

DEMOCRACY FOR A PRICE

By WILL GULDIN

A hard-to-track type of campaign spending benefitted the state’s democratic candidates, bucking a national trend.

Sources: FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION, OPENSECRETS.ORG

Outside groups spent a record amount during the 2012 election cycle in attempt to sway voters. These groups spent more than \$1 billion to influence the election.

During the last presidential election, that number was closer to \$300 million. The Supreme Court’s 2010 decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* paved the way toward this higher spending by allowing corporations and unions to make political expenditures, so long as that spending is done independently of any candidate.

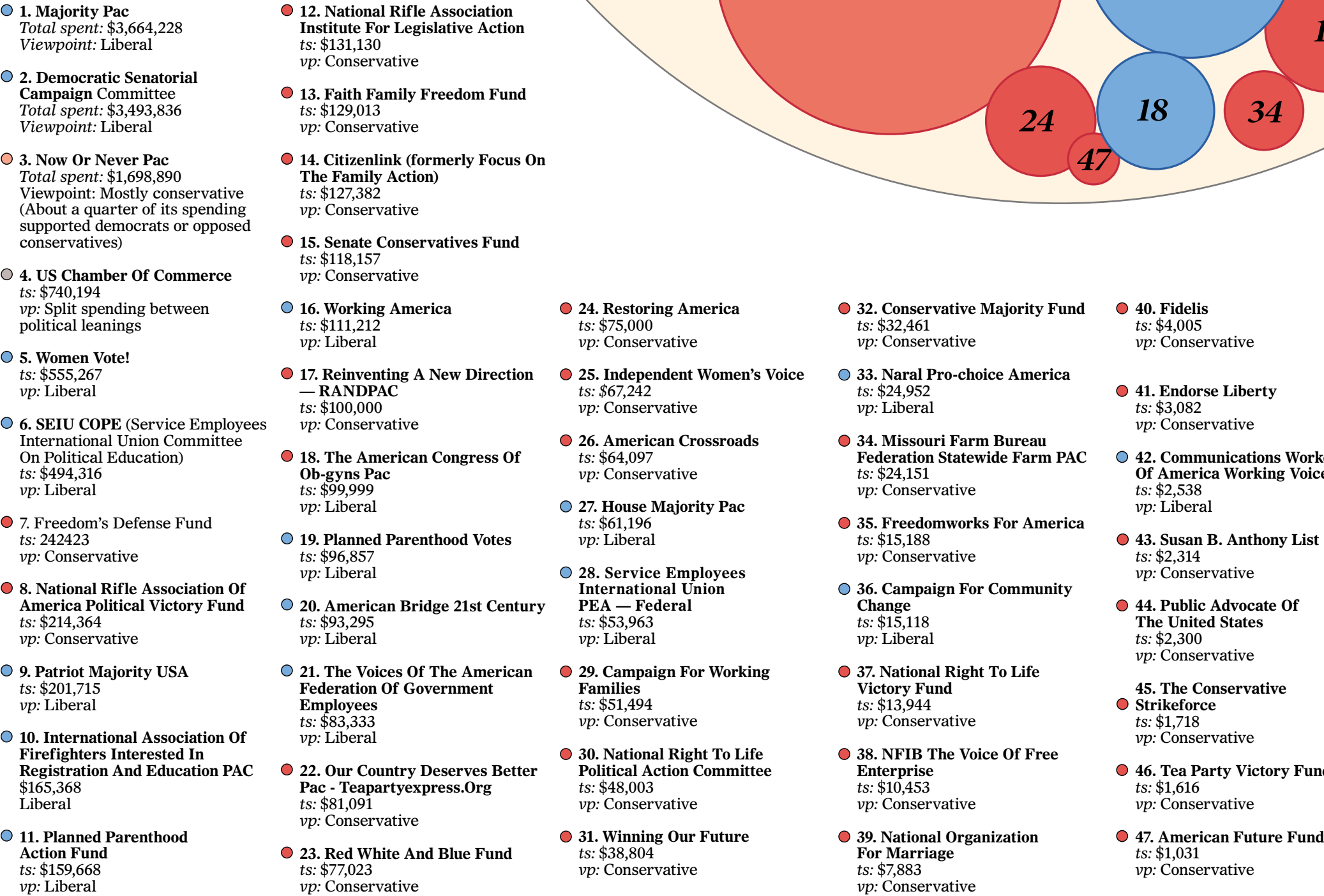
Often this spending is used for ads that specifically pull for or oppose a candidate. These are called “indepentent expenditures” and made up the vast majority of that \$1 billion spent by outside groups throughout the eleciton.

Although Missouri is no longer the battleground state it once was, dozens of groups made independent expenditures here during the election. In an exception to the national rule, though, most of this spending supported democrats or opposed republicans, particularly incumbent U.S. Senator Claire McCaskill. She won reelection against challenger Todd Akin.

On the left, groups and the amount of their independent expenditures are shown.

Independent expenditures in Missouri during the 2012 election, grouped by organization

Note: For several reasons, these independent expenditure totals should be considered approximations. This is related to the way groups have to report their expenditures to the Federal Election Commission.



\$13.5 MILLION TOTAL

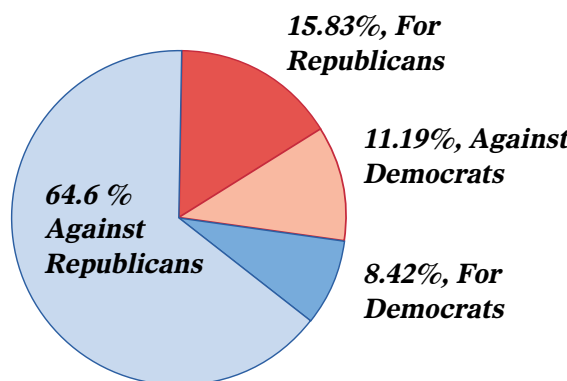
Missouri bucks a national trend

On the whole, conservative groups vastly outspent liberal groups in the 2012 election, and they outspent them by a smaller margin did in the 2010 election, too. In Missouri, though, liberal groups spent heavily with more than 64 percent of all independent expenditures going toward opposing republican candidates.

This could be explained by the Missouri Senate race, where Claire McCaskill kept her seat, holding off challenger Todd Akin. After his “legitimate rape” comment, liberal groups felt the seat was suddenly more likely to stay democratic, and the bought ads and made other expenses to oppose him.

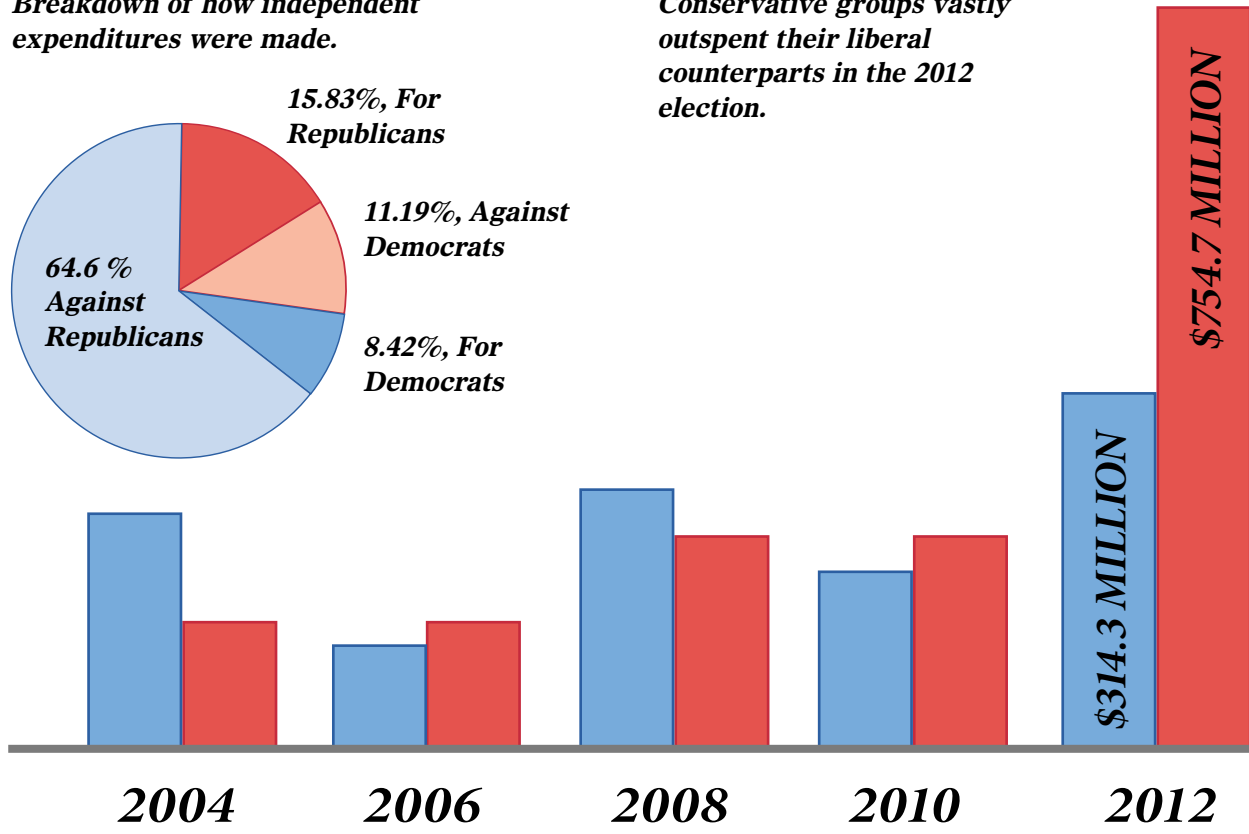
IN MISSOURI

Breakdown of how independent expenditures were made.



NATIONALLY

Conservative groups vastly outspent their liberal counterparts in the 2012 election.



The rise of independent expenditures

These vast fundraising amounts are part of an ongoing trend across the country. Over the past several election cycles, the amount of independent expenditures made has steadily risen, and it jumped much higher in the 2012 election.

Presidential elections gather more spending attention than mid-terms, but this was also the first presidential election since the 2010 *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* decision by the Supreme Court. Shortly after this decision, another case led to the creation of “Super PACs,” or groups that raise unlimited sums from corporations, individuals, unions, and other groups, according to OpenSecrets.org. Super PACs aren’t allowed to contribute directly to a candidate’s campaign.

This graphic shows the rise in independent expenditures as a portion of all outside spending, minus what was spent each election cycle by party committess.

Figures represent independent expenditure totals

Total outside spending during election
Independent expenditures during election

