



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 10, 2011

Contact: Rachel Tardiff,
202-746-1507

SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS DEMAND BANKS, HEALTH INSURERS, OIL COMPANIES COME CLEAN ON DARK MONEY

*America's Real Job Creators Call on **Bank of America, Citigroup, WellPoint, AHIP, BP, API** and Other Groups to Disclose Secretive Third Party Political Spending*

Small Business Owners to Banks, Insurers, Energy Companies: "How Are You Spending Our Money?"

Washington, DC—Small business owners in the **Main Street Alliance** network launched a "**Business Against Dark Money**" campaign today, calling on banks, health insurers, and oil companies to fully disclose their "dark money" spending – dues and contributions paid to trade associations and other third parties that can then be used for political purposes, often to advance big business interests at the expense of small businesses, without disclosure of the original source.

"We're demanding that the big banks – the ones that crashed the economy and then took bailout money while small businesses took it on the chin – come clean about their dark money spending," said **Melanie Collins**, owner of **Melanie's Home Childcare** in **Falmouth, Maine** and a leader with the **Maine Small Business Coalition**. "Bills like the 'REINS Act' and the 'Regulatory Accountability Act' would gut the rules meant to protect us from another Wall Street meltdown. We can't find out whether the banks we do business with are behind these bills because there's so much dark money changing hands. Let's shed some light on which companies are spending dark money on what issues. We deserve to know how our money's being spent."

As the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other trade groups prepare to file their latest IRS 990 forms (which include line item listings of major donations, but without sources) on November 15, small business groups affiliated with the Main Street Alliance network in 10 states (including Idaho, Louisiana, Maine, Montana, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Virginia, and Washington) are sending letters to major banks, health insurers, and oil companies in their states urging the companies to disclose all third party spending before next week's 990 filing deadline.

Nationally, Main Street Alliance leaders sent letters urging disclosure to the country's biggest banks, health insurers, oil companies, and their trade associations. The companies and trade groups include: **Bank of America, Citigroup, Goldman Sachs, JPMorgan Chase, Aetna, CIGNA, Humana, UnitedHealth Group, WellPoint, BP, Chevron, ConocoPhillips, ExxonMobil, Shell**, the **American Bankers Association, America's Health Insurance Plans**, and the **American Petroleum Institute** ([copies available online](#)).

“How will rolling back protections and standards, making another disaster like the BP spill more likely, help small businesses? It won’t. We need to preserve protections that safeguard local economies from disasters like the BP spill, not roll them back,” said **Mary Noel Black**, owner of **The UPS Store at Citiplace** in **Baton Rouge, Louisiana** and a member of the Main Street Alliance steering committee. “Bills like the REINS Act would give big companies free reign to write their own rules. I want to know which companies are using dark money to push these proposals without getting their hands dirty. When I want to make my voice heard, I sign my name at the bottom. BP and other big companies should, too.”

The letters to companies and trade groups read, in part: “At the national level, we are seeing efforts to turn back the clock on new rules of the road... advanced on the pretext of helping small businesses. In reality, these rollbacks would shift risk and shift costs from big corporate interests onto the shoulders of small businesses like ours. Small businesses and the general public should have access to complete information about the funding behind these efforts.”

“My small company can’t afford a lobbyist, or the kind of campaign spending that would allow me to compete with the mountains of cash expended by the health insurance industry,” said **Jim Houser**, owner of **Hawthorne Auto Clinic** in **Portland, Oregon** and co-chair of the **Main Street Alliance of Oregon**. “Health insurance premiums for my 9 full-time staff and their families, now \$100,000 per year, are crippling my company. I insist to know which insurers are financing efforts to reverse health care reform so I can avoid those companies when I renew my health insurance next year.”

A Bloomberg News analysis of the U.S. Chamber’s 990 filing last November uncovered that America’s Health Insurance Plans (AHIP), the health insurance industry’s leading trade group, contributed \$86 million to the U.S. Chamber in 2009 as the Chamber mounted an aggressive campaign against health care reform.

“Pushing to roll back health care reform, financial reform, and environmental protections in the name of small businesses is basically identity theft. It’s stealing our good name to advance a special interest agenda,” said **Rick Poore**, owner of **DesignWear** in **Lincoln, Nebraska** and member of the Main Street Alliance steering committee. “And it’s only gotten easier to do that since the *Citizens United* decision opened the floodgates to unlimited corporate spending in elections. We’re blowing the whistle on this. We’re demanding that the big companies we do business with come clean about whether they’re putting dark money behind these efforts, and if so how much.”

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The Main Street Alliance is a national network of state-based small business coalitions. MSA creates opportunities for small business owners to speak for themselves on issues that impact their businesses and local economies. www.mainstreetalliance.org