

# [***Koch officials tell donors Nikki Haley was the right candidate to back, despite early losses to Trump***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B6F-HJ21-DY7V-G001-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; Officials in the political network affiliated with billionaire Charles Koch on Saturday defended their heavy investment in [*Nikki Haley's long-shot campaign*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/26/politics/republican-donors-trump-haley-senate/index.html) to derail former President Donald Trump's bid for the GOP presidential nomination.

In a presentation to the network's top donors, Emily Seidel and Michael Palmer - senior advisers to Americans for Prosperity Action - said the narrowing of the GOP race to just Trump and Haley demonstrates she was the right candidate to back as a Trump alternative, according to a summary of the presentation provided to CNN by an AFP Action official.

AFP Action endorsed the former South Carolina governor in [*November*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/11/28/politics/koch-network-nikki-haley/index.html) and will continue to support her - even as she faces what Koch officials acknowledge is an "uphill battle" for the nomination.

Seidel and Palmer, however, also emphasized that the organization stands ready to shift its resources and say that flipping the Senate from Democratic control is a top priority that grows all the more important if Trump wins the nomination.

The presentation from AFP Action officials came Saturday afternoon to top donors in the libertarian-leaning network associated with Koch - a Kansas industrialist who has worked to spread his free-market ideas through investments in ***politics***, think tanks, philanthropic groups and educational institutions.

In all, some 400 contributors affiliated with the network are meeting in Indian Wells, California, for an annual winter summit.

Haley is [*rebuffing calls by Trump*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/25/politics/nikki-haley-trump-republican-primary/index.html) and his allies to exit the race, despite finishing 11 points behind the former president in New Hampshire. She plans an ambitious round of fundraising with events in the coming days in New York; Palm Beach, Florida; and Miami.

Haley also had a short video call with top Koch donors to describe how she sees the race overall and in South Carolina, the next potentially competitive contest on the GOP primary calendar.

Campaign managers for Haley and Trump also both plan to attend an upcoming gathering in Florida of another influential GOP donor group, the American Opportunity Alliance, two sources told CNN.

Alliance members include prominent investors Ken Griffin and Paul Singer, real-estate investor Harlan Crow and members of the Ricketts family, owners of the Chicago Cubs.

The Florida meeting was first [*reported by Puck*](https://twitter.com/teddyschleifer/status/1751318281883984248?s=46&t=X22bwEyZiDnZZZ37-6rgtQ).

As CNN [*reported Friday*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/26/politics/republican-donors-trump-haley-senate/index.html), some donors who have backed Haley say they are now redoubling their efforts to secure GOP victories in congressional races, following Trump's big wins in Iowa and New Hampshire.

The summary provided of Saturday's presentation to Koch donors echoes recent public statements from AFP Action's leaders.

The group has invested millions to back Haley's candidacy and already has spent more than $3 million on advertising in South Carolina, according to AdImpact data. AFP officials say they have reached out to more than 420,000 South Carolina voters and were knocking on more doors in the Palmetto State this weekend.

Still, Trump remains the clear favorite in Haley's home state, which holds its primary February 24.

CNN's Kylie Atwood contributed to this report.

By Fredreka Schouten, CNN

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