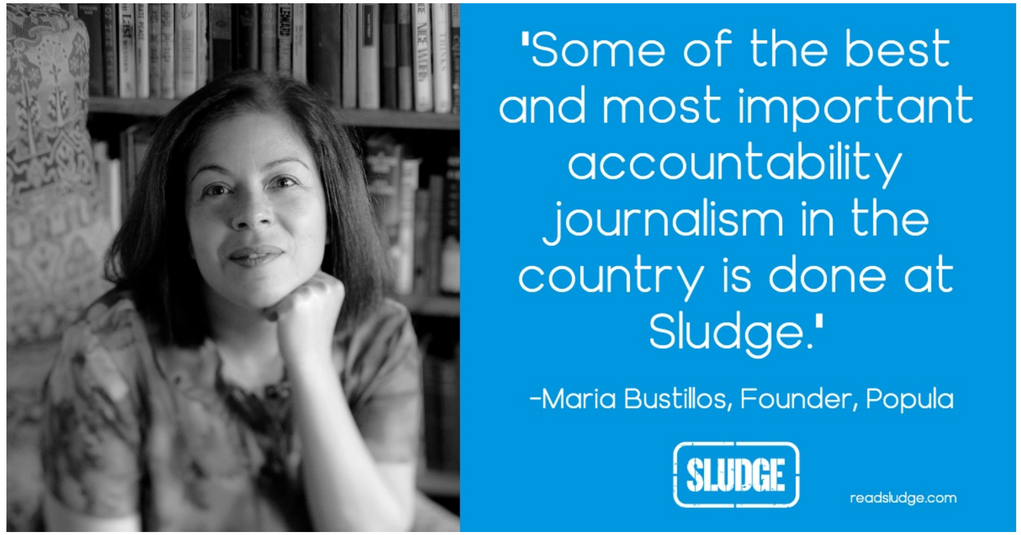
10 Big Impacts

Of Our Money in Politics Reporting

June 2024 — readsludge.com

A Relentless Investigative Newsroom

- A 501(c)3 nonprofit, independent newsroom launched in 2018
- Our beat is money in politics — connecting special interests to news headlines
- We cover lobbying, dark money, and hidden influence with a data-driven approach

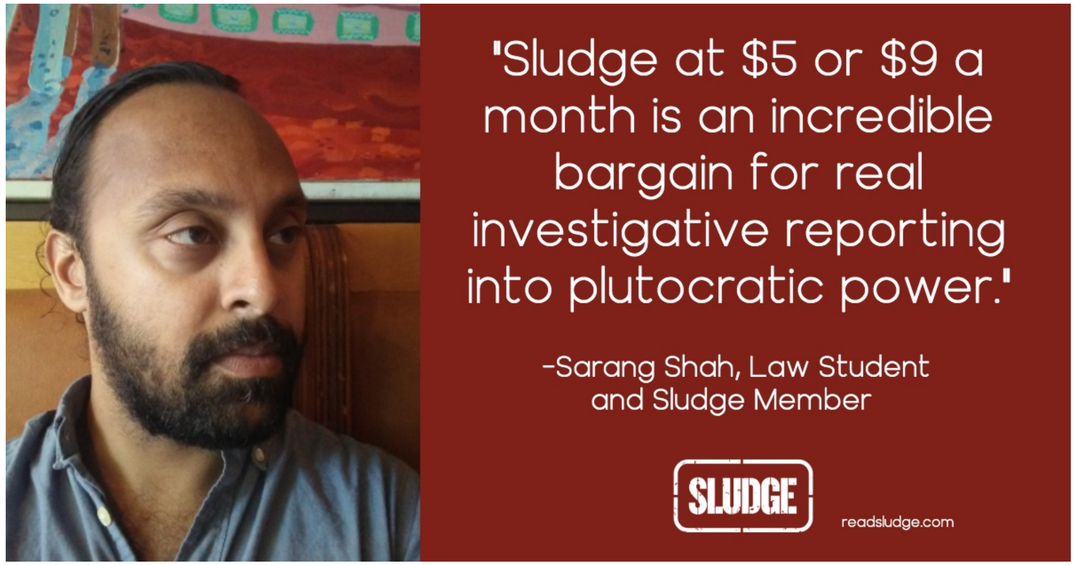


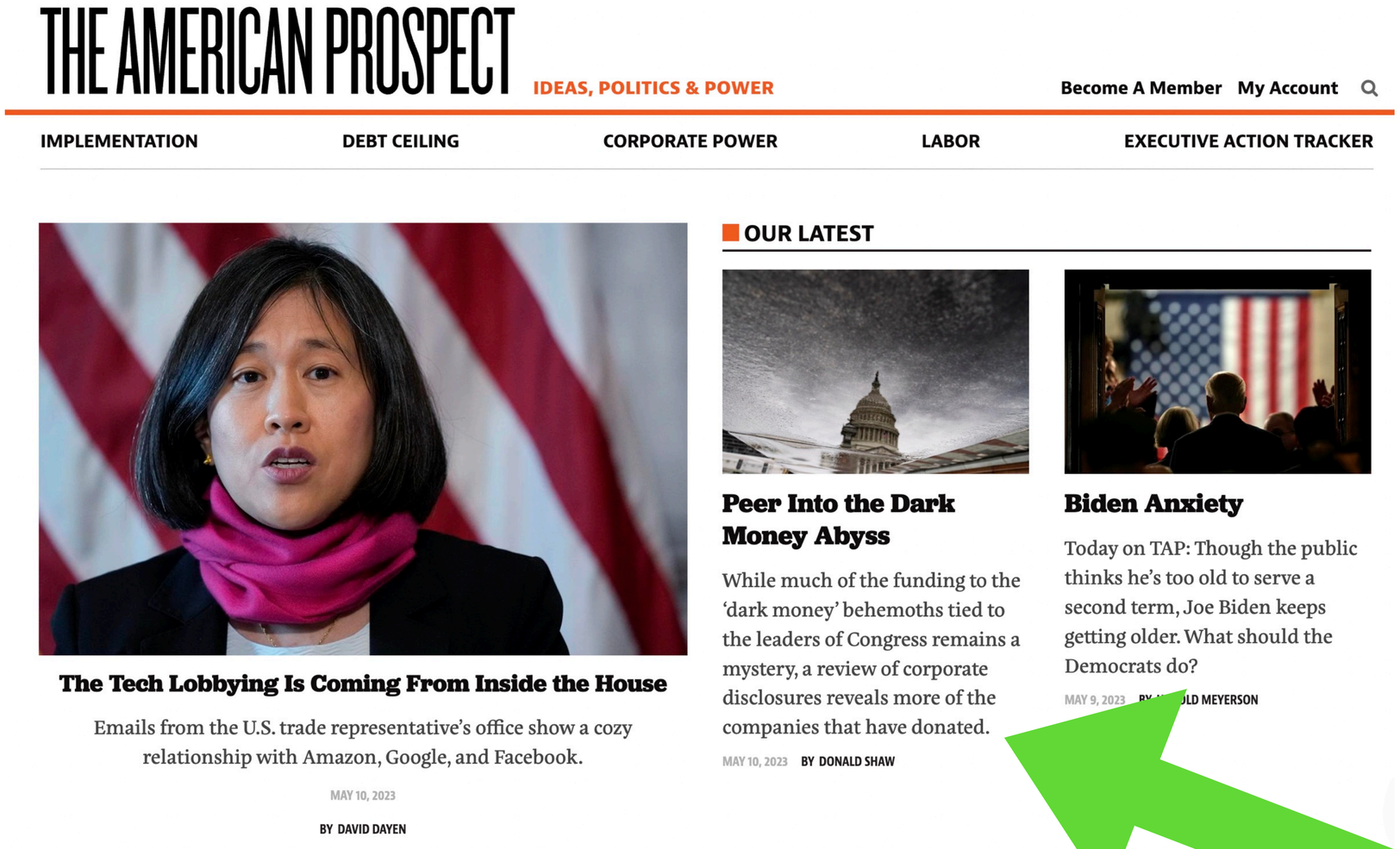
Our Reach

- Millions of readers every year through our website and republishing agreements
- More than 1,000 news reports since 2018 examining corporate power and special interest influence
- 50,000+ followers across social media platforms, led by 33k team followers on X
- Newsletter list makes us the 7th-largest U.S. news site on the Ghost publishing platform

Our Support

- Primarily supported by subscribers starting at $5 a month for full access
- Member of the Institute for Nonprofit News (INN) and the NewsMatch drive
- 2020 project grantee of the Fund for Investigative Journalism (FIJ)
- Sustainable with another 10% of our newsletter converted to paid subscribers





Our Partners: The American Prospect has republished 85 Sludge stories over the past five years, entirely free of charge

Following Sludge Report, Coalition Launches Campaign to End Hate Group Funding

More than 20 philanthropists, foundations, and donor-advised fund providers launched their “Hate Is Not Charitable” campaign on March 20.

amalgamated FOUNDATION

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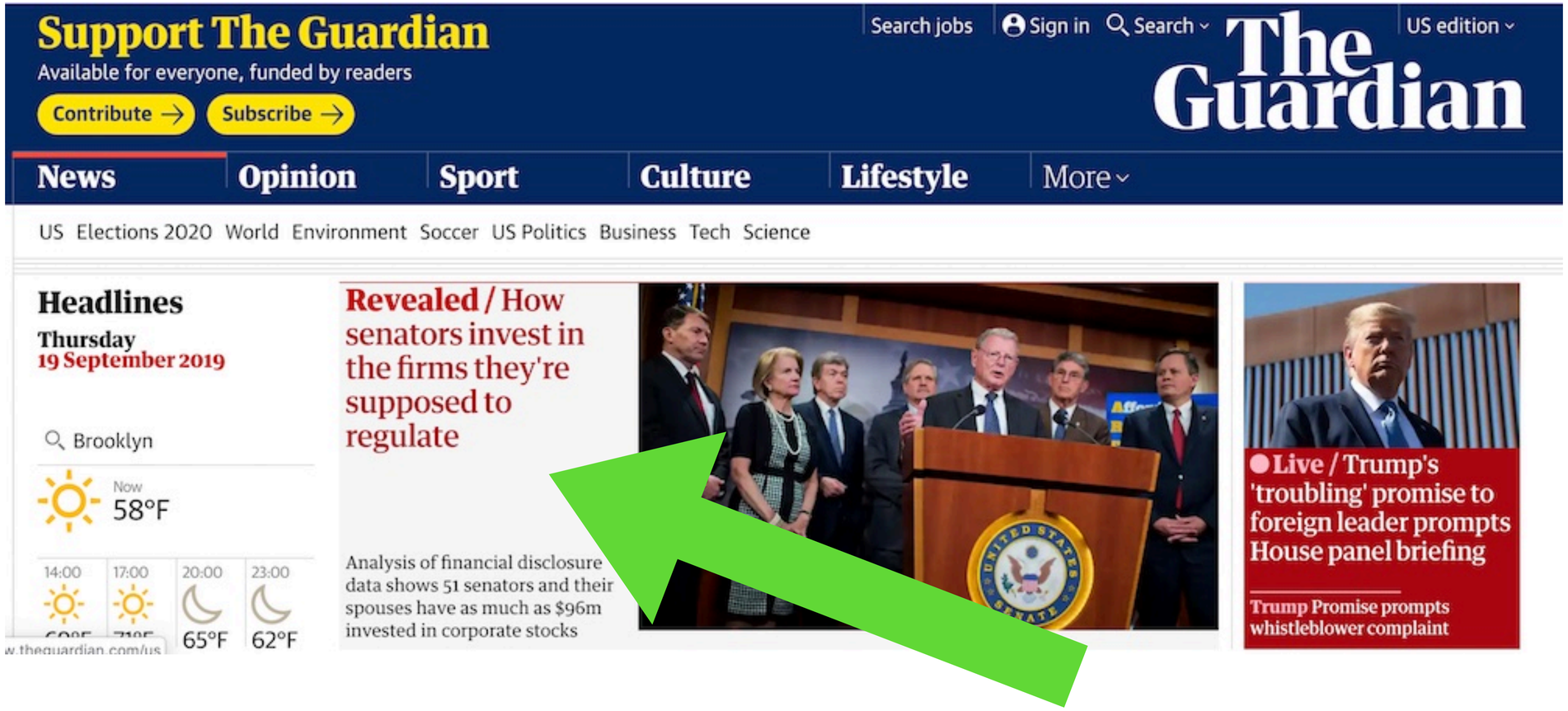
As leaders of philanthropic institutions, donor advised fund providers, and individual philanthropists, we are joining together to take a stand against the twisted use of charitable funds to support organizations that foment hatred. We are deeply concerned that donors, acting anonymously, through donor advised funds managed by Donors Trust, Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund, Schwab Charitable Fund, and V d Charitable between 2014 and 2017 contributed nearly $11 million to 34 organizations that y Law Center considers to be hate groups. These organizations include anti-LGBTQ groups, a anti-immigrant groups, a white nationalist group, among others.

Donors who utilize donor advised funds receive significant tax a ts anonymously. These advantages are based on the imperative that contributions

#1: We Exposed How U.S. Hate Groups Get Anonymous Funding

Our 2019 reporting series directly inspired the Hate Is Not Charitable campaign, joined by dozens of philanthropic groups

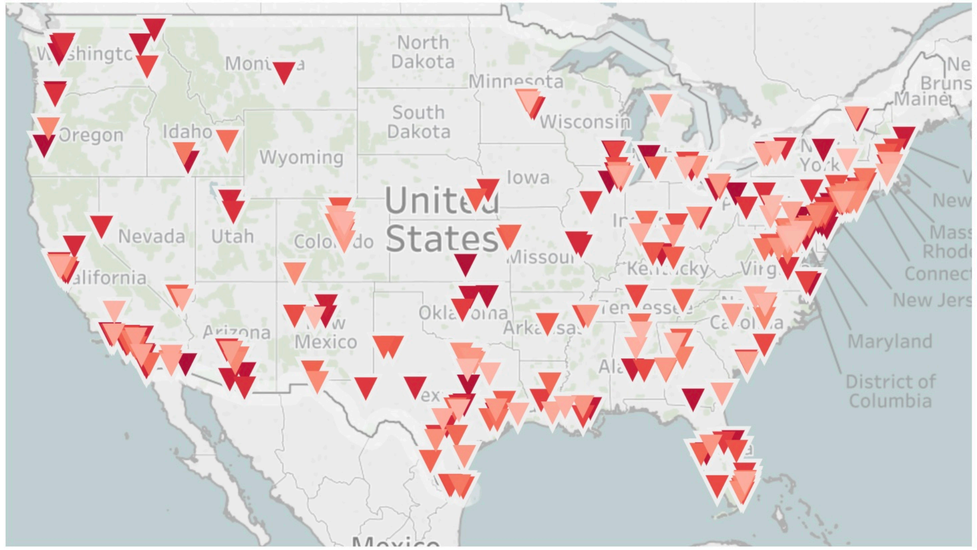


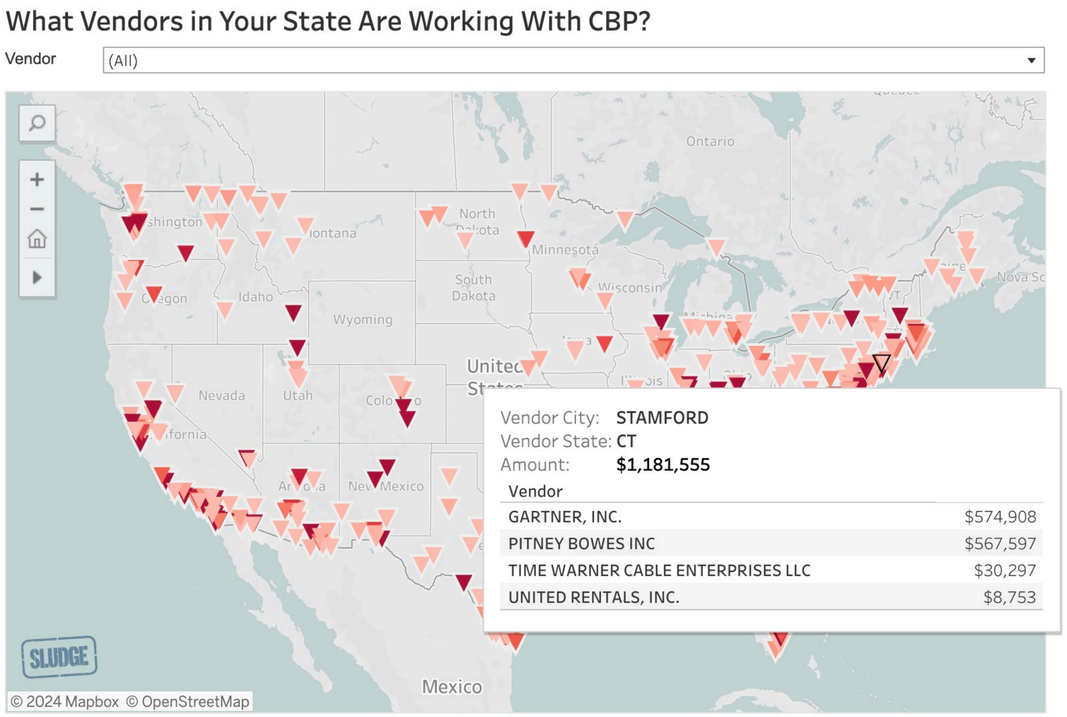
#2: We Uncovered Congress' Stocks

Our groundbreaking 2019 collaboration with the Guardian US put the personal investments of U.S. senators on their homepage

Who Is Making Money from ICE in Your State?

Hundreds of for-profit and nonprofit corporations have pulled in billions of dollars worth of ICE contracts in recent years. See where these ICE operations take place and where the corporations are headquartered.





From 2010 to June 24, 2019, U.S. Customs and Border Protection paid $6.41 billion to 1,122 outside vendors for an array of products and

#3: We Broke the Story of ICE and CBP Funding Local Law Enforcement

During debates over immigration policy, our data-viz went viral, inspired the New York City Council to pass a resolution, and prompted follow-up local reports

Manchin Bailed Out Plant That Pays Millions to His Family's Coal Company

Here's how Joe Manchin made his millions in the waste coal industry.

FAIR

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SEPTEMBER 28, 2021

‘Manchin Has Taken the Lead in Diluting Ethics Provisions’

CounterSpin interview with David Moore on Manchin's climate conflict

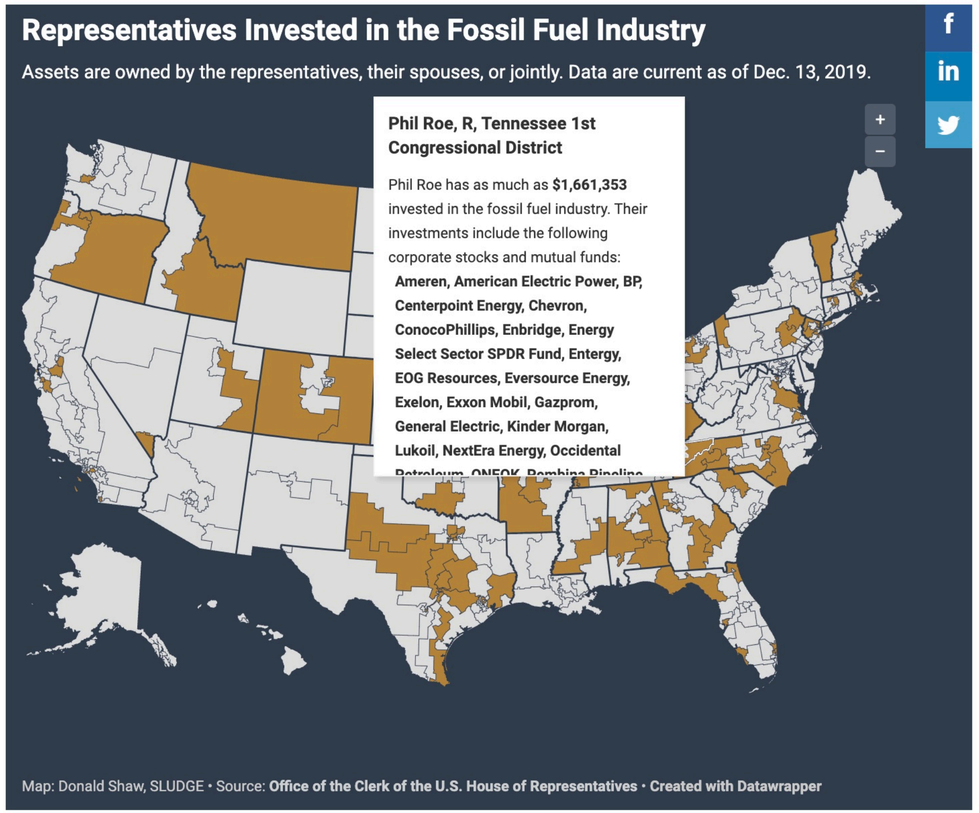
JANINE JACKSON

#4: We Exposed Joe Manchin’s Waste-Coal Self-Dealing

Sludge broke the story that Manchin, as governor, signed laws benefiting his family-held business. Follow-up stories came in the NYT, WaPo, Politico, etc.

Members of Congress Own Up to $93 Million in Fossil Fuel Stocks

As dire climate change projections mount, one in four members of Congress is invested in oil, gas, or coal interests.



#5: We Analyzed All the Fossil Fuel Stocks of Congress

In labor-intensive reports, Sludge was the first outlet to tally lawmakers' investments in fossil fuels and place the info on an interactive map

Mysterious Dark Money Group That Backed ‘Big Oil’s Favorite Democrat’ Was Funded by Big Oil

American Workers for Progress, which spent big for Cuellar, was funded by an oil and gas industry lobbying group.

U.S. Rep. Henry Cuellar (D-Texas) speaks to members of the media June 27, 2019 at the U.S. Capitol in Washington,

REVEALED: Oil Industry Lobbying Group Funded ‘Dark Money’ Ad Campaign for Conservative Democrats

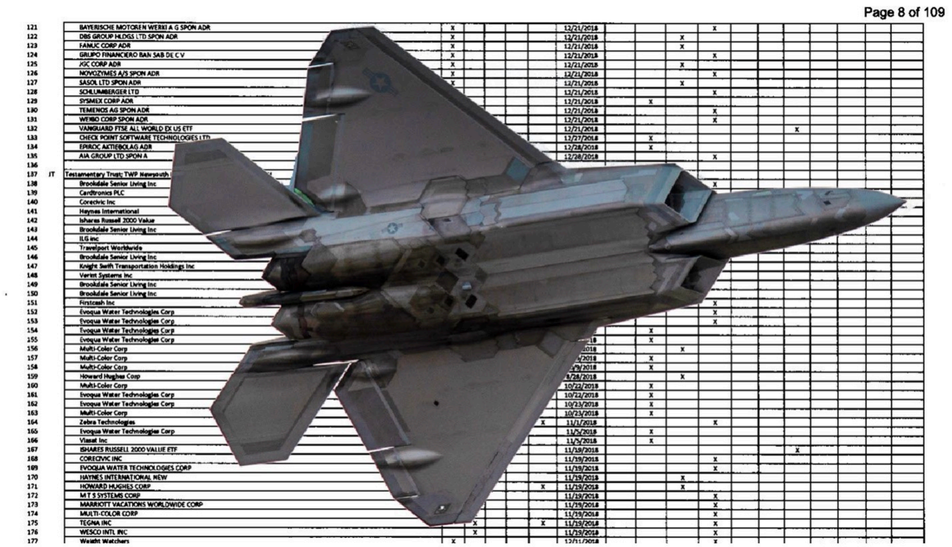
The American Petroleum Institute's latest tax filing reveals payments to an opaque group that has spent millions on ads promoting Henry Cuellar, Kyrsten Sinema, and other conservative Democrats.

#6: We Uncovered Big Oil’s “Dark Money”

Sludge twice unearthed tax docs showing that an oil industry lobbying group was behind shadowy campaign spending for “Big Oil’s Favorite Democrat”

The Members of Congress Who Profit From War

Here are the senators and representatives who own stock in Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon, and other top defense contractors.



Foregroud: A Lockheed Martin F-35 Joint Strike Fighter; Background: Rep. Gianforte's dense, handwritten financial disclosure.

POLITICS

At least 15 lawmakers who shape US defense policy have investments in military contractors

Warren Rojas, Camila DeChalus, Kimberly Leonard, and Dave Levinthal
Dec 13, 2021, 5:02 AM EST

Share | Save

From left: Rep. Jim Cooper, Sen. Tommy Tuberville, Sen. Jacky Rosen, and Rep. Pat Fallon. US House of Representatives; US Senate; Marianne Ayala/Insider

Rashida Tlaib Proposes Defense Stock Ban for Members of Congress

The bill would ban members of Congress from trading in weapons companies like Lockheed Martin and Raytheon, as well as in Amazon, Pfizer and thousands more Department of Defense contractors.

#7: We Exposed the Defense Stocks of Congress

Our viral 2020 report led to a wave of follow-up stories on conflicts of interest of lawmakers approving rising defense contracts to companies in which they invest.

#8: Sludge Scooped Trump's Billionaire Legal Backers

Sludge's find of billionaires steering donations to the RNC Legal Fund was featured on MSNBC in the summer of 2020, one of several on-air mentions

NYC Public Campaign Financing Program Leveled the Playing Field: Report

A new Brennan Center analysis found that New York City's small-dollar matching program was key in electing record numbers of women and people of color to City Council.

Seattle Residents Make Record Use of 'Democracy Voucher' Program

Last year's elections saw gains in use of the public campaign financing system among people of color, younger, and lower-income Seattleites, according to a new report.

Public Campaign Financing Is Coming to New York

With funding approved in the state budget, a new program that matches small-dollar donations could allow candidates to run campaigns supported by everyday New Yorkers.

Oakland Voters Approve 'Democracy Dollars' Program to Boost Participation in City Elections

An Oakland ballot measure creating a public campaign financing option and strengthening transparency in election spending passed with strong support.

#9: Sludge Leads In-Depth Coverage of Democracy Reforms

Since 2020, Sludge has kept up a solutions-focused reporting series on campaign finance, ethics, and voting rights reforms that are working in—and being adopted by—states and cities.

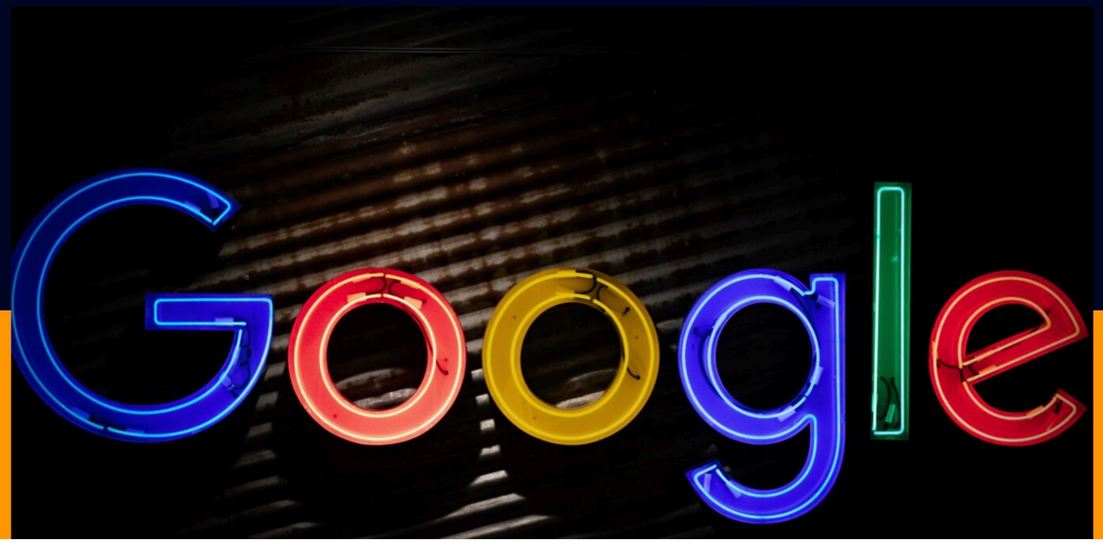
Corporate America is Helping to Elect Anti-Abortion Attorneys General

Abortion access is on the ballot in several states this year, where Democratic AG candidates have pledged not to enforce restrictive abortion laws and Republicans have said they would enforce the bans.

Abortion rights activists participate in a Bans Off Our Bodies rally on May 14, 2022 in Washington, D.C.

MAJOR CORPORATIONS HAVE DONATED OVER $6 MILLION TO ANTI-ABORTION GROUPS, DESPITE PROMISES TO DEFEND ACCESS

Google, Comcast, and Amazon promised to defend employees' access to abortion. Meanwhile, they've donated millions to groups supporting anti-abortion candidates.

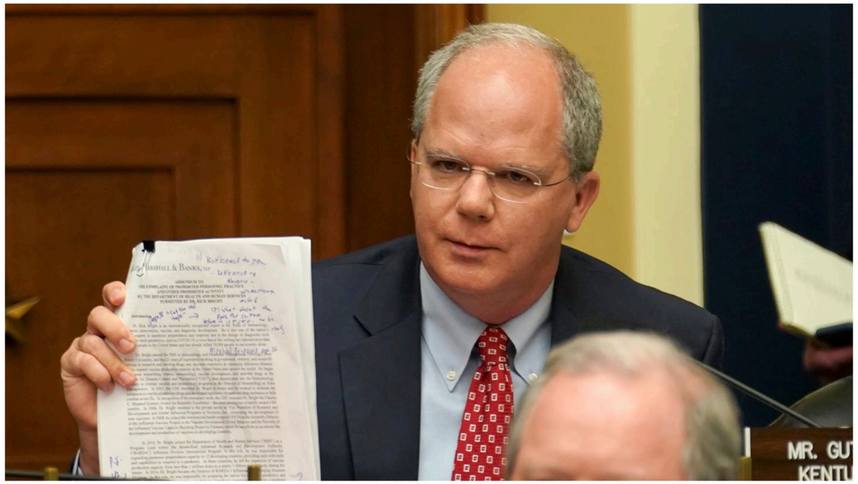


#10: We Broke a Major Corporate Accountability Story on Abortion Access

In 2022, soon before Roe fell, Sludge was the first to name the large companies that pledged to support abortion rights that had donated to the Republican Attorneys General Association (RAGA)

Members of Congress Profited From COVID Bailout While Small Businesses Were Shut Out

This new analysis of how members of Congress benefited from the CARES Act comes as Congress failed to provide as much relief for ordinary workers as many had hoped in the latest round of stimulus.



EXPOSED: Reps Pass Bills That Benefit Their Own Private Companies

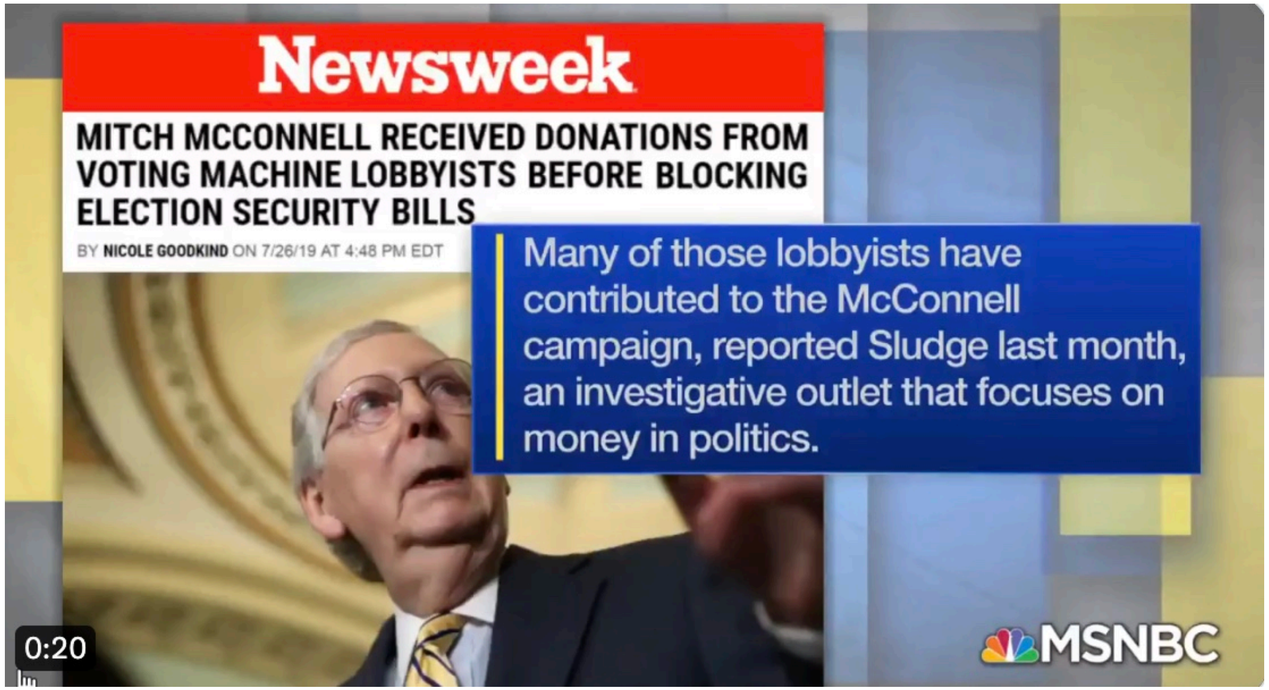
Nearly 100 House representatives hold positions at private companies. There's nothing stopping them from using their legislative power to pad their bottom lines.

Sludge Investigation Featured on Vice TV

Bonus (#11): We Went Viral by Publishing All the Outside Income of Members of Congress

Social media accounts racked up millions of views of politicians whose businesses benefited from forgivable loans during the Covid pandemic

Helping Political Newsreaders Follow the Money



Linked in news: NPR, Politico, CNN's KFILE, The Intercept, Newsweek, The Daily Beast, Slate, Mother Jones, HuffPost, The Appeal, Right Wing Watch, Motherboard, Vice, The New Republic, etc…

Collaborations: The Guardian US, WNYC, Capital & Main, Fast Company, TYT Investigates, CJR & The Nation's Covering Climate Now, More Perfect Union, LittleSis

Cited by: Color of Change, Justice Democrats, 350.org, Sunrise Movement, RAICES (Texas), CAIR, Sleeping Giants, RepresentUS, Common Cause, Public Citizen, CREW, POGO, and others

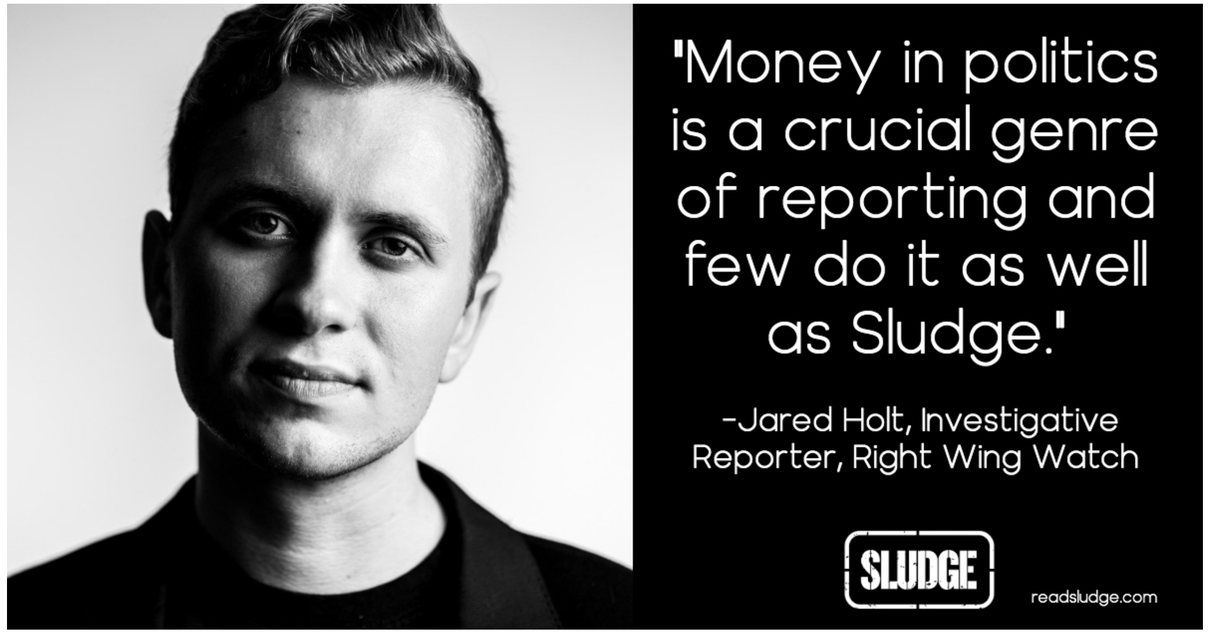
A Lean, Two-Person Investigative Team

Previously: OpenCongress, the most-visited nonprofit bill-tracking site

- 91% of our operating budget is for two co-founders to research, report, edit, and collaborate
- 3% is publishing tech (Ghost Pro site hosting and Outpost membership tools) to reach sustainability from our growing email list
- 3% is other newsroom tech tools, 2% is nonprofit accounting, and 1% is news subscriptions
- Producing hundreds of investigative stories a year, with data analysis and interactive data-viz

David Moore, co-founder

Donald Shaw, co-founder and editor



Get in touch to discuss a charitable grant, tax-deductible gift, or reporting partnership—and help keep Sludge following the money

Contact: david@readsludge.com, (917) 753-3462 - LinkedIn - More About Us