

# [***Sen. Cortez Masto Opposes Dark Money In Politics, Even Though One Of Her Biggest Supporters Is A Dark Money Group***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:661Y-82P1-JBCM-F0X3-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Byline:** Kyle Mullins, Forbes Staff

**Highlight:** North Fund, a dark money group, is putting millions of dollars behind a senator who thinks it should have to disclose its donors.

**Body**

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Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto, seen here speaking during a Senate hearing, has sponsored a constitutional amendment that would allow Congress to regulate campaign finance spending more strictly.

(AP Photo/Mariam Zuhaib)

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Nevada Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto believes dark money is a threat to our political system. To combat it, she has backed several campaign finance reform proposals, including a constitutional amendment that would allow Congress to regulate campaign money more strictly. But one of the biggest supporters of her own candidacy is a dark money group.

Here s how the funds flowed. First, anonymous donors, such as three who gave $19 million, $11 million and $9.7 million in 2020, handed over checks to a group called North Fund. That entity is considered a social welfare organization, allowing it to keep its donors secret and donate to political causes as long as it spends more than 50% of its money on non-political activities. Then, in May and June, North Fund handed $4.1 million to a super PAC called Somos PAC. Somos PAC in turn spent $3.5 million this cycle, more than half of what it has raised, supporting Cortez Masto, who is running for reelection this year. Strip away the layers, and you re left with exactly the sort of situation that the senator says is a threat to the political system: Anonymous donors are putting huge amounts of money behind her candidacy, and there s no way to tell who they are or what they want from her.

It s a dicey situation for Cortez Masto, who could not cut off the dark money even if she wanted to. Although the funds are supporting her candidacy, they are not flowing through her official campaign, giving her little control. She can t really stop that, because it s illegal to coordinate strategy with an outside group, noted Anna Massoglia, editorial director at OpenSecrets, a research group focused on money in ***politics***. Josh Marcus-Blank serves as a spokesperson for the campaign, which has also raised $23.6 million from small-dollar donors this cycle. He underscored Cortez Masto s support for overturning**Citizens United v. FEC,**the Supreme Court case that dramatically loosened restrictions on campaign fundraising.

But like it or not, big donors are putting big money behind Cortez Masto, with North Fund watching Somos PAC deploy the cash on television ads and online marketing. They re using nonprofit status as a shield for their donors, said Robert Maguire, research director at another watchdog group called Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington.

We are proud to count Somos PAC among our grantees, a representative for North Fund said in a statement, noting that it doesn t give directly to campaign committees.

Somos PAC has raked in cash from other dark money groups beyond the North Fund, accepting $1,000,000 from America Votes, $447,000 from Family Friendly Action Fund and $334,000 from State Victory Action. Another $226,500 came from a super PAC called Change Now, which this cycle received nearly all of its funds from yet another dark money group called Sixteen Thirty Fund. In total, nearly 90% of Somos PAC s funding is untraceable.

If Cortez Masto had her way, everyone would know the names of the people routing money through the various groups. She has cosponsored legislation called the DISCLOSE Act, which would require social welfare organizations like the North Fund to disclose any donors who give over $10,000 that might be routed into the political system. With no Republican support, however, the bill has no chance of passing the Senate.

Maguire said both parties benefit from the current lack of regulation, but those on the left are more likely to want to change the rules. Democrats are increasingly using dark money and benefitting from dark money, but they are also trying to do something [about it]. Whereas, on the Republican side, there is essentially no effort.

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