One of the biggest threats to a fair and accessible democracy in the US is the lack of transparency behind campaign donations to political candidates. Information about campaign financing is highly relevant to constituents who want to be informed when they make decisions on how they want to vote in an election, yet it is often inaccessible. By streamlining this searching process, citizens can make more informed decisions when voting in local, state, and federal elections. In light of the upcoming midterm elections, this issue is more pressing than ever.

This project will require large amounts of data management and the integration of multiple datasets. Data on campaign finance will be primarily sourced from the Federal Election Commission dataset, which will need to be cleaned to display donations based on categories including election cycle and type of donor. We would also like to organize data on all elected officials' voting history to illustrate the potential impact of donations on their policy decisions. Incorporating all of these datasets will require the development of effective schemas to create a large relational database. We hope to develop a mechanism for updating our website to reflect a changing political landscape.

Our goal is to create a website that allows users to easily access campaign financing data for each election. We can have an interactive map that allows a user to click their state, linking them to a different page that includes campaign finance data for each election. This new page will show the official data for all Congressional elections within their state. The user can see total donations for each candidate, and then they can click the candidate's name to go to a new candidate page which shows exactly where the money is coming from, itemized by the person donating. This data can be ordered by name, or more importantly, the amount which is being donated. Furthermore, the state and candidate pages can be easily accessed through a search bar on the main website. This allows the user two routes to access the data: the search bar and the map.

While data on political donations does exist through government agencies like the Federal Election Commission (FEC), these sources are rather inaccessible to the average voter. This data is difficult to navigate, largely disaggregated, and requires a high level of data literacy for dedicated constituents to comb through complex data on their own. Furthermore, other websites like Follow the Money have similar goals of exposing politicians' benefactors and have the ability to search donations to individual politicians, yet largely focus on general trends within states. Open Secrets conversely focuses more on individual elected officials, and fails to address broader trends across states/party lines. Additionally, there is not a website that is specifically for analyzing organizations/lobbying groups that are large contributors to politicians. Our project would be able to incorporate each of these different aspects to provide constituents with the most comprehensive data possible on how donations are affecting their elected representatives.

Our group is still exploring tools to use in the development of this project and plan on discussing options with our TA. We plan on learning about Python, Flask, and PostgreSQL for data management, deploy this project with React.js, and host it through GitHub Pages.