How associations gave in the last election cycle

GARY A. FELD, PHD

During the 2011-12 election cycle, associations were extremely active, spending and donating millions of dollars. The top-100 association political action committees contributed a combined total of nearly $114 million to candidate campaigns, leadership PACs and party committees.

Leading the way was the National Association of Realtors, which contributed almost $4.8 million to political committees during the cycle. The top-five contributors – realtors, beer wholesalers, auto dealers, bankers and trial lawyers – all contributed more than $3 million. Of the top-20 association PACs, 25 percent were related to the health industry, led by the American Association of Orthopedic Surgeons.

While groups representing the realtors and auto dealers supported both parties, they tended to be far more generous to Republican candidates. In the past election cycle, the National Association of Realtors donated almost $2.2 million to GOP federal candidates – a figure about $400,000 greater than its PAC donated to Democratic candidates. Contribution patterns by the National Automobile Dealers Association were even more pronounced. Over the past two years, NADA's PAC gave $2.1 million to Republican candidates, but only $817,500 to Democrats.

Among the top association contributors to GOP candidates, four associations represent the financial and insurance industry and another four represent the medical industry. And the 15th top PAC contributor – the National Rifle Association – gave more than $877,000 to Republicans.

Democrats do not have as many supporters reaching this level of contribution among associations. In fact, only four association PACs gave more than $1 million to Democratic candidates and only one – the American Association of Justice – donated more than $2 million.

While these numbers seem large, they pale in comparison to the amounts spent electioneering by groups such as the U.S. Chamber. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, the Chamber spent more than $36 million during the 2012 election, including over $4.4 million against victorious Virginia Senate candidate Tim Kaine. Only two of the 15 Senate races where the Chamber was active, however, saw winners backed by the business organization. In the House, the Chamber supported four winning candidates in the 22 races where it was active.

Feld is principal at PowerBase Associates, a political and legislative research firm based in Alexandria, Va. He can be reached at gfeld@powerbaseassociates.com or through the company website at www.powerbaseassociates.com.

Top association PAC contributors to all political committees, 2011-12

1. National Association Of Realtors	$4,758,923
2, National Beer Wholesalers Association	3,874,500
3, National Automotive Dealers Association	3,622,000
4. American Bankers Association	3,404,500
5. American Association For Justice	3,194,500
6. Credit Union National Association	2,927,600
7. American Association Of Orthopaedic Surgeons	2,516,500
8. American Dental Association	2,325,750
9. American College Of Radiology Association	2,156,000
10. National Rural Electric Cooperative Association	2,025,568
11. National Association Of Home Builders	2,024,000
12. National Cable And Telecommunications Association	1,973,000
13. American Hospital Association	1,914,350
14. National Multi Housing Council	1,865,500
15. American Society Of Anesthesiologists	1,831,650

Top association PAC contributors to Democratic candidates, 2011-12

1. American Association For Justice	$2,358,500
2. National Association Of Realtors	1,764,606
3. National Beer Wholesalers Association	1,362,000
4. Credit Union National Association	1,089,000
5. National Automobile Dealers Association	817,500

Top association PAC contributors to Republican candidates, 2011-12

1. National Association Of Realtors	$2,183,426
2. National Automobile Dealers Association	2,145,000
3. American Bankers Association	2,076,500
4. National Beer Wholesalers Association	1,932,500
5. Associated Builders & Contractors	1,371,573

COMPILED FROM REPORTS FILED WITH THE FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION

GW COLLEGE OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES
ALEXANDRIA, VA • ONLINE

MASTER'S DEGREE
PUBLISHING

Become a leader in the ever-evolving digital media creation and distribution processes of Publishing.

Gain a thorough grounding in contemporary practices. Two-year, 30-credit program with core courses on the foundations of publishing with tracks in Business, Marketing, Editorial, Design, and Technology.

Program designed for publishing professionals. Courses are offered weekday evenings in Alexandria and Online, allowing students to work full-time in the publishing field.

www.nearyou.gwu.edu/pubs

For a list of all GW graduate programs, visit **www.gwu.edu/gradapply**.

Information Sessions
Thursday, January 17
12:00 pm
Online
Thursday, January 31
6:30 pm
1925 Ballenger Ave, Suite 250
Alexandria, VA 22314
Metro: Blue or Yellow line to King Street

More Information
1.800.JOIN.GWU (564.6498)
www.nearyou.gwu.edu/pubs

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON, DC

38212 THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION INSTITUTION CERTIFIED TO OPERATE IN VA BY SCHEV.