

# Dark Money<sup>1</sup>—Not the Grassroots—Is Behind the Convention of States Organizations

By Judi Caler



Patriots are rightly concerned that Mark Meckler, lobbyist and President of the Convention of States organizations (COS), has spent tens of millions of dollars spreading misinformation and cajoling State Legislatures into passing applications asking Congress to call a convention under Article V of the U.S. Constitution. Thirty-four States are needed to pass such applications to trigger a constitutional convention, where a new Constitution would likely be proposed, along with an easier mode of ratification. So, who is behind COS?

Meckler tells state legislators that COS is a grassroots movement, funded by thousands of ordinary citizens. In fact, since December, 2017, the COS [homepage](#) boasted:

## *WHO'S BEHIND THIS THING?*

*The American people. We thought you'd never ask! The Convention of States Project is first and foremost a movement of grassroots citizens who are fed up with business as usual in D.C. We're funded by thousands of everyday patriots who have committed their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor to protecting liberty for future generations.*

But [Andy Schlafly](#), attorney and son of conservative icon Phyllis Schlafly, testified at a [Pennsylvania hearing](#) on Oct. 22, 2019 against COS's Article V convention application (@ 11:55):

Schlafly: "...[W]ho's funding them? Where's the money coming from? There's a lot of **money** behind this. And they're not disclosing where the money behind this push to change the Constitution is coming from. That should scare everybody in this room. Who are these people who are pushing to rewrite the Constitution? I suspect some of them are globalists, but ask them...it's not disclosed. And I'm certainly not in favor of allowing billionaires who don't disclose their identity...[or] their real agenda...to rewrite our Constitution. That's **not** a good idea."

Meckler, at the same [hearing](#), feigning outrage, fumed (@ 46:11):

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<sup>1</sup> Dark money is money donated to politically active nonprofit organizations or anonymous corporate entities, which spend this money to influence political campaigns or other special interests but are not required to reveal their donors.

Meckler: "...[W]ho's funding this? Any of you at any time are welcome to visit our very fancy corporate offices ***in my house in Texas. In my personal home office off the kitchen, where all the billionaires apparently come visit me. It's an outrage and a slander.*** And this kind of slanderous politics takes this discussion to some place it should not go, which is frankly, it's just slander, and innuendo. It's gutter politics. And I don't believe in it...

"I can tell you who my donors are. See, because the person that raises the money for...this organization is my wife of 26 years who works in the office next to mine, who has raised money from over 80,000 individual grassroots patriots all over this country. So, if those are the millionaires and billionaires that Mr. Schlafly is afraid of, well, he might want to talk to the grandmas who send me checks and say, 'it's five bucks a month out of my fixed income, and I'm sorry I can't afford any more.' Again, an outrageous slander on the tens of thousands of people supporting this movement."

Notice that in one fell swoop, Meckler masterfully deflects attention from the source of his funding, while playing the victim and accusing his opponents of slander.

So, what's the truth? Let's go straight to the tax-exempt returns that Meckler is required to file with the IRS every year. These returns, also known as 990s, are public information and filed by all nonprofits.

The most recent 990s available for Meckler's organizations are for the years 2020, 2019, and 2018. The Meckler organizations appear to include Convention of States Action (COSA); Citizens for Self-Governance (CSG); Citizens for Self-Governance Action (CSG Action); and Defending Liberty, Inc. (DLI). Each year, Meckler filed a 990 return for each entity, as required by law, and signed them under penalty of perjury.

Nonprofits are not required to disclose the identity of their contributors—so all contributors are anonymous, unless the organization chooses to disclose them. That's why the accompanying Schedule B doesn't include the names & addresses of the donors—only the total amount of all donations totaling \$5,000 or more from each numbered donor during the year. Still, those figures are revealing.

Donations of \$5,000 or more to each entity are summarized by year on the accompanying Chart. The source documentation for figures on the Chart can be found mostly on Schedule B of the linked 990s.

Here's the short version:

Between 2018 and 2020, contributions ranging from \$5,000 to \$2,000,000 per donor, to the four entities totaled \$16,751,011, or 63% of the \$26.7 million in contributions reported on Meckler's combined 990s for the 3-year period. And that \$16.7 million was from *at most* 168 unique anonymous persons; thus, their average contribution was almost \$100,000 [ $\$16,751,011 \div 168 = \$99,708$ ].

But likely, Meckler has fewer than 168 major donors, as repeat donors over the 3-year period are to be expected. So, depending upon how many major donors gave in one, two, or three years and/or gave to multiple Meckler entities, the average donation per major donor over the three-year period amounts to *at least \$99,708, and may be more than \$200,000 or \$300,000!* ***So, COS isn't a grassroots organization funded from the bottom up by small donors.*** Schedule B provides proof that COS's agenda to replace our Constitution is coming mostly from major donors.

Meckler frequently sends out emails asking for money, to his list of unsuspecting patriots. Unsurprisingly, most of his requests are accompanied by an offer from a "generous donor" to match each contribution. The patriots on Meckler's email list probably have no idea that Meckler has been receiving almost two-thirds of his contributions from multi-millionaires and/or billionaires while drawing salaries for himself and his wife totaling hundreds of thousands of dollars annually.

We can only conclude that Meckler is disingenuous when he ridicules the suggestion that his organizations are funded by undisclosed multi-millionaires and billionaires. And while his organizations may well receive some small donations, he denies that the bulk of his money comes from the superrich. And all the while, he yells "slander" with a straight face, and shamelessly conjures up Grandma wishing she could give him more of her paltry income, when asked about the millions in **dark money** he's amassing!

We know why the liquor, drug, and tobacco industries invest millions in lobbyists to influence state legislation. But why would major donors invest millions in COS to bring about a convention to rewrite the U.S. Constitution?

The total amount of money spent over the years by the Meckler organizations to trigger a constitutional convention is astonishing. Meckler needs to be confronted everywhere he goes by opponents, supporters, & legislators alike—and asked why he is hiding the fact that he's working for the superrich. We have a right to know; it's our Constitution they're after!

You can download the 990 forms from the accompanying Chart and copy Schedule B, so you'll have ammo to push back with, the next time Meckler plays the Grandma card.

**Meckler Entities Anonymous Major Contributions (≥ \$5,000) for Years 2018 Through 2020**

Meckler Organizations' Forms 990	(A) # of Major Donors (Sched. B)	(B) Total \$ from Major Donors (Sched. B)	(C) Total of all Contributions: Form 990 p.1, line 8	B ÷ C Major Contributions' % of Total	B ÷ A Average Major Donation
<a href="#">COSA 2020 47-2245708</a>	55	\$4,112,370	\$7,159,560	57%	\$74,770
<a href="#">COSA 2019</a>	45	3,884,001	6,777,645	57%	86,311
<a href="#">COSA 2018</a>	26	2,239,125	4,872,216	46%	86,120
<a href="#">CSG 2020 27-1657203</a>	8	1,016,800	1,622,566	63%	127,100
<a href="#">CSG 2019</a>	13	633,100	961,914	66%	48,700
<a href="#">CSG 2018</a>	13	1,844,815	2,319,810	80%	141,909
<a href="#">CSG Action 2020 27-4648506</a>	1	2,000,000	2,000,000	100%	2,000,000
<a href="#">CSG Action 2019</a>	2	305,800	305,800	100%	152,900
<a href="#">CSG Action 2018</a>	2	535,000	581,000	92%	267,500
<a href="#">DLI 2018: 812320022 No Rev. 2019-20</a>	3	180,000	180,000	100%	60,000
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>\$16,751,011</b>	<b>\$26,780,511</b>	% of total contributions ≥ \$5,000*	Avg. \$ per Major Donor – at the very least*
*See note below				<b>63%</b>	<b>\$99,708</b>

\*Note: \$16,751,011 in major contributions [≥ \$5,000] out of \$26,780,511 total contributions [63%] were reported, from 168 Major Donors giving \$5,000 or more to the above Meckler entities from 2018-2020. Thus, the Average contribution given by a Major Donor was *at the very least \$99,708* [ $\$16,751,011 \div 168$ ] and may be over \$200,000 or \$300,000—if the same Major Donors contributed in multiple years and/or to multiple Meckler entities.