



# CONCORD MONITOR

Friday, March 22, 2013

## My Turn: In fact, ALEC's influence isn't benign

By ZANDRA RICE HAWKINS  
For the Monitor

From their perch in Kansas, Charles and David Koch – oil magnates and owners of Koch Industries – have successfully manipulated their vast wealth to influence the outcomes of campaigns on both a small and large scale. But that's nothing compared to what happens under the golden dome in Concord during a legislative session.

The Kochs are major funders of a network of think-tanks and front groups designed to influence public policy in New Hampshire and other states. In addition to Americans for Prosperity, which is the most high-profile, groups include the elusive American Legislative Exchange Council and even the Josiah Bartlett Center for Public Policy. In the March 17 Sunday Monitor, the Josiah Bartlett Center's own Grant Bosse derided Granite State Progress for being concerned about ALEC.

A little background: When Granite State Progress first started talking about the Koch brothers and ALEC, we expected to get push back from Koch's lead group, AFP.

Instead, we were surprised to see the Josiah Bartlett Center rush to their defense. It didn't take long to figure out why: The Josiah Bartlett Center is part of the conservative State Policy Network, which is funded by Charles and David Koch via the "Donor's Capital Fund." Financial filings show that the Bartlett Center also received direct funding from a Koch-run foundation – despite President Charlie Arlinghaus and Bosse's assertions that it did not.

Knowing this, it should come as no surprise that Bosse, in his defense of ALEC, paints a misleading picture of the group's activities, asserting that it simply "invites members of state legislatures to go to conferences, eat hotel food, sit through PowerPoints, and share legislative ideas." Sounds benign, right?

What he conveniently skips over is that ALEC membership and ALEC task forces give an equal vote to corporate lobbyists and other special interest groups peddling legislation that benefits the bottom line of some of the biggest corporations in the world – often at the expense of everyday Granite Staters.

This is starkly different from the National Conference of State Legislatures, which is made up of state legislators and staff on committees where corporations do not get a vote. The fact that ALEC allows corporations to secretly vote on legislation which is then introduced by ALEC legislators in state houses all across our country is a prime reason why several New Hampshire state legislators have dropped their ALEC membership or refused to join.

The next steps in process go something like this: After Koch Industries, a longstanding member and corporate funder of ALEC, influences legislation introduced in a state, Koch's other branches get to work.

Groups like AFP launch "grassroots" campaigns to advance the legislative agenda, providing a front group to disguise the wealthy corporate interests who are pulling the strings.

Take for example the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, a multi-state cap and trade program. Koch – which has plants in the Northeast – releases an estimated 300 million tons of carbon dioxide pollution each year and has supported efforts to prevent the regulation of carbon emissions. ALEC model legislation to repeal RGGI has been introduced repeatedly in the New Hampshire State House. Each time, the Koch-funded AFP shows up to lobby in support of repeal, buffered at times by paid robocalls, mailers and radio ads.

Each time, the Josiah Bartlett Center issues reports and messages claiming RGGI is supposedly wrong for the state. Interestingly, RGGI is actually a success story: smart, independent state legislators

recognize the program has a proven track record of lowering greenhouse gas emissions and generating revenue for investments in renewable energy programs. In fact, since its implementation, RGGI has generated \$17 million in revenue and created nearly 460 jobs in New Hampshire, according to a report by Analysis Group, a Boston-based economic consulting firm. So despite the multi-pronged efforts of the Koch brothers, Koch Industries will still be subject to the responsible curbing of carbon emissions.

But that's not always the case: Granite State Progress identified and tracked 30 pieces of ALEC model legislation in the State House in the last year alone, 16 of which became law. We have already testified on a dozen ALEC-related bills this session.

In contrast to Bosse, we don't think it's paranoid to expose the corporate corruption of our legislative process, but we do think it's baloney for someone to argue that having corporate interests write our laws is something Granite Staters should sit back and let happen.

Exposing undue influence is difficult, especially with so many networks designed to obscure the vast – and dangerous – financial influence of certain individuals or groups. But it's a worthwhile pursuit for anyone truly interested in having government for the people, by the people. ■

*(Zandra Rice Hawkins is executive director of Granite State Progress, a progressive advocacy organization.)*

Archive: <http://www.concordmonitor.com/home/5249032-95/state-alec-koch-corporate>