

The Perverse Ways Your Tax Dollars Fund the Left's Dark Money Network

**How Leftist Nonprofit Networks Exploit Federal Tax Dollars to Advance a Radical
Agenda**

Testimony before

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My name is Tyler O'Neil.¹ I write and edit commentary and investigative reporting for The Daily Signal. I wrote two books, "Making Hate Pay: The Corruption of the Southern Poverty Law Center" and "The Woketopus: The Dark Money Cabal Manipulating the Federal Government." The views I express in this testimony are my own.

Chairman Van Drew, Ranking Member Crockett, members of the subcommittee, I am honored to be invited to testify before you today.

Did you know that millions of your tax dollars go to fund leftist activist groups, who then lobby the government for policies you may disagree with?

Part of this money comes through government grants and contracts, paying activist groups to do work on behalf of the government, but some of it comes through the salaries of government employees.

About a quarter of federal employees are union members,² and the major government unions don't just negotiate for perks like working from home. They also bankroll the same leftist groups that sent staff and policy recommendations into the Biden administration, using the bureaucracy to force leftist ideology on the American people.³

The Service Employees International Union gave \$1.6 million to New Venture Fund, a dark money pass-through nonprofit that cloaks which donors give to which projects, from 2013 to 2022. SEIU also gave \$5.2 million to Sixteen Thirty Fund, New Venture Fund's sister nonprofit, from 2013 to 2023. The union gave \$1.8 million to the Tides Foundation, another dark money pass-through nonprofit that supports anti-Israel rioters, among other things, from 2012 to 2016. The SEIU also gave \$1.1 million to Tides Advocacy Fund (a sister of Tides) from 2011 to 2019.⁴

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² "Union Members—2024." The Bureau of Labor Statistics. Jan. 28, 2025.

<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/union2.pdf> Accessed July 13, 2025.

³ O'Neil, Tyler. "The Woketopus: The Dark Money Cabal Manipulating the Federal Government." New York: Bombardier Books, 2025.

⁴ O'Neil, Woketopus. p. 85.

The AFL-CIO, America's largest union, gave \$410,000 to Sixteen Thirty Fund from 2014 to 2017, \$250,000 to New Venture Fund from 2010 to 2017, \$468,000 to Tides Advocacy from 2021 to 2023, \$200,000 to the Tides Center in 2011, and \$100,000 to the Tides Foundation in 2015.⁵ The American Federation of Government Employees, the largest union in the federal government, forms part of the AFL-CIO. AFGE has aggressively filed lawsuits to block President Trump's reforms to make the administrative state more accountable to the president.⁶

Both the SEIU and the AFL-CIO bankrolled the Center for American Progress, which sent at least 60 staff into the Biden administration, and Demos, which wrote and helped implement a policy to turn government offices into voter registration machines likely to help Democrats.⁷

Federal government employees can receive taxpayer funds for time they spend not doing their job but working for the union. The Office of Personnel Management once published how much money the unions effectively received from the taxpayer, but the office stopped publishing the figures under President Biden.⁸

This taxpayer-funded union time indirectly contributes Americans' tax dollars to the Left's dark money network.

Of course, the government also directly supports the Left's dark money network. USAID awarded more than \$800,000 to New Venture Fund⁹ and \$27 million to the Tides Center, a sister of the Tides Foundation.¹⁰

George Soros, a Hungarian American billionaire, has funded a broad swath of the Left through his Open Society Foundations, which his son Alex now runs.

⁵ O'Neil, Woketopus. p. 84.

⁶ O'Neil, Tyler. "DEEP STATE ALLIES: Who Are the Leftist Groups Suing to Block Trump's Reforms?" The Daily Signal. Feb. 14, 2025. <https://www.dailysignal.com/2025/02/14/who-are-leftist-groups-suing-block-trumps-reforms-root-out-deep-state-woketopus/> Accessed July 11, 2025.

⁷ O'Neil, Woketopus. pp. 84-85, 117-120, 307-322.

⁸ O'Neil, Tyler. "The Sneaky Way Government Unions Rake in Taxpayer Money, and How Congress Can Fight It in Reconciliation." The Daily Signal. Feb. 23, 2025. <https://www.dailysignal.com/2025/02/23/sneaky-way-government-unions-rake-taxpayer-money-how-congress-can-fight-reconciliation/> Accessed July 10, 2025.

⁹ USA Spending Cooperative Agreement AID0AAA1000074. https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_AID0AAA1000074_072 Accessed July 13, 2025.

¹⁰ USA Spending. Grants AID0AAA1600007, AID0AAG1600029, AID0AAG1400006, and AID0FDAF1400004. Summarized in O'Neil, Tyler. "USAID's Troubling Ties to the Woke Nonprofits That Called the Shots in the Biden Administration." The Daily Signal. Feb. 16, 2025. <https://www.dailysignal.com/2025/02/16/woketopus-usaids-troubling-ties-woke-nonprofits-called-shots-biden-administration/> Accessed July 9, 2025.

Arms of the Open Society Foundations have long received funds from the U.S. Agency for International Development, which has rightly become exhibit A of the waste, fraud, and abuse in the federal government.

In 2001, the Soros foundations network listed USAID among its “donor partners,” alongside other government aid agencies in countries such as Britain, Canada, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany, and Austria.¹¹

Alliance for Open Society International, an arm of the Open Society Foundations, received just under \$2 million from USAID between 2007 and 2008.¹² The State Department awarded the Alliance for Open Society International more than \$600,000 for programs in Belarus and Kazakhstan during the Obama administration.¹³

The Alliance for Open Society sued USAID twice, challenging the government’s requirement that organizations receiving taxpayer funds had to sign an anti-prostitution pledge. The Supreme Court struck down the pledge requirement when applied to U.S.-based organizations, but it upheld the requirement for foreign entities, which lack First Amendment rights.¹⁴ The alliance was the formal name of Open Society Institute Baltimore, which closed in 2023.¹⁵

“The claims that the Open Society Foundations, founded by George Soros, receive funding from USAID or direct the funding of a multibillion-dollar U.S. government agency are manifestly false,” the foundation said in a February news release. “These allegations are part of a broader effort to undermine international development work and delegitimize the independent funding of civil society organizations worldwide.”¹⁶

Many organizations that receive Open Society funding also take government money, some of that money from the Justice Department, the purview of this committee.

¹¹ Soros Foundations Network 2001 Report. https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/0025bb89-fc0b-4dd6-b134-5d861e9095ef/a_complete_9.pdf Accessed Feb. 23, 2025.

¹² USA Spending. Grant AID122A000200042 https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_AID122A000200042_072 Accessed July 9, 2025.

¹³ USA Spending. Grant SLMAQM11GR635 https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_SLMAQM11GR635_019 and Grant SLMAQM11GR0635 https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_SLMAQM11GR0635_019 Accessed July 9, 2025.

¹⁴ Supreme Court. Agency for International Development v. Alliance for Open Society International. (2020) https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/19pdf/19-177_b97c.pdf Accessed July 9, 2025.

¹⁵ OSI Baltimore. OSF to close OSI-Baltimore after 25 years; will invest \$20 million to seed the future of social justice philanthropy. Feb. 16, 2023. <https://www.osibaltimore.org/2023/02/osf-to-close-osi-baltimore-after-25-years-will-invest-20-million-to-seed-the-future-of-social-justice-philanthropy/> Accessed July 9, 2025.

¹⁶ Open Society Foundations Press Release “False Claims Regarding Open Society, George Soros, and USAID.” Feb. 12, 2025. <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/newsroom/false-claims-regarding-open-society-george-soros-and-usaid> Feb. 23, 2025.

None stands out more than the Vera Institute of Justice, which claims that “the American criminal justice system is rooted in a history of white supremacy and racial control that spans from slavery and Jim Crow to the War on Drugs and modern police brutality.”¹⁷ The group aims to end “mass incarceration” in part by “redefining public safety” and decreasing the role of police.¹⁸

Vera has also taken extreme stances against the enforcement of immigration law. It has declared that federal immigration agencies are a “threat to civil liberties”¹⁹ and launched an initiative to “establish a right to representation for all immigrants facing deportation.”²⁰

The Open Society Foundation’s funding for this nonprofit may not come as a surprise. Democracy PAC, a Soros super PAC, has backed the election campaigns of “rogue prosecutors” in what Heritage Foundation scholars Zack Smith and Cully Stimson describe as “a devious scheme to replace law and order prosecutors with zealots opposed to the death penalty.” In the thirty U.S. cities with the highest murder rates, at least fourteen have prosecutors backed or inspired by Soros. The murders in those fourteen cities accounted for 68% of the homicides in the thirty top homicide cities through June 2022.²¹

Since 2016, the Foundation to Promote Open Society has given more than \$11 million to the Vera Institute.²²

During the Biden administration, many agencies bankrolled Vera. The Justice Department paid the group at least \$73.6 million in contracts, mostly for providing legal services for immigrant children. The DOJ also gave Vera more than \$7 million in grants.²³ In just over one

¹⁷ Turner, Nicholas. “Acknowledging Black History Requires Uncomfortable Honesty.” Vera Institute of Justice. Feb. 5, 2019. <https://www.vera.org/news/acknowledging-black-history-requires-uncomfortable-honesty> Accessed July 10, 2025.

¹⁸ “Redefining Public Safety Initiative.” Vera Institute of Justice. <https://www.vera.org/ending-mass-incarceration/criminalization-racial-disparities/public-safety/redefining-public-safety-initiative> Accessed July 10, 2025.

¹⁹ “Federal Immigration Enforcement Agencies Are a Threat to Our Civil Liberties.” Vera Institute of Justice. July 13, 2020. <https://www.vera.org/news/federal-immigration-enforcement-agencies-are-now-a-threat-to-our-civil-liberties> Accessed July 10, 2025.

²⁰ “Advancing Universal Representation Initiative.” The Vera Institute of Justice. <https://www.vera.org/ending-mass-incarceration/reducing-incarceration/detention-of-immigrants/advancing-universal-representation-initiative> Accessed July 10, 2025.

²¹ Smith, Zack and Cully Stimson. *Rogue Prosecutors: How Radical Soros Lawyers Are Destroying America’s Communities*. New York: Bombardier Books, 2023. pp. x–xi.

²² Open Society Foundations Grants Search for “Vera Institute.” https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/grants/past?filter_keyword=Vera+Institute Accessed July 10, 2025.

²³ USA Spending Search for recipient “Vera Institute of Justice” from Jan. 20, 2021 to Jan. 20, 2025. <https://www.usaspending.gov/search?hash=42459e41cc0120c1ee8be2e91371f17b> Accessed July 10, 2025.

year, the Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families paid Vera \$196.3 million for "refugee and entrant assistance."²⁴

Meanwhile, many former Vera Institute staff went on to work in the federal government.

- Sean Addie, a former senior program associate at Vera, joined the Department of Education as "director of correctional education" in January 2016, where he remains to this day, according to his LinkedIn profile.²⁵
- Guillermo Cantor, former associate director of research at Vera, went on to work for HIAS (a nonprofit that received federal funding to house and transport immigrants across the country) as senior director of the Center for Refugee Policy. He now serves as director of research and policy at the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, a quasi-independent federal agency.²⁶
- Kevin Stewart, a former consultant at Vera, now serves as a policy advisor at the Justice Department, where he started in July 2024, according to LinkedIn.²⁷
- Chiraag Bains, who spent years at the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division under Barack Obama, worked at the Open Society Foundations, and directed legal strategies at the leftist group Demos before joining the Biden White House, got one of his earliest jobs at the Vera Institute.²⁸

The fact that the Biden administration paid the Vera Institute millions specifically to provide legal services to immigrants as 9 million illegal aliens entered the country under Biden should set off alarm bells, yet Vera is far from the only organization that fits this pattern.²⁹

The U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, one of the nonprofits that transported illegal aliens across the country under the Biden administration, reported receiving the vast majority of its \$289 million in revenue from government grants (\$284 million for 98.2%).³⁰

²⁴ USA Spending Contract 75P00121C00019.

https://www.usaspending.gov/award/CONT_AWD_75P00121C00019_7570_-NONE_-NONE- Accessed July 10, 2025.

²⁵ "Sean Addie." LinkedIn profile. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/sean-addie-4aab013/> Accessed July 11, 2025.

²⁶ "Guillermo Cantor." LinkedIn profile. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/guillermocantor/> Accessed July 11, 2025.

²⁷ "Kevin Stewart." LinkedIn profile. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/kevin-stewart-2685276b/> Accessed July 11, 2025.

²⁸ "Chiraag Bains." LinkedIn profile. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/chiraagbains/details/experience/> Accessed July 11, 2025.

²⁹ O'Neil, Woketopus. pp. 237-241.

³⁰ U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants Form 990 Part VIII for fiscal year ending Sept. 30, 2023. <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/131878704/202442129349301489/full> Accessed July 9, 2025.

The Department of Health and Human Services awarded the committee \$1.1 billion during the Biden administration.³¹

The U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants received \$75,000 in grants from the Foundation to Promote Open Society between 2017 and 2021. A 2021 grant supported the committee in developing “a community sponsorship program that will expand resettlement support for refugees and other forcibly displaced populations.”³²

A climate activist group, the National Wildlife Federation, also stands out as an example of taxpayer dollars funding a group that benefits from the Left’s dark money network.

The federation pushes the narrative of “environmental justice,” which combines the idea that America is structurally racist with the suggestion that the burning of fossil fuels will cause massive environmental disaster. Mustafa Santiago Ali, the federation’s vice president, moderated a Democratic presidential forum on “environmental justice” in 2019 during which he declared that “environmental racism is the new Jim Crow in regards to food, housing, jobs, education.”³³

Two former federation staff took leadership positions in the Department of the Interior under Biden: Laura Daniel-Davis and Tracey Stone-Manning.³⁴

Yet the federation’s influence in permanent Washington goes back decades. In 2009, an Interior Department probe into the Bureau of Land Management found that BLM was consulting NWF staff on budgeting, and NWF staff were writing and editing official BLM materials to promote the federation’s priorities. An Inspector General report found that this cozy relationship created “the potential for conflicts of interest or violations of law.” Yet for some reason, the Obama Justice Department declined to prosecute.³⁵

These cozy relationships also brought money to the left-wing activist group. The federation received at least \$17,000 from the Environmental Protection Agency for “Earth Tomorrow,”

³¹ USA Spending. Grants search results for U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants from Jan. 20, 2021, to Jan. 20, 2025. <https://www.usaspending.gov/search?hash=c7c996b3abff868ccdc9ce9ccf0000> Accessed July 9, 2025.

³² Open Society Foundations, “Awarded Grants” page search results for “Committee for Refugees.” https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/grants/past?filter_keyword=Committee+for+refugees&grant_id=OR2017-38528 Accessed April 2, 2024.

³³ “WATCH: 2019 Presidential Forum on Environmental Justice.” Democracy Now. November 8, 2019. https://www.democracynow.org/live/watch_2019_presidential_forum_on_environmental Accessed May 7, 2024.

³⁴ O’Neil, Woketopus. pp. 129-131.

³⁵ O’Neil, Woketopus. pp. 132-134.

an after-school and summer education program that the federation describes as its “longest-standing environmental justice education program.”³⁶

The EPA awarded the federation \$8.7 million in grants during the Biden administration, and it wasn’t alone. The Department of Agriculture awarded the group \$5 million. Interior agreed to give the federation \$2.9 million. The Department of Homeland Security awarded \$1.2 million. The Trump administration has clawed back some of this money, but millions still made it through.³⁷

The EPA awarded the federation \$8 million in July 2023, for the group to “design, operate, and lead a Mid-Atlantic thriving communities hub to be an environmental justice thriving communities technical assistance center.” The Trump administration canceled this grant in February, but not before EPA had paid \$1.5 million.³⁸

Meanwhile, the federation spent \$460,000 on lobbying in Congress in 2024.³⁹

New Venture Fund gave the federation \$800,000 between 2010 and 2016.⁴⁰

Direct grants and contracts from the federal government to left-wing activist groups rightly draw attention, but the union funding often goes under the radar. In these and other ways, Americans’ tax dollars fund the Left’s dark money network, propping up activist groups that push the government in radical directions.

Congress should seek to prevent this perverse state of affairs.

³⁶ “Project Title: Earth Tomorrow: An Interdisciplinary After-School And Summer Program.” EPA Grant Awards Database. https://web.archive.org/web/20210926122450/https://yosemite.epa.gov/oarm/igms_egf.nsf/9e-9c2a5934a808d585256fb6006df292/5079abae84d6366185257d6f0071ee16!OpenDocument Accessed May 7, 2024, via Internet Archive.

³⁷ USA Spending. Search results for recipient “National Wildlife Federation” between Jan. 20, 2021, and Jan. 20, 2025. <https://www.usaspending.gov/search?hash=d2cdd9d8aef2612e74e92038d024b206> Accessed July 10, 2025.

³⁸ USA Spending. Grant 95314201. https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_95314201_068 Accessed July 10, 2025.

³⁹ “National Wildlife Federation” lobbying profile on OpenSecrets. <https://www.opensecrets.org/orgs/national-wildlife-federation/summary?id=D000064937> Accessed July 10, 2025.

⁴⁰ “New Venture Fund.” Form 990, Schedule I, for 2010–2016, accessed via ProPublica Nonprofit Explorer on April 27, 2024.