

Moving Right: A New Report Shows How Conservative Foundations Have Succeeded in Shaping Public Policy

Charging the media with left-wing bias has become a familiar mantra of conservatives, but a new report from the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP) suggests that right-wing pundits are in fact monopolizing political debate in the very media outlets that they regularly attack.

"Right-wing think tanks receive far greater media attention than their progressive, or even centrist, counterparts," the study says--evidence that the sophisticated marketing of conservative policy ideas, which is being strategically financed by several prominent foundations, is paying off.

"The foundations provided \$16.3 million in grants to help political conservatives shape public and elite opinion," the report says. "This money has supported three interlocking purposes: the development of right-wing media outlets, the development of conservative public affairs programming on public television and radio, and the development of right-wing media critics to exert pressure on the media mainstream into covering the right's political and policy agenda."

In addition to underwriting this media blitz, the 12 conservative foundations that the NCRP report examines have awarded:

- \$88.9 million to support conservative scholarship and academic programs, train younger conservative activists, and reverse progressive curricula and policy trends on America's campuses.
- \$79.2 million to build and strengthen a national infrastructure of think tanks and advocacy groups, \$64 million of which was directed to institutions with a major focus on domestic policy issues and \$15.2 million of which was aimed at institutions focusing on American national security interests, foreign policy, and global affairs.
- \$10.5 million to assist conservative law firms and law-related projects
- \$9.3 million to support a network of regional and state-based think tanks and advocacy institutions

- \$5.4 million to organizations working to transform the social views and giving practices of religious and philanthropic leaders.

According to the NCRP report, conservative foundations have been much more willing than their "mainstream" counterparts to maintain a national policy focus. They have also been more willing to support multiple social change strategies, including advocacy, leadership development, and constituency mobilization. "Conservative funders see themselves as part of a larger movement to defeat 'big government liberalism' and they fund accordingly, but mainstream foundations prefer to make modest, on-the-ground improvements in specific neighborhoods," says Sally Covington, author of the report. "As a result, mainstream foundations increasingly operate within the larger policy assumptions and parameters that conservative funders help shape."

The 52-page report, *Moving a Public Policy Agenda: The Strategic Philanthropy of Conservative Foundations*, scrutinizes the grantmaking practices of the 12 conservative foundations and includes an analysis of major grantee activities, an examination of conservative resource mobilization since the early 1970s, and a discussion of the public policy impact of conservative philanthropy.

Copies of the report are available for \$25 from:

NCRP
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