## Arizona candidates draw individual donors

*Individual donations are a hot topic among political parties. What can individual donations tell us about the possible outcome of a race?*

Jessica A. Floyd

WASHINGTON — Republicans are bringing in more money per Senate race than Democrats but more individual donations are going to left-leaning candidates. One senate race places both candidates in the top five highest donations and top five raised funds categories.

According to the [Pew Research Center](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/05/08/most-americans-want-to-limit-campaign-spending-say-big-donors-have-greater-political-influence/), 77 percent of the public thinks there should be limits on the amount of money individuals and organizations can spend on political campaigns.

Candidates also want to “prove” to voters that they can weigh into the system, said Alex Tausanovitch, director of campaign finance end electoral reform at the Center for American Progress. “One of the ways they prove that is by taking more money from small donors.”

Democratic challenger Mark Kelly is out-raising incumbent Senator Martha McSally in Arizona’s 2020 senate race — $2.5 million to just shy of $1 million.

**[Data visualization]** <https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/INrTO/1/>

So far the race for a Senate seat once held by the late Sen. John McCain is raising the most money among the 2020 senate races.

Individual donations have been referenced on many occasions leading up to the 2018 midterm elections.

“Small donor contributions come from a variety of donors and represent a shift in the Democratic fundraising process,” said Alysa James, communications director of African American media for the Senate Democrats.

There are many reasons for individual donations to gain popularity. Democratic think tanks point to public opinion as one explanation.

“The public is really concerned about corruption and government,” Tausanovitch said. “A lot of voters feel that the government isn’t representing their interest.”

Even as far back as 2008, Barack Obama clinched the Democratic Party nomination with the help of individual donors funding. Democrats have since developed their fundraising strategy around the model utilized by the Obama team.

For Presidential races, the Democratic National Convention is requiring candidates to have a minimum number of individual donors. That’s just how important the party views the grassroots action.

"I haven't reached the DNC's 65,000-donor threshold yet, but I'm working hard to earn my spot," Castro admitted on The Rachel Maddow show.

Individual donations in the Kelly-McSally race can demonstrate the power and limitations of viewing donations as an indicator of campaign success. Kelly has raised more than $200,000 more in donations from Arizonans than McSally so far.

“It looks like Mark Kelly is one of these candidates who’s trying to show the voters that he is with them in seeing the problems and corruption in our politics,” Tausanovitch said. “He’s trying to raise more money from small donors and refuse money from corporate PACs.”

Nearly two thousand donors contributed $5,600 to Kelly’s campaign, while just under a thousand gave the same amount to McSally.

The bulk of both campaign funding comes from within the state. For example, two of McSally’s highest spending donors — William Dolan and Debra Luke — live in Arizona and contributed more than $6,000 each.

Receiving money from out of state donors is not uncommon. Neighboring state, California is home to more than three hundred contributors for both campaigns.

New York serves as a Democratic sources of money for Kelly. Texas adds funding to the McSally campaign at a similar rate.

Kelly got more than $530,000 from contributors in New York. The majority of those voters were lawyers, investors and retirees.. Retirees donated just over $50,000.

**[Data visualizations]** <https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/Kto8r/1/> **and**  <https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/7bAm5/1/>

McSally received more than $182,000 from donors in Texas. The most of those voters were CEOs, engineers and retirees. Retirees alone contributed more than $31,000.

The majority of in-state donors for both campaigns are retired. Kelly’s retired donors contribute more than $500, while McSally’s gave just over $400 on average.

Despite raising more money, [polls](https://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2020/senate/az/arizona_senate_mcsally_vs_kelly-6801.html) show McSally up by one point. Earlier polls had her up more, but the gap could be closing between the two.

“It looks like small donors are more motivated in recent years,” Tausanovitch said. “There are more small donors making contributions that are between zero and $200 than there have been in a long time.”

Tausanovitch believes there are more candidates invested in prioritizing the will of the people.