

I have donated to the campaigns of candidates seeking state and federal offices. Maybe you have made a contribution to a candidate, too. I know plenty of people who really don't have the money to make those contributions, but when asked they will somehow find an "extra" \$25 or \$50 because they believe they are really helping the candidate. Like me, they might even believe that those contributions will buy yard signs, or radio time, or pay for printing and mailing. They may think that the candidate will need and remember the contribution, and will represent them more vigorously in the legislature.

Well I am finished donating to state and federal candidates. I did some research on the Ohio Secretary of State's web site to learn where Ohio 20<sup>th</sup> District State Senator, Jimmy Stewart, got his campaign funds and how he spent them. The next time you are asked to make a contribution to a candidate seeking state office, consider the following:

Candidates for state and local office are prohibited by law from accepting campaign contributions from corporations. This is probably based on the assumption that deep-pocket corporate contributions could be seen as influencing the legislators' voting. But corporations can form political action committees (PACs) through which they can and do make campaign contributions.

Jimmy Stewart has accepted contributions from a wide range of corporate interests including Abbott Laboratories, American Electric Power, AK Steel, Altria, AT&T, BP, Cinergy, Duke Energy, Eli Lilly, Embarq, Fifth Third Bank, First Energy, Glaxo Smith Cline, HSBC, Humana, Grange Mutual Casualty, Huntington Bancshares, J. P. Morgan Chase, Johnson and Johnson, Kraft Foods, Merck, Molina Healthcare, Motorists Mutual, Nationwide, NOVA Chemicals, the Ohio Bank PAC, Pfizer, SBC, UPS, Verizon, Wal-Mart and Wyeth. There are more.

One might assume that the interests of corporate Ohio might be at odds with the interests of Ohio's labor unions. So to assure that they receive equal representation from Stewart, unions contribute conspicuously to his campaign fund. The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Laborers District Council of Ohio, Ohio Civil Service Employees Association/American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees, Ohio & Vicinity Regional Council of Carpenters, Ohio AFL-CIO, Teamsters, Ohio Federation of Teachers, and the Ohio Education Association are among Jimmy's organized labor contributors.

The professional and trade associations that have given money to Stewart include those representing doctors, dentists, hospitals, nurses, lawyers, mortgage brokers, cable television operators, accountants, contractors, the coal industry, credit unions, funeral directors, fair managers, home builders, merchants, the oil and gas industry, optometrists, osteopaths, podiatrists, therapists, realtors, police and firefighters. Thus, I suspect their interests are also well-represented.

If you ever have an issue with any of these industries, companies or unions, you might wonder if your legislators are going to be very responsive if it jeopardizes the hundreds of thousands of dollars in campaign contributions upon which they rely.

Since entering the race for the Ohio Legislature in 2002, Jimmy Stewart has raised almost 2.5-million dollars. Most of that money was raised during his race for the State Senate in 2008, a race in which he spent well in excess of 1.5-million dollars. Some of the remaining one-million dollars was spent on his three previous house races.

Candidates are prohibited from accepting cash contributions of over \$5000. But there are no such limits on *in-kind* contributions. So Jimmy Stewart and the State Republicans play a sort of shell game with campaign funds. In 2008, the Ohio Republicans, through their various committees and caucuses, contributed about one million dollars to Stewart, all as in-kind contributions in excess of \$5000. Those in-kind contributions were generally used to purchase media or to pay for postage or production costs.

The state republicans also gave Jimmy another \$17,000 in cash amounts of less than \$5000. Laundering money through the caucuses is a great way for individuals and PACs to contribute to the candidate without the direct connection that would be reported in a candidate's campaign finance report. It's a sort of "Make sure this gets to Jimmy," (wink, wink), deal.

Some of his cash came from voters like you. So you might wonder, "What does Jimmy do with the cash he raises?"

Since 2005, Jimmy Stewart has reimbursed himself nearly \$67,000.00 for "expenses" out of campaign funds. He spent over \$4000 of his campaign contributions on OSU tickets for "campaign purposes."

Earlier this year (2010), he reimbursed himself over \$2500 for attending a political conference in Washington, D.C. Keep in mind that Stewart was elected in 2008 and will not be up for re-election until 2012. Yet he is "campaigning" in Washington, D.C. – almost three years before his next election. Jimmy Stewart has already spent nearly \$42,000 for campaign expenses so far in 2010 (as of September).

Jimmy Stewart has paid out over \$11,000.00 from his campaign funds to rent "office space." I wish you luck in finding his rented offices.

In the interest of fairness, Jimmy Stewart has given over \$191,000.00 back to the statehouse republicans' various committees and caucuses, to be used to help other deserving candidates.

Jimmy Stewart has his wife and step-children on the campaign payroll. He has paid his wife nearly \$2000.00 to do graphic design work. (Stewart's wife works in graphic design for Ohio University. I hope she is not using tax-payer-purchased-university-owned equipment to do this work.) Jimmy has paid his step-children to canvass voters.

Jimmy has paid "volunteers" to walk in parades, to knock on doors, to place yard signs, and to distribute his campaign literature. He has paid for "food and beverages" for his "volunteers." According to his campaign finance reports, it appears that at most events, fairs, festivals, or dinners that Jimmy Stewart attends, he has paid his admission with campaign contributions. None of this is illegal, but is that what you thought you were paying for?

In my view, Jimmy Stewart is a true politician, bought and paid for by special interests, while buying his way into the Ohio Statehouse. I just wonder who he represents on the senate floor.

You can check out your state, federal and local legislators' campaign funds at:

<http://www.sos.state.oh.us/candidates.aspx>

More information about federal candidates is available here:

<http://www.opensecrets.org/index.php>