

NEWS | ECONOMY & LABOR

Some of AIPAC's Biggest Donors Are Also Financing Attacks Against Labor Rights

The movements for labor and Palestinian rights have common cause against the billionaires who aim to destroy them both.

By Derek Seidman, TRUTHOUT

June 5, 2024

Truthout doesn't serve the interests of politicians or billionaires. Instead, we work for you, readers who believe in justice and want to see a transformed world. Will you advance our work today with a tax-deductible donation?

[Donate Now](#)



Jewish American demonstrators rally outside the Manhattan headquarters of pro-Israel lobbying group American Israel Public Affairs Committee and the offices of Senators Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, who accept donations from the group, on February 22, 2024, in New York City.

SELCUK ACAR / ANADOLU VIA GETTY IMAGES

In response to Israel's genocidal siege of Gaza, a new progressive effort, the "[Reject AIPAC](#)" coalition, is [calling](#) on federal candidates to refuse endorsements and contributions from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), whose vast

CUT THROUGH THE CORPORATE NOISE WITH REAL MEDIA.

Truthout doesn't serve the interests of politicians or billionaires. Instead, we work for you, readers who believe in justice and want to see a transformed world. Will you advance our work today with a tax-deductible donation?

AIPAC's political influence, and the labor movement — have common opponents: Some of the biggest donors to the pro-Israel electoral machine are also financing the national union-busting infrastructure that has, for decades, waged a frontal assault on U.S. workers.

A Truthout investigation reveals that a handful of billionaire donors who have given huge sums to AIPAC's political efforts have also spent millions funding key groups aiming to demolish the labor movement. Some of these anti-labor groups include the Job Creators Network, the Center for Union Facts, the Koch-backed State Policy Network, the Manhattan Institute, and the Liberty Justice Center, a central group behind the 2018 *Janus v. AFSCME* decision. Moreover, major anti-labor AIPAC donors from Wall Street are among the key backers of Republican Rep. Virginia Foxx, who is leading the McCarthyist congressional hearings against critics of Israel on campuses and in unions.

The dual aims of some of AIPAC's top donors —

CUT THROUGH THE CORPORATE NOISE WITH REAL MEDIA.

Truthout doesn't serve the interests of politicians or billionaires. Instead, we work for you, readers who believe in justice and want to see a transformed world. Will you advance our work today with a tax-deductible donation?

“It’s not just about standing in solidarity with Palestine for its own sake, which is vital and important,” Schuhrke told *Truthout*, “but also to try to stop this ... repressive environment that’s gunning for the labor movement itself.”

RELATED STORY



Pro-Israel Billionaires Line Up Behind NC Republican Leading Campus Witch Hunt

War Against Labor Unions and Palestinian Rights

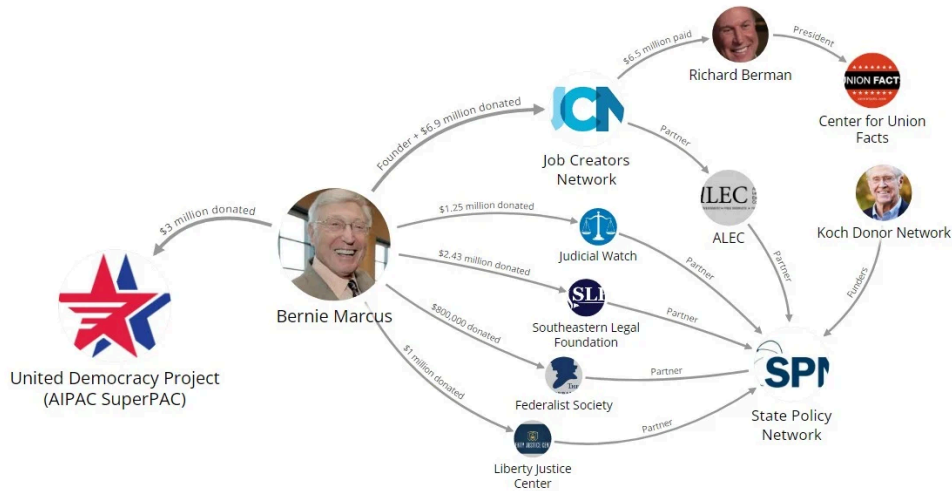
Bernie Marcus is the co-founder and former CEO of Home Depot. He is worth nearly \$10 billion. For decades, he’s used his vast wealth to fund a host of

CUT THROUGH THE CORPORATE NOISE WITH REAL MEDIA.

Truthout doesn't serve the interests of politicians or billionaires. Instead, we work for you, readers who believe in justice and want to see a transformed world. Will you advance our work today with a tax-deductible donation?

has spent millions against progressive candidates. This makes Marcus the fourth top donor to AIPAC-tied electoral groups, according to the investigative news outlet Sludge. In the 2022 cycle, Marcus also donated \$1 million to UDP.

Marcus has been a longtime enemy of the labor movement, funding numerous organizations that are waging war against labor unions and workers' rights.



Top AIPAC donor Bernie Marcus is bankrolling anti-union groups.

LITTLESIS.ORG

Truthout doesn't serve the interests of politicians or billionaires. Instead, we work for you, readers who believe in justice and want to see a transformed world. Will you advance our work today with a tax-deductible donation?

Alliance. Since then, he has given the JCN at least \$6.9 million.

The JCN has spent nearly \$1.4 million on lobbying the federal government since 2016. Its recent lobbying efforts have focused on measures like overturning the NLRB's joint employer rule, which expanded rights for workers with multiple employers, and pushing the National Labor Relations Board Reform Act, which would weaken the NLRB for workers by preventing a Democratic majority.

The JCN has received millions from anti-union industry groups like the Retail Industry Leaders Association and the National Restaurant Association, and JCN "partners" include FreedomWorks, Americans for Prosperity and the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), all key hubs of the Koch dark money empire that has been a driving force behind state-level attacks on labor unions and workers' rights.

Anti-Union Attacks

Truthout doesn't serve the interests of politicians or billionaires. Instead, we work for you, readers who believe in justice and want to see a transformed world. Will you advance our work today with a tax-deductible donation?

Over the past decade, the JCN has paid \$6.5 million to Berman's firm, presumably to oversee its campaigns.

One of Berman's core missions is to destroy the labor movement. "I get up every morning and I try to figure out how to screw with the labor unions," he told a group of oil executives in 2014. Berman's anti-labor front groups, backed by millions in corporate cash, are key weapons that business power employs in war against labor unions.

Berman oversees a dizzying array of nonprofits and front groups aimed at attacking unions and other progressive causes, much of which resort to mudslinging and personal attacks. His Center for Union Facts functions as the corporate elite's attack dog against unions like the United Auto Workers and Starbucks Workers United. His Employment Policies Institute wages war against minimum wage increases.

Through supporting Berman's operations, big AIPAC donors like Bernie Marcus have been able to fund attacks

CUT THROUGH THE CORPORATE NOISE WITH REAL MEDIA.

Truthout doesn't serve the interests of politicians or billionaires. Instead, we work for you, readers who believe in justice and want to see a transformed world. Will you advance our work today with a tax-deductible donation?

Links to Historic Assault on Labor

Marcus funds other attacks on the labor movement through his huge donations to groups like the Liberty Justice Center (LJC), a right-wing law firm that played a pivotal role in the 2018 *Janus* Supreme Court decision which ruled that government workers are not required to pay dues to unions that represent them in collective bargaining.

In 2021, Marcus gave \$1 million to the Liberty Justice Center. The LJC is part of the State Policy Network, the vast network of conservative state and national groups funded by the Koch donor network that incessantly attack labor unions and pro-worker legislation.

The LJC represented Mark Janus in the *Janus* case, which Schuhrke, writing in *Jewish Currents*, called “one of the most consequential assaults on organized labor in recent years.” *Janus*, writes Schuhrke, “effectively imposed ‘right-to-work’ on the nation’s entire public sector.”

Truthout doesn't serve the interests of politicians or billionaires. Instead, we work for you, readers who believe in justice and want to see a transformed world. Will you advance our work today with a tax-deductible donation?

required to pay union dues because the union members' employer is a nonprofit that receives government funding.

“The suit is an attempt to use the union's pro-Palestine position as a justification to extend *Janus* to private organizations that receive government funding,” [writes](#) Schuhrke.

Koch Ties

Along with Marcus, top AIPAC donors from Wall Street are key players in the national anti-union landscape.

Paul Singer, worth [\\$6.1 billion](#), is currently the [fifth top](#) donor to the AIPAC political network in the 2024 election cycle, with [\\$1 million](#) donated to UDP — the [same amount](#) he donated in the 2022 cycle.

Singer is the [founder](#) of Elliott Management, one of the world's biggest hedge funds. A 2012 [Fortune](#) profile called him “a passionate defender of the 1% and a rising

Truthout doesn't serve the interests of politicians or billionaires. Instead, we work for you, readers who believe in justice and want to see a transformed world. Will you advance our work today with a tax-deductible donation?

and workers' rights.

Singer has donated at least \$8.76 million to the Manhattan Institute since 2010. He's also the chairman of its board, sitting alongside other billionaires like former Trump education secretary Betsy DeVos.

Like the Liberty Justice Center, the Manhattan Institute is part of the Koch-backed State Policy Network (SPN), which also includes groups like ALEC and Americans for Prosperity, which for years have been at the forefront of the Koch network's anti-labor operation. The anti-union National Right to Work Foundation is also part of the SPN.

Marcus is also a huge donor to SPN affiliates and partners. Since 2010, he's given at least \$2.43 million to the Southeastern Legal Foundation, \$1.25 million to Judicial Watch and \$800,000 to the Federalist Society.

AIPAC Wall Street Donors Back Virginia Foxx

CUT THROUGH THE CORPORATE NOISE WITH REAL MEDIA.

Truthout doesn't serve the interests of politicians or billionaires. Instead, we work for you, readers who believe in justice and want to see a transformed world. Will you advance our work today with a tax-deductible donation?

Project last November, the same amount he gave in [2022](#). According to [The Lever](#), which obtained confidential internal AIPAC documents, Jonathan Gray, the president of Blackstone Group, the world's largest private equity firm, pledged \$1 million to AIPAC. Blackstone committed millions to AIPAC "to support humanitarian relief efforts" after October 7. This includes \$3 million from the Blackstone Charitable Foundation and \$1 million personally donated from Gray (whose personal net worth is \$7 billion), and Blackstone founder and CEO Stephen Schwarzman (whose personal net worth is \$36.9 billion).

Both Blackstone and Apollo have poor records on workers' rights. The [Private Equity Labor Scorecard](#), which grades private equity firms on their labor practices, gave Blackstone an "F" and Apollo a "D." Blackstone recently faced major controversy when one of its portfolio companies, the slaughterhouse cleaning service Packers Sanitation Services Incorporated, was [found](#) to have employed over 100 children, some as young as 13.

CUT THROUGH THE CORPORATE NOISE WITH REAL MEDIA.

Truthout doesn't serve the interests of politicians or billionaires. Instead, we work for you, readers who believe in justice and want to see a transformed world. Will you advance our work today with a tax-deductible donation?

Foxx, who represents North Carolina's Fifth District, chairs the House Committee on Education and the Workforce. She's used that seat of power to wage hearings into alleged antisemitism on campuses, the most high-profile examples of which took place last December with the president of Harvard, MIT and Penn.

Foxx, whose ultraright political agenda includes an unremitting hostility to labor unions, is expanding her witch hunts to other campuses — and also, now, to unions that express solidarity with Palestinians.

Rowan, Schwarzman and Singer have been major contributors to Foxx, especially since she began her hearings into campuses and unions in late 2023. Rowan is a massive donor to the University of Pennsylvania, and he led the effort to unseat former Penn President Liz Magill. Weeks after Foxx's grilling of Magill, Rowan reportedly co-hosted a fundraiser for Foxx in New York City.

Rowan and his spouse Carolyn also donated \$13,200 to

CUT THROUGH THE CORPORATE NOISE WITH REAL MEDIA.

Truthout doesn't serve the interests of politicians or billionaires. Instead, we work for you, readers who believe in justice and want to see a transformed world. Will you advance our work today with a tax-deductible donation?

Adelson have also donated tens of thousands of dollars to Foxx. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee PAC, AIPAC's political action committee, has channeled over \$80,000 to Foxx since 2022.

Common Cause

As billionaire-backed politicians and groups increasingly use the cudgel of “antisemitism” to attack labor unions, one thing should be clear: The Palestinian solidarity movement and the labor movement have common cause against big corporate donors that seek to destroy them both.

Schuhrke says it is vital for the labor movement to resist the new McCarthyism against pro-Palestinian activists and critics of Israeli actions — many of whom themselves are union members.

“This kind of repression, no matter what form it takes,” says Schuhrke, “is always inherently the enemy of the labor movement.”

Truthout doesn't serve the interests of politicians or billionaires. Instead, we work for you, readers who believe in justice and want to see a transformed world. Will you advance our work today with a tax-deductible donation?

and calling on elected officials to reject AIPAC contributions.

Right now, thousands of unionized graduate workers, postdocs and researchers across the University of California (UC) system, who are members of the powerful UAW Local 4811, are waging a militant strike in response to violent attacks on peaceful protesters. The union claims the UC administration committed unfair labor practices by repressing workers who were engaged in free speech over working conditions.

Local 4811 has been one of the most outspoken unions demanding a ceasefire in Gaza and in displaying solidarity with the plight of Palestinians. Many members of Local 4811 participated in the UC Palestine Solidarity Encampments, and the union is calling on the UC administration to negotiate with the protest movement to reach an agreement on its demands around divestment from the UC's investments in weapons companies that are profiting from Israel's war on Gaza.

CUT THROUGH THE CORPORATE NOISE WITH REAL MEDIA.

Truthout doesn't serve the interests of politicians or billionaires. Instead, we work for you, readers who believe in justice and want to see a transformed world. Will you advance our work today with a tax-deductible donation?

occupation and apartheid as well, and allow Palestine to be free.”

THANK YOU FOR READING TRUTHOUT. ONE BRIEF BUT IMPORTANT THING BEFORE YOU GO.

For over 20 years, *Truthout* has been publishing boldly honest journalism like the piece above – **stories about and by grassroots activists, reports from the frontlines of social movements, and unapologetic critiques of the systemic forces that shape all of our lives.**

Monied interests prevent other publications from confronting the worst injustices in our world. But *Truthout* remains a haven for transformative journalism in pursuit of justice.

We simply cannot do this without support from our readers. At this time, we're appealing to add 50 monthly donors in the next 2 days. If you can,

CUT THROUGH THE CORPORATE NOISE WITH REAL MEDIA.

Truthout doesn't serve the interests of politicians or billionaires. Instead, we work for you, readers who believe in justice and want to see a transformed world. Will you advance our work today with a tax-deductible donation?



Copyright © Truthout. May not be reprinted without permission.



DEREK SEIDMAN

Derek Seidman is a writer, researcher and historian living in Buffalo, New York. He is a regular contributor for *Truthout* and a contributing writer for LittleSis.

RELATED STORIES



CUT THROUGH THE CORPORATE NOISE WITH REAL MEDIA.