

# [***Hundreds Of Billionaires Donate Big Money In Midterms But Trump Gives Nothing***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:66SV-D501-JBCM-F35R-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Byline:** Matt Durot, Forbes Staff

**Highlight:** How does a billionaire become a kingmaker in American ***politics*** without giving away any of his own money? Ask the former president.

**Body**

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Donald Trump

Photograph by Jamel Toppin/The Forbes Collection;

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**How does a billionaire become a kingmaker in American *politics* without giving away any of his own money? Ask the former president.**

Hundreds of billionaires have pumped money into the 2022 midterm elections. George Soros dumped $129 million into left-leaning super-PACs. Conservatives Dick and Elizabeth Uihlein and Ken Griffin each countered with nearly $55 million. Peter Thiel handpicked a couple of Senate candidates, then seeded them with $15 million apiece.

Donald Trump, by contrast, appears to have donated nothing.

Yes, the former president has routed money to his acolytes and has gained a kingmaker reputation for doing so. But the cash Trump is sending to other candidates isn t actually Trump s money. Instead, it s money other people have given to Trump-affiliated groups. Trump then takes those funds, passes some of them along to his allies and basks in the attention that such generosity affords him.

Consider the $15 million that recently went to support Republicans running for Senate in Pennsylvania, Nevada, Arizona, Ohio and Georgia. After the 2020 election, Trump raised more than $100 million from an army of supporters across the country. To do so, he started a group named Save America, which qualifies as a leadership PAC, the sort of entity politicians often use to share cash with other candidates. Trump held most of the money for himself, but a month ago, his group transferred $20 million to another outfit called Make America Great Again, Inc. That entity then bought $2 million to $4 million of ads to support candidates in those five states. Trump, in turn, patted himself on the back.

In the last two years alone, President Trump s Save America PAC has provided maxed out contributions to over 250 candidates, Trump spokesperson Taylor Budowich said, ignoring the fact that none of that money came from Trump personally. He is responsible for raising over $350 million for [various Republican groups], he has headlined more than 40 fundraisers for candidates, and his name is used by candidates around the nation to raise an incalculable amount of money.

No one doubts Trump s ability to raise a lot of money from other people. But some of the reported465 other billionaireswho donated in the 2022 election might be wondering why Trump is not willing to part with any of his own cash. A search of Federal Election Commission documents turned up a handful of donations for small amounts $1.50 here, $25 there from people purporting to be Donald Trump. In all, they add up to less than $200. "Most likely they are not from former President Donald Trump, concluded Brett Kappel, a campaign-finance attorney at Harmon, Curran, Spielberg & Eisenberg. Unfortunately, it's not uncommon for people to enter false information on those donor forms."

For those familiar with the way Trump does business, it should not come as much of a surprise that he is using other people s money rather than his own. Trump, after all, made his name in the 1980s by loading up on debt other people s money and spending like he never had to pay it back. Ultimately, that approach led to a series of bankruptcies. He slowed down but didn t stop, figuring out how to expand his empire by convincing other developers to spend money on various projects, then pay him to slap his name on them. Trump even applied the other-people s-money approach to philanthropy, collecting cash via his foundation and then handing out funds from others as if they were his own.

When he got into the political arena, Trump promised things would be different. I don t need anybody s money, he said when announcing his candidacy in 2016. I m using my own money. I m not using lobbyists. I m not using donors. I don t care. I m really rich. He assured supporters, however, that he would use the same hard-nosed tactics he had perfected in the business world to help the United States. It s called OPM, he said at one rally, laying out his plan to make Gulf states pay for refugee safe zones. I do that all the time in business. It s called other people s money. There s nothing like doing things with other people s money.

Trump put $66 million of his own money into his 2016 presidential bid, but he eventually decided other people s money would be nice on the campaign trail as well. His 2016 campaign bolstered his donations with $285 million from others. In 2020, rumors swirled that Trump would end up injecting a big amount of cash into his campaign in its final weeks. But that never came to fruition, and he became theonly billionaire to spend $0 of his own moneyon a White House run. After losing office, Trump stayed on the fundraising circuit, eyeing the 2022 midterms and, perhaps, the 2024 presidential election.

**Additional reporting by Zach Everson.**

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