

You love their teams, but you might not love their politics; Owners of our local teams donated to Democrat and Republican causes ahead of the election, but far from equally.

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Body

Leading up to this week's presidential election, The Times scoured the databases of the Federal Election Commission and the California Secretary of State to gain an understanding of the political activism of the owners and partners of professional sports teams in Los Angeles.

That group of deep-pocketed contributors combined to spend more on Democrats and their causes than on Republican efforts, bucking the nationwide trend of most sports owners. Former Vice President Joe Biden's campaign drew \$642,200 in support from owners of Los Angeles' sports teams, compared to \$7,971 donated to President Trump's campaign.

The group's combined financial support during this election donation cycle totaled more than \$18 million, with the bulk coming from one family. Steve and Connie Ballmer, of the Clippers, dedicated half of their nearly \$15-million political spending spree on promoting California Propositions 16 and 25. If accepted, Proposition 16 would end the ban on affirmative action and Proposition 25 would eliminate cash bail. Connie Ballmer made a \$7-million donation to Everytown for Gun Safety Victory Fund.

When it came to strictly partisan donations, Philip and Nancy Anschutz of the Kings and Galaxy were the most aggressive. They spent more than \$1 million on Republican causes and campaigns to elect Republican members of Congress from California, Colorado, Oklahoma, Georgia, Kansas and Texas. Through the Anschutz Entertainment Group, the family donated about \$50,000 to elect Democrats in California state elections and \$100,000 to stop Proposition 13, which raises commercial property taxes. The Anschutzes also dropped \$5,000 to endorse Propositions 16, 17 and 18. Proposition 17 restores parolees' right to vote and 18 gives some 17-year-olds the right to vote in California primaries.

Marc Merrill, one of many co-owners of LAFC, emerged as one of Los Angeles' top spenders. A co-founder of video game developing company Riot Games, Merrill donated \$826,200 to mostly Democratic campaigns and committees. He made a donation of \$620,600 to the Biden Victory Fund. Angels owner Arte Moreno, a Republican who spoke at a Latinos for Trump event in Phoenix in September, donated about \$20,000 to Trump's campaign and victory fund prior to this election cycle. Neither he nor his wife, Carole, have donated to Trump since. They instead used this donation cycle to spend upwards of \$50,000 on supporting Republican members of Congress, including matching \$10,600 donations to a political action committee for Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.).

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Of the Dodgers' owners, the most active was Todd Boehly, who also has a stake in the Sparks.

He spent roughly \$133,000 on both Democratic and Republican causes and campaigns.

The Chargers ownership group combined to donate more than \$300,000 in this cycle to primarily Republican issues and races.

Dean and Michael Spanos each sent \$25,000 to Take Back the House 2020. They also contributed a total of \$43,800 to the National Republican Congressional Committee.

Among the least politically involved in this Los Angeles group were the Lakers owners. Jeanie Buss donated \$2,700 to Kamala Harris' presidential campaign and nearly \$5,000 to ActBlue.

Jim Buss' donations to Republican efforts, including Trump's reelection, totaled about \$7,200.

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About the data

The Times searched FEC and the California Secretary of State data for all members and spouses of the ownership groups that control Los Angeles' NBA, WNBA, NFL, MLB, NHL and professional soccer teams. The data presented here includes only the names of those who donated to political causes or campaigns after the election donation cycle began Nov. 7, 2018.

Missing from the dataset were those for whom no contributions were found, including Magic Johnson, a vocal supporter of Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton ahead of the 2016 election. He donated more than \$500,000 to Democratic entities during that cycle.

But Johnson did not make any contributions ahead of this year's presidential election.

The same goes for the family of Stan Kroenke, who owns the Rams. The Kroenkes were politically active in the past.

They donated \$100,000 to the Hillary Victory Fund in 2016 and more than \$1 million to President Trump's inaugural committee but nothing in this cycle.

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Times staff writer Thuc Nhi Nguyen contributed to this story.

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Donations by team owners

The Clippers' Ballmers blow the rest of Los Angeles' professional sports teams out of the water when it comes to monetary donations to political campaigns.

Source: Reporting by Maria Torres and Thuc Nhi Nguyen

Note: Contributions from Rams owners were not found. Some Dodgers part-owners are also part-owners of the Sparks.

Graphic

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PHOTO: CLIPPERS OWNERS PHOTOGRAPHER: PHOTO: DODGERS / SPARKS OWNERS
PHOTOGRAPHER: PHOTO: ANGELS OWNERS PHOTOGRAPHER: PHOTO: JEANIE BUSS | JIM BUSS
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