explorer

- » [2023 990](#), which became publicly available after the race:
 - > Total revenue: \$1,587,314
- » The Ohio Chamber of Commerce lists itself as the direct controlling entity of Ohioans for a Healthy Economy, Inc. and Ohioans for a Healthy Economy Action Fund in its 2024 990.
- » We traced some of Ohioans for a Healthy Economy, Inc.'s funding in 2022 back to these groups, using filing text searches as well as digging into 990s filed by known or suspected Ohio Chamber funders:
 - > Ohio Chamber of Commerce: \$100,000

Uihlein Funded Ads In Ohio (2024)



- > American Property Casualty Insurance Association, an Illinois-based 501(c)(6) trade association representing over 1,200 insurance companies.
- > Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA): \$75,000. A 501(c)(6) trade association representing the American Pharmaceutical industry. The group has a long history of lobbying and funding right-wing dark money organizations.
- > 55 Green Meadows: \$50,000. 55 Green Meadows is a 501(c)(4) associated with the Ohio Health Care Association, representing the nursing home industry.
- > One Ohio United: \$50,000. One Ohio United is a 501(c)(4) dark money group.
- > Ohio Hospital Association: \$30,000. The Ohio Hospital Association is a 501(c)(6) trade association representing Ohio hospitals and health care providers. The Ohio Hospital Association’s PAC has contributed primarily to Republican campaigns and committees in 2024.

Ohioans United for Public Education

Step 1: Identification: identified from [political ad](#) “paid for by” disclaimer.

Step 2: Investigation: utilized business filings, federal and state databases.

- Ohioans United for Public Education [describes itself](#) as “a citizen led organization fully committed to the values that form thriving communities through robust investments in public education.”
- Total 2024 Spending: Unclear (The group did spend \$188,458.81 in ads on federal races in Ohio, according to FEC filings.)
- The organization ran one ad in 2024 attacking Republican candidate Joe Deters’ record as state treasurer with “[Joe Deters is Corrupt.](#)”

Step 3: Databases Used to Trace Ohioans United for Public Education Funding

Ohio filings: Ohio Secretary of State’s campaign finance portal

- Only found a similar sounding group called “Ohioans United Action Fund” filed in Ohio:
 - » Reported no revenue or contributions in 2024
 - » Organized in 2020 with no revenue or expenses reported since then

FEC filings: FEC website

- 10/1/24: 48-hour independent expenditure report detailing \$145,461.81 in independent expenditures:
 - > 10/1/24: \$94,767 to Resonance Campaigns for digital online communications opposing Bernie Moreno (U.S. Sen. race)
 - > 10/1/24: \$24,749.09 to Resonance Campaigns for digital online communications opposing Derek Merrin (U.S. House race)
 - > 10/1/24: \$25,945.72 to Resonance Campaigns for digital communications opposing Kevin Coughlin (U.S. House race)
 - > 10/12/24: 48-hour independent expenditure report detailing \$40,000 in independent expenditures (opposing Moreno)
 - > 1/27/25: filed its year-end report (covering October 1, 2024 - December 31, 2024) detailing \$188,458.81 in independent expenditures
 - > Filed by Jeffrey Rupert at the same address as Ohioans for Judicial Integrity
 - > 10/1/24: \$94,764 to Resonance Campaigns for digital online communications opposing Bernie Moreno (U.S. Sen. race)
 - > 10/1/24: \$27,749.09 to Resonance Campaigns for digital online communications opposing Derek Merrin (U.S. House race)
 - > 10/1/24: \$24,945.72 to Resonance Campaigns for digital communications opposing Kevin Coughlin (U.S. House race)
 - > 10/12/24: \$40,000 to Resonance Campaigns for online communications opposing Bernie Moreno (U.S. Sen. race)

Business entity search: Secretary of State's Business filing database

- Uncovered that Ohioans United for Public Education was tied to political consultant Jeffrey Rupert.

Frecka PAC

Step 1: Identification: identified from [political ad](#) "paid for by" disclaimer.

Step 2: Investigation: utilized business filings, federal and state databases.

- [The Frecka PAC](#) was [solely funded](#) by Ohio plastics manufacturer and major donor to far-right politicians, David Frecka. New to the scene in 2024, the Frecka PAC reported its funding information to the FEC and the PAC was terminated in May 2025.
- Total Spending in 2024: \$1,220, 636 on Ohio state ads.
 - » \$244,500 was spent on four Ohio Supreme Court ads
 - » \$976,135.91 for [Issue 1](#) ads

Step 3: Databases Used to Trace Frecka Pac Funding

Ohio filings: Ohio Secretary of State's website and campaign finance portal

- 10/1/24: filed a statement of organization in Ohio
- 10/24/24: filed its 12-day pre-general detailing \$1,220,635.91 in expenditures and no revenue:
 - » 10/3: \$480,700 to the Strategy Group for Media, Inc (7669 Stagers Loop, Delaware, Oh) for Issue 1 ads
 - » 10/9: \$81,500 to the Strategic Media Placement (7669 Stagers Loop, Delaware, Oh) for Hawkins ads
 - » 10/9: \$81,500 to the Strategic Media Placement (7669 Stagers Loop, Delaware, Oh) for Shanahan ads
 - » 10/9: \$81,500 to the Strategic Media Placement (7669 Stagers Loop, Delaware, Oh) for Deters ads
 - » 10/15: \$495,435.91 to the Strategic Media Placement (7669 Stagers Loop, Delaware, Oh) for Issue One ads
- 12/13/24: filed its 30-day post-general filing detailing no expenditures or revenue

FEC filings: FEC website

- 8/19/24: the Frecka PAC filed its statement of organization with the Federal Elections Commission:
 - > Address: 421 Office Park Drive, Mountain Brooke, AL
 - > Filed by Britney Gonzalez (Britney@crosbyott.com)
- 9/25/24: filed a 48-hour independent expenditure report detailing \$460,700 in independent expenditures
 - » 9/23/24: \$460,700 to the Strategy Group for Media, Inc for media production/placement on Pro-Bernie Moreno ads (U.S. Senate)
- 10/15/24: filed its October Quarterly report detailing \$535,750 in total disbursements and

\$2 million in revenue

- » 9/12/24: received \$2 million from David Frecka (611 1st Ave. S, Tierra Verde, FL), self-employed entrepreneur
- » 9/18/24: sent \$75,000 to House Freedom Action
- » 9/23: \$460,700 (ABOVE expenditure)
- 10/24/24: filed its pre-general filing detailing \$1,242,735.91 in disbursements and no revenue
 - » 10/8/24: \$2,000 to Crosby Ottenhoff Group for compliance consulting
 - » 10/9/24: \$244,500 to Strategic Media Placement Inc for media production/placement
 - » 10/3/24: \$480,700 to the Strategy Group for Media Inc for media production/placement
 - » 10/15/24: \$495,435.91 to the Strategy Group for Media Inc for media placement/production
 - » 10/2/24: \$20,000 to the Strategy Group for Media, Inc for polling
- 12/5/24: filed its post-general filing detailing \$152,025 in disbursements and no revenue
 - » 10/22/24: \$2,000 to Crosby Ottenhoff Group for compliance consulting
 - » 10/30/24: \$150,000 to Strategic Media Placement, Inc for media production/placement
- 1/31/25: filed its year-end report (covering late November through December) detailing \$7507.50 and no revenue
 - » 12/20/24: \$4,937.50 to Crosby Ottenhoff Group for compliance consulting
 - » 11/28/24: \$2,570 to Holtzman Vogel Baran Torchinsky & Josefiak for legal consulting



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