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Gathering Place
Ira Rohter

Isle campaign donations pay off for Big Oil -- at consumers' expense

CHEVRON, Tesoro and Aloha Petroleum spent \$696,402 in campaign donations and lobbying during the last three years to influence key office holders and candidates to oppose the gasoline price cap regulating their excessive profits in Hawaii. These numbers come from reports available from the Campaign Spending Commission and state Ethics Commission, as cited by Hawaii Clean Elections in testimony last May before the Legislature.

Statistics printed in the Star-Bulletin Sept. 12, and from the 2005 State Data Book show that Big Oil's "investment" of \$696,402 has allowed Chevron, Tesoro and Aloha Petroleum to rake in between \$1,821,330 to \$3,382,470 per week in excess profits since Aug. 21 alone. Projecting these numbers out a year, Hawaii consumers will be paying at least \$136,000,000 in excess profits to the oil companies who monopolize our marketplace. Not a bad rate of return for spending \$696,402 in lobbying and campaigns donations to lawmakers. All of these excess profits come straight out of Hawaii's consumers' pocketbooks, good money that could have been spent on their own needs instead of enriching profit-bloated oil industry executives and stockholders.

Had the revised gas cap calculation method passed during the 2006 legislative session been enforced by Governor Lingle, motorists would have saved between \$3,382,470 and \$4,943,610 per week, for a projected yearly savings of \$215,650,000.

The inflated gas prices that Hawaii motorists are forced to bear demonstrate how wealthy special interests influence office holders to protect their profits even while average citizens get screwed.

Hawaii needs to adopt "voter owned" elections to take back control of its government.

One way voters can take back control of their government is by passing full public funding of elections. Already seven states and two municipalities have passed "Clean Elections" laws: Arizona; Connecticut; Maine; New Jersey; New Mexico; North Carolina; Albuquerque, N.M.; and Portland, Ore..

In Maine, 83 percent of the state Senate and 77 percent of the state House are made up of legislators that ran as "Clean Elections" candidates. Not being indebted to powerful special interests such as developers, pharmaceutical, oil or tobacco companies who give them large donations for their election campaigns allows them to do what is best for the public, not their donors. In Arizona, 10 out of 11 statewide offices, including governor, are held by Clean Elections candidates. In addition, 23 percent of the Arizona state Senate and 58 percent of the House were elected using public financing.

If Hawaii voters want to gain control, increase their access to Legislators, and reduce the influence of lobbyists and the special interests who give sizable donations to office holders, they must pass voter-owned elections in this coming session. Only then will we end being ripped off by well-heeled special interests.

Ira Rohter is president of Hawaii Clean Elections.

Lobbying Data

Oil Industry Invests \$696,402 In Campaign Donations and Lobbying in Years 2002, 2003, 2004 to Influence Hawaii's Legislations and Policies

I. Contributions to Office Holders and Candidates

[Source: Hawaii Campaign Spending Commission reports, as data-based by the Institute on Money In State Politics www.followthemoney.org]

In **2004** the Oil Industry gave 129 donations totaling \$150,822 to office holders and candidates

In **2002** the Oil Industry gave 112 donations totaling \$123,256 to office holders and candidates.

Party	Office	Count	Amount
DEMOCRAT	GOVERNOR	4	\$3,000
DEMOCRAT	HOUSE	54	\$19,650

DEMOCRAT	LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR	2	\$750
DEMOCRAT	PARTY PAC	2	\$6,000
DEMOCRAT	SENATE	36	\$12,725
DEMOCRAT TOTAL		98	\$42,125
REPUBLICAN	GOVERNOR	23	\$39,300
REPUBLICAN	HOUSE	95	\$98,947
REPUBLICAN	LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR	5	\$17,250
REPUBLICAN	PARTY PAC	17	\$66,256
REPUBLICAN	SENATE	8	\$11,250
REPUBLICAN TOTAL		148	\$233,002
SEARCH TOTALS		246	\$275,127

They spend \$275, 127 in direct campaign donations.

II. Lobbying

[Source: State Ethics Commission . Lobbying Registration and Organizational Expenditures Reports for years 2004-2005]

In 2005 lobbyists representing the Western State Petroleum Assoc, Aloha Petroleum, and ChevronTexaco and were paid \$133,797

In 2004 lobbyists representing the Western State Petroleum Assoc, Aloha Petroleum, Tesoro, and ChevronTexaco were paid \$287,478.

III. Conclusion

So the Oil Industry has spent at least \$421, 275 lobbying, and \$275,127 in campaign donations, for a total of \$696,402 to influence government policies in Hawaii over the past 3 years.

***** UPDATE *****

First 6 months of 2006

Lobbying --- Chevron, Aloha Petroleum, and Western States Petro Assoc spent \$62,536 for 2006 session Lobbying costs

Donations -- \$9,148. \$5998 to Governor Lingle, \$2,000 to Lt Gov Aiona.

