



Big Money Flooding Midterm Election Races

Analysis Shows Outsized influence of Outside Money in 2018 Midterms; Outside Spending Exceeds Candidate Spending in 14 out of 39 “Tossup” Races

By Alan Zibel, Research Director, Public Citizen’s Corporate Presidency Project

October 23, 2018 – More than eight years after the U.S. Supreme Court’s 2010 *Citizens United* decision opened the floodgates for secret corporate money to flow into our elections, hundreds of millions of dollars from Super PACs and other outside groups are pouring into the tightest U.S. Congressional races.

A Public Citizen analysis finds that the vast majority of outside spending is flowing to the most competitive races, magnifying the impact of outside money. In 14 out of 39 races rated as a “tossup” by the [Cook Political Report](#), outside spending, excluding party spending, even exceeds the candidates’ own spending.

Among the 81 battleground races – those ranked by the Cook Political Report as “tossup,” “lean Democratic” or “lean Republican” – 17 have now seen outside spending exceed candidate spending as of this week. The analysis also found that, of nearly \$715 million in outside spending this cycle, about \$565 million, or nearly 80 percent, is going to the 81 closest races. Public Citizen analyzed data from the Center for Responsive Politics on outside spending, including from super-PACs, 501(c) nonprofits and other donors, in the most competitive House and Senate races ranked by the Cook Political Report. The data, which is current as of October 22, does include some traditional regulated PAC spending.

The analysis found that 59 percent of outside spending, or nearly \$421.5 million, went to the 39 races categorized by the Cook Political Report as a “tossup.” The analysis also found that an additional \$143.2 million went to the 42 races rated as leaning toward Democrats or Republicans.

Outside spending in 2018 midterms has already exceeded 2014 levels and will be the highest-ever for a midterm election. Republicans are leading in outside spending, as nearly \$366 million has been spent to support Republicans or oppose their rivals, with nearly \$323 million in support Democrats or against their opponents. Outside spending now exceeds candidates’ own spending, including some party spending, in 31 races, the highest number for a midterm election.

The analysis underscores the growing influence of outside spending groups in U.S. of elections in the wake of the Supreme Court’s ruling that these spending groups are by their nature independent of candidates and political parties. Individuals and organizations alike can spend as much as they want to support candidates as a result of this ill-considered decision that struck down the law prohibiting corporations and unions from spending money from their treasuries to influence elections. The decision led to the advent of super PACs and 501(c) groups that may accept unlimited contributions and use them to influence elections as long as

these outside groups do not coordinate with candidates, though their independence is often suspect, as Public Citizen has previously [written](#).

Table #1: Competitive Races Where Outside Spending Exceeds Candidate Spending

Race	Office	Cook Political Rating	Democrat Name	Republican Name	Outside Spending-Total	Candidate Spending	Outside Spending Vs Candidate Spending
MN08	House	Lean GOP	Radinovich, Joe	Stauber, Pete	\$6,082,000	\$3,037,937	200%
WVS1	Senate	Lean Dem	Manchin, Joe	Morrisey, Patrick	\$25,265,019	\$15,678,782	161%
NY22	House	Tossup	Brindisi, Anthony	Tenney, Claudia	\$7,195,471	\$4,553,958	158%
CO06	House	Lean Dem	Crow, Jason	Coffman, Mike	\$9,448,657	\$5,992,651	158%
KS02	House	Tossup	Davis, Paul	Watkins, Steve	\$5,217,630	\$3,363,683	155%
MOS2	Senate	Tossup	McCaskill, Claire	Hawley, Josh	\$52,109,282	\$33,699,575	155%
NVS1	Senate	Tossup	Rosen, Jacky	Heller, Dean	\$35,725,895	\$24,136,039	148%
OH01	House	Tossup	Pureval, Aftab	Chabot, Steve	\$4,540,203	\$3,503,959	130%
ME02	House	Tossup	Golden, Jared	Poliquin, Bruce	\$7,429,690	\$5,796,630	128%
INS1	Senate	Tossup	Donnelly, Joe	Braun, Mike	\$36,027,998	\$29,423,798	122%
TNS1	Senate	Tossup	Bredesen, Philip	Blackburn, Marsha	\$29,015,133	\$24,486,873	118%
CA25	House	Tossup	Hill, Katie	Knight, Steve	\$8,449,590	\$7,283,906	116%
VA07	House	Tossup	Spanberger, Abigail	Brat, Dave	\$6,307,765	\$5,450,512	116%
AZS2	Senate	Tossup	Sinema, Kyrsten	McSally, Martha	\$37,428,900	\$33,569,276	111%
NJ03	House	Tossup	Kim, Andy	MacArthur, Thomas	\$6,510,667	\$6,054,747	108%
MN01	House	Tossup	Feehan, Daniel	Hagedorn, Jim	\$3,474,939	\$3,449,717	101%
NJ07	House	Tossup	Malinowski, Tom	Lance, Leonard	\$6,056,597	\$6,082,608	100%

Table #2: Summary of Outside Political Spending In Tight 2018 Races

Cook Political Report Rating	Number of Races	Outside Spending	% of All Outside Spending
Lean Dem	17	\$90,964,028	13%
Lean GOP	25	\$52,191,872	7%
Tossup	39	\$421,502,194	59%
Outside Spending in tight races	81	\$564,658,094	79%
All Outside Spending		\$714,744,525	100%

(Source: Center for Responsive Politics 10/22/2018; data excludes all party spending)

Table #3: Tight Senate Races, Outside Political Spending vs Candidate Spending

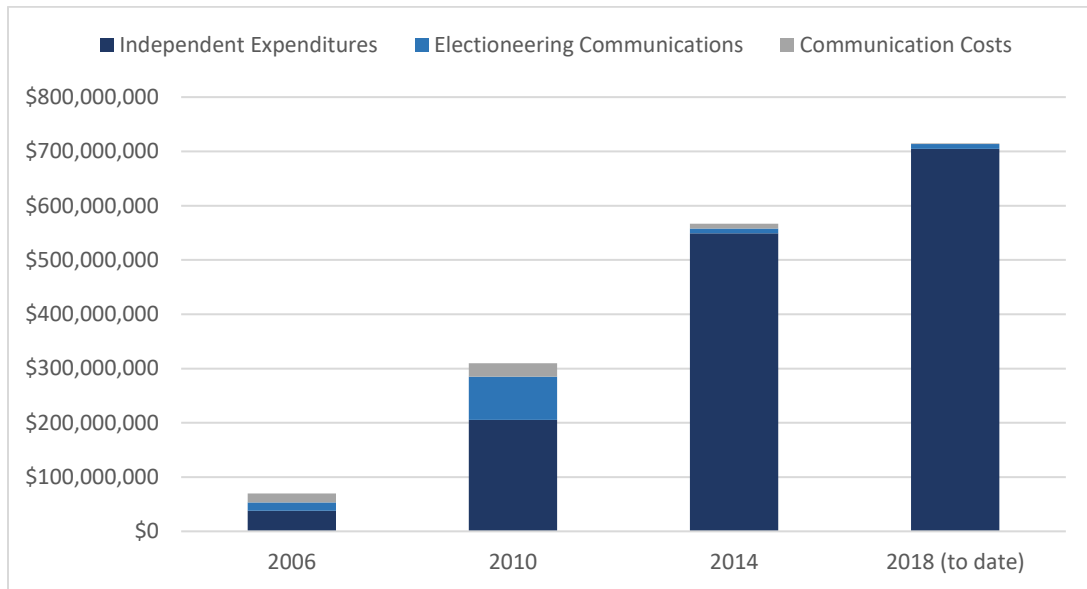
Race	Cook Political Rating	Democrat	Republican	Outside Spending	Candidate Spending	Outside Spending Vs Candidate Spending
West Virginia	Lean Dem	Manchin, Joe	Morrissey, Patrick	\$25,265,019	\$15,678,782	161%
Missouri	Tossup	McCaskill, Claire	Hawley, Josh	\$52,109,282	\$33,699,575	155%
Nevada	Tossup	Rosen, Jacky	Heller, Dean	\$35,725,895	\$24,136,039	148%
Indiana	Tossup	Donnelly, Joe	Braun, Mike	\$36,027,998	\$29,423,798	122%
Tennessee	Tossup	Bredesen, Philip	Blackburn, Marsha	\$29,015,133	\$24,486,873	118%

(Source: Center for Responsive Politics/Cook Political Report. Data excludes all party spending)

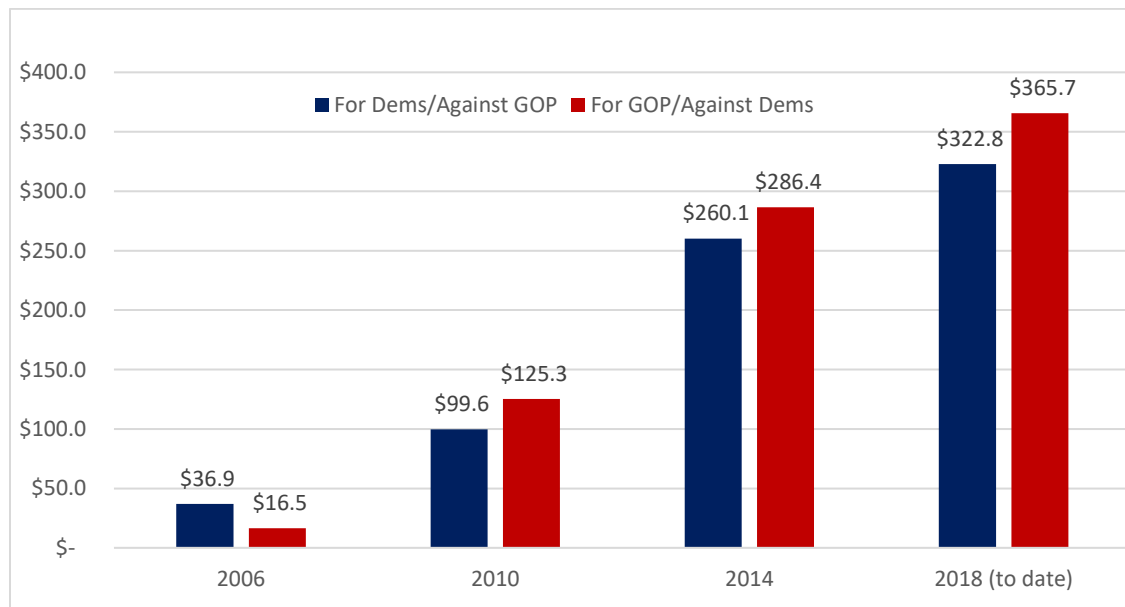
Table #4: Tight House Races, Outside Political Spending vs Candidate Spending

Race	Cook Political Rating	Democrat	Republican	Outside Spending-Total	Candidate Spending	Outside Spending Vs Candidate Spending
MN08	Lean GOP	Radinovich, Joe	Stauber, Pete	\$6,082,000	\$3,037,937	200%
NY22	Tossup	Brindisi, Anthony	Tenney, Claudia	\$7,195,471	\$4,553,958	158%
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(Source: Center for Responsive Politics/Cook Political Report. Data excludes all party spending)

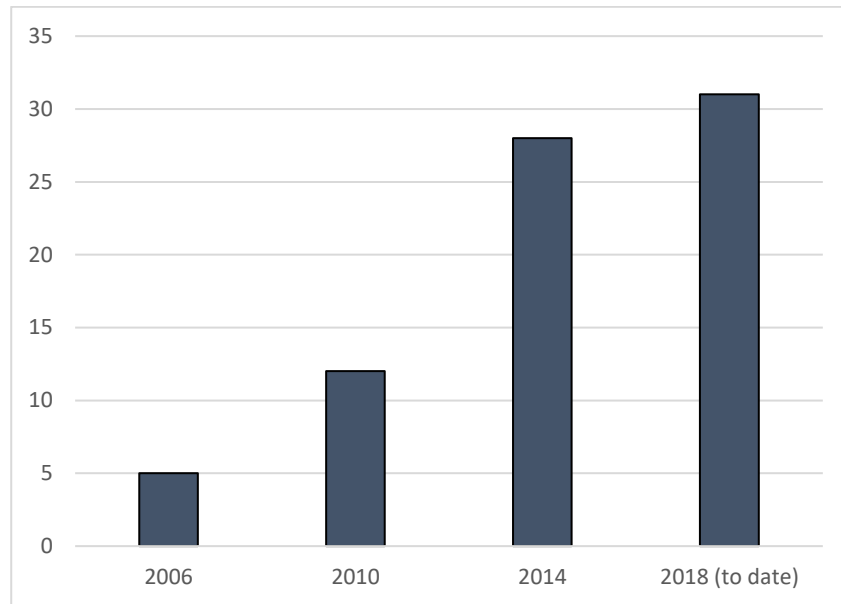
Chart#1: Total Outside Political Spending in Midterm Elections

Source: Center for Responsive Politics

Chart #2: Midterm Outside Spending By Party (Millions)

(Source: Center for Responsive Politics, excludes party spending)

Chart #3: Midterm Races In Which Outside Spending Exceeds Candidate Spending



Source: Center for Responsive Politics (includes uncoordinated party spending)