

Peter Franchot for Comptroller Campaign
Review of Contributions—2010 Campaign Cycle

Maryland Tax Education Foundation
November 16, 2011

The cost of political campaigns is skyrocketing. MTEF wanted to find out who finances these campaigns. The results pose some questions. MTEF reviewed the finance records filed with the State of Maryland by the Franchot for Comptroller campaign.

Summary

The 2010 campaign raised \$1.9 million, of which 76% of the contributions originated in Maryland. Out of state contributions (24%) derived principally from the District of Columbia and Virginia. Individuals represented 56% of contributions, with businesses and PACs providing 37%.

Contributions of \$1,000 or more (715 in total) provided 65% of all donations. Of the 715 large contributions, 90 specific contributions were \$4,000 or more.

The above statistics on specific contributions understate the generosity of certain families or business owners, since family members can give in unison, or a business owner can channel donations through multiple corporations. Also, such statistics exclude the effects of bundling. In politics, “bundling” refers to the convoluted practice of combining numerous small contributions into a large contribution that is then funneled to a candidate through a “conduit,” generally an individual or corporation trying to gain influence.

To the extent practical, MTEF links families with their businesses in order to consider “combined generosity” in the next section.

Large Contributors

Entities affiliated with the West Group Management LLC (a Virginia real estate firm controlled by the Halpin family) and the Halpin family (Virginia) contributed \$54,125:

<u>Contributor</u>	<u>Contribution</u>
World Resources	\$ 6,000
Helen Halpin Trust	4,000
Halpin (Wyoming)	4,000
Halpin (Virginia)	4,000
Western Sky Investors	3,375
Gateway Canyons	3,375
Gateway Canyons Private Tours	1,500
Sky Adventures	3,375
West Creek Cattle	1,500
Cobblestone Ridge, LLC	4,000
West Group Properties	4,000
The Granite Group	4,000
Pine Associates	4,000
Eagle Management Corp.	3,000
1985 Group	4,000
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	\$ 54,125

Multiple corporations and James Robinson at 10 East Lee Street, Baltimore, donated a total of \$37,000. Among other businesses, James Robinson owns Morgan Creek Productions, a movie producer. Robinson family members appeared to contribute another \$15,750, for a grand total of \$52,750.

Firms based at 2560 Lord Baltimore Drive accounted for \$30,100 in contributions. The address is associated with Edward St. John, the real estate developer.

The Blair family of Montgomery County accounted for \$24,100 (including a contribution from Blair Office Building). The Blairs are controlling stockholders in Health Extras, Inc., which holds a large drug contract with the State. The contract's extension was recently approved by the Board of Public Works.

Similarly, multiple corporations and Steven Fader at 23 Walker Avenue contributed a total of \$13,000. Car dealerships and real estate.

Five companies at East Biddle Street provided a total of \$16,000. The companies appear to be affiliated with Ron Lipscomb, the real estate developer.

Peter Angelos and the Orioles came in at \$11,000.

The Abramson family, Tower Companies (affiliated real estate developer) and Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney (Ron Abramson is a partner in the firm) contributed \$18,000.

Pamela and Jonathan Genn, John Gudelsky and Samuel Yedlin provided a combined \$16,000 to the campaign. They appear linked by real estate investments.

The Trone family, affiliated with Total Wine & Beverage (retail services systems) provided \$14,000. Total Wine & Beverage is interested in extending its "super store" concept to Maryland.

A Microsoft Excel spreadsheet with details on the campaign contributions is posted on the MTEF website.

MTEF estimates the top 20 family/corporate groups account for 20% of the Comptroller's 2010 campaign contributions, before the effects of bundling, which would increase the level of concentration.

About the MTEF

MTEF is a non profit, non partisan organization that studies budget and tax issues in the State of Maryland. Previous topics have included:

- A \$1.1 billion legal fee requested by the Angelos law firm;
- A \$1.5 billion slots license giveaway proposed by the State of Maryland;
- Montgomery County's \$2 billion school budget and its related academic performance;
- The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (the \$3.5 billion water utility), and its related performance;
- The fact that over half of slots-related purse subsidies will go to out-of-state horse owners;
- Constellation Energy's \$4 billion nuclear sale to Electricite de France and reasonable concessions to BG&E ratepayers;
- The investment performance of the Maryland state pension fund and the level of investment management fees;
- The level of state government subsidies to State Center, a proposed real estate development in Baltimore; and
- Constellation Energy's proposed merger with Exelon Corporation and reasonable concessions to BG&E ratepayers.