

Kristen McDonald Rivet Received Campaign Contributions From A Right-Wing Donor & Founder Of A For-Profit Charter Network Allied With Betsy Devos & Affiliated With Conservative Groups Funded By The Koch Brothers

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Huizenga Was A Major Contributor To The Republican Party Nationally And In Michigan, Including Several Republican Presidential Candidates

Huizenga Was A Major Michigan Republican Party Donor And A Major Donor To The Presidential Campaigns Of George W. Bush And Mitt Romney. HuffPost reported, "National Heritage Academies has important political ties that have helped in keeping in operation. Its founder and chair, J. C. Huizenga, is a member of the board of directors of the Michigan affiliate of the right-wing Mackinac Center for Public Policy think tank and a major Michigan Republican Party donor. National Heritage Academies is affiliated with the rightwing lobby group ALEC and is a member of its Education Task Force. Huizenga was also a major campaign donor to the presidential campaigns of George W. Bush and Mitt Romney." [HuffPost, [5/27/14](#)]

...And Founder Of A For-Profit Charter Network...

Huizenga Founded National Heritage Academies, One Of The Nation's Largest For-Profit Charter School Operators

1995: Huizenga Founded National Heritage Academies. According to NHA Schools, "After the birth of his son, J.C. Huizenga began to think about education from a parent's perspective. He believed every child should have the opportunity to receive a great education and schools should be held accountable to produce results. This led Mr. Huizenga to open his first National Heritage Academies school in 1995 – Excel Charter Academy – and his belief continues to drive our mission forward today." [NHA Schools, Who We Are, accessed [5/15/24](#)]

National Heritage Academies Was The Third Largest For-Profit Charter School Company In The United States. HuffPost reported, "National Heritage Academies is a for-profit corporation based in Grand Rapids, Michigan. It operates 75 schools in nine states with approximately 50,000 students. In 2011-2012, it was the third largest for profit charter school company in the United States based on number of schools with second largest number of students. It operates nationwide although most of its schools and students are in Michigan. In 2012, the Michigan Department of Education identified National Heritage Academies as the operator of more than half of the charter schools in the state labeled as 'focus schools' because of poor student performance." [HuffPost, [5/27/14](#)]

...Strongly Allied With Betsy DeVos

Much Of DeVos's Advocacy Work In Michigan Came At The Direct Benefit Of NHA And Huizenga, Who Praised DeVos's Pro-Charter Advocacy

An Academic Review Of NHA's History Noted That NHA Was “Politically Aligned” With DeVos And “Much Of DeVos's Advocacy Work In Michigan Has Come At The Direct Benefit Of NHA And Huizenga.” According to a case study on National Heritage Academies published in Yale University’s Education Studies Student Research section, “Furthermore, the NHA has been criticized for its connections to high-power political officials. J. C. Huizenga, the founder and chair of the NHA, was a major campaign donor to the presidential campaigns of both George W. Bush and Mitt Romney. (Singer, 2014; Meiksins, 2014). NHA is also politically aligned with controversial Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos. Indeed, much of DeVos’s advocacy work in Michigan has come at the direct benefit of NHA and Huizenga (Martinez, 2016). In addition, the NHA has pushed for specific policies that benefit it, at the expense of other charter schools: for example, Huizenga successfully pushed through measures that would ensure that EMO’s as large as NHA could expand without direct permission from local and state education commissions.” [Yale University Blog, Education Studies Student Research in Courses Taught By Dr. Mira Debbs, accessed [6/11/24](#)]

DeVos’s Pro-Charter Advocacy In Michigan To Use Public Dollars To Fund Charters Was Praised By Huizenga, Who Said, “When It Comes To School Choice...Betsy DeVos Has Done More Than Any Other Education Secretary.” According to the Network for Public Education, “Huizenga’s praise for former Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos is hardly a surprise. He shares her Dutch Calvinist roots, the same home state, and, most importantly, the same passion for using public tax dollars to fund a privately run school marketplace. A multi-millionaire businessman, he actively lobbied to pass charter school legislation in Michigan, and when it passed, he began building his for-profit charter school empire.” [Network for Public Education, Chartered for Profit, [9/1/21](#)]

- **Huizenga: “When It Comes To School Choice, When It Comes To Parent Power And The Right Of Parents To Choose What’s Best For Their Child, Betsy DeVos Has Done More Than Any Other Education Secretary.”** According to the Network for Public Education, “‘When it comes to school choice when it comes to parent power and the right of parents to choose what’s best for their child, Betsy DeVos has done more than any other education secretary.’ So stated J.C. Huizenga, the CEO and president of NHA, during a Center for Education Reform discussion as DeVos’s tenure was coming to an end” [Network for Public Education, Chartered for Profit, [9/1/21](#)]

While DeVos Was Secretary Of Education, Democrats Raised Ethical Concerns About Her Connection To Huizenga-Backed Groups

2017: A Group Of Six Democratic U.S Senators From The Senate HELP Committee Wrote DeVos A Letter Raising Concerns About Her Connections To Two “Dark Money” Groups Named The American Federation For Children And The Great Lakes Education Fund. According to a press release from the office of U.S Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, “Today, after receiving no responsive information to previous requests, several members of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee (HELP) renewed their request to President Donald Trump’s nominee for Secretary of Education, Elisabeth DeVos, to come clean about her connections to ‘dark money’ groups. [...] As Senators Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Bob Casey (D-PA), Al Franken (D-MN), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), and Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) explain in their letter to DeVos, ‘Because donations to a 501(c)(4) are anonymous, they effectively launder the identities of donors to the other parts of your political apparatus. But you know, and the donors know, and therein lies the potential for conflict of interest.’ [...] We requested you provide information about two 501(c)(4) organizations with which you have been associated: the American Federation for Children and the Great Lakes Education Fund. You acknowledged your association with these entities in your disclosures to the Office of Government Ethics (OGE).” [U.S Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, Press Release, [1/27/17](#)]

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- DeVos Admitted Her Association With These Organizations In Ethical Disclosures She Filed With The Office Of Government Ethics.** According to a press release from the office of U.S Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, “Today, after receiving no responsive information to previous requests, several members of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee (HELP) renewed their request to President Donald Trump’s nominee for Secretary of Education, Elisabeth DeVos, to come clean about her connections to ‘dark money’ groups. [...] As Senators Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Bob Casey (D-PA), Al Franken (D-MN), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), and Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) explain in their letter to DeVos, ‘Because donations to a 501(c)(4) are anonymous, they effectively launder the identities of donors to the other parts of your political apparatus. But you know, and the donors know, and therein lies the potential for conflict of interest.’ [...] We requested you provide information about two 501(c)(4) organizations with which you have been associated: the American Federation for Children and the Great Lakes Education Fund. You acknowledged your association with these entities in your disclosures to the Office of Government Ethics (OGE).” [U.S Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, Press Release, [1/27/17](#)]

Huizenga Donated Over \$30,000 To The Great Lakes Education Project Education Fund. According to a press release from the office of U.S Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, “J.C. Huizenga: Between 2005 and 2007, Huizenga donated \$25,000 to All Children Matter, and in 2010 he donated \$30,000 to the American Federation for Children Action Fund. Mr. Huizenga founded the National Heritage Academies, a for-profit charter network that has 80 schools in 9 states and has received over \$43 million in federal funding. According to a 2012 review by the Michigan Department of Education the schools in the ‘focus’ category, due to significant gaps in achievement, more than half were managed by National Heritage Academies. It has been reported that Mr. Huizenga said that his involvement with charter schools was due to realizing that ‘privatizing public education was not only practical but also desperately needed.’” [U.S Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, Press Release, [1/27/17](#)]

- DeVos Founded The Great Lakes Education Project.** Bridge Michigan reported, “Let MI Kids Learn would provide a path for students to catch up academically, said Beth DeShone, executive director of the Great Lakes Education Project, a nonprofit advocacy group founded by DeVos. ‘Doing what’s best for our children shouldn’t be political,’ DeShone said.” [Bridge Michigan, [11/28/22](#)]
- The Great Lakes Education Project Endorsed Republican Pro-Charter Candidates In Michigan.** According to Michigan Democrats, “Several Republican candidates have been touting an endorsement from GLEP, the Great Lakes Education Project. GLEP is a DeVos-backed project whose upfront claim is prioritizing euphemistic ‘school choice,’ while advocating for funneling money out of Michigan’s public schools and into private and for-profit charter schools. These charter schools profit at the expense of students, families, and their communities, without being held to any of the same standards as our public schools.” [Michigan Democrats, [9/14/20](#)]

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- **All Children Matter Was A School-Choice Advocacy Group Headed By DeVos That Was Fined Over \$5 Million For Election Law Violations In Ohio.** Politico reported, “A school-choice advocacy group headed by billionaire Betsy DeVos owes the state of Ohio more than \$5.3 million for election law violations — a record fine that is now nearly a decade past due. DeVos is President-elect Donald Trump’s pick to lead the Education Department. The unpaid fine dates back to 2008, when All Children Matter — a group that lobbied for school-choice legislation and was run by DeVos — broke Ohio election law by funneling \$870,000 in contributions through its nationwide PAC to its Ohio affiliate, according to the Ohio Elections Commission.” [Politico, [11/29/16](#)]

...And Affiliated With Conservative Groups Funded By The Koch Brothers...

National Heritage Academies Had Ties To Conservative Groups Funded By The Koch Brothers

Huizenga Sat On The Board Of The Mackinac Center, A DeVos Funded “Anti-Union Pressure Group” That Opposed Whitmer’s COVID Lockdown Policies And Opposed Climate Protection Policies

Huizenga Was On The Board Of Directors For The Right-Wing Mackinac Center For Public Policy And Was A Major Republican Party Donor. HuffPost reported, “National Heritage Academies has important political ties that have helped in keeping in operation. Its founder and chair, J. C. Huizenga, is a member of the board of directors of the Michigan affiliate of the right-wing Mackinac Center for Public Policy think tank and a major Michigan Republican Party donor. National Heritage Academies is affiliated with the rightwing lobby group ALEC and is a member of its Education Task Force. Huizenga was also a major campaign donor to the presidential campaigns of George W. Bush and Mitt Romney.” [Huffpost, [5/27/14](#)]

The Mackinac Center For Public Policy Was An Anti-Union Pressure Group Funded By The DeVos Family. Slate reported, “For example, Trump installed Karen M. Czarnecki, a leader of the avowedly anti-labor Mercatus Center who previously worked at the American Legislative Exchange Council (which ghostwrites anti-union legislation for Republican legislators) and the Heritage Foundation (which publicly promotes that legislation). Patrick Wright and F. Vincent Vernuccio, two more Trump appointees, work at the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, an anti-union pressure group funded by the DeVos family.” [Slate, [2/3/21](#)]

The Mackinac Center Promoted Operation Gridlock, A Protest Of Governor Whitmer’s COVID Lockdown Orders. According to the Center for Media and Democracy, “The family of Trump’s Education Sec. Betsy DeVos is the biggest known donor to the Michigan Freedom Fund (MFF), which organized and ran paid ads promoting the April 15 protest of Whitmer’s lockdown, named ‘Operation Gridlock.’ MFF organized a second protest, which occurred on May 20. Greg McNeilly, a political adviser to the DeVos family, founded MFF. [...] Mackinac promoted ‘Operation Gridlock’ in April, and more recently, Mackinac’s law firm, the Mackinac Center Legal Foundation, teamed up with the Michigan Chamber of Commerce to sue Whitmer over her lockdown orders. In September, the conservative state Supreme Court heard the case, and on Oct. 2 it issued a 4-3 decision nullifying the orders, ruling that she lacked the authority to issue emergency orders after April 30. Most states are currently

under some form of emergency declaration, making Michigan an outlier.” [Center for Media and Democracy, [10/21/20](#)]

- **The Mackinac Center’s Law Firm, The Mackinac Center Legal Foundation, Sued Whitmer Over Her Lockdown Orders.** According to the Center for Media and Democracy, “The family of Trump’s Education Sec. Betsy DeVos is the biggest known donor to the Michigan Freedom Fund (MFF), which organized and ran paid ads promoting the April 15 protest of Whitmer’s lockdown, named ‘Operation Gridlock.’ MFF organized a second protest, which occurred on May 20. Greg McNeilly, a political adviser to the DeVos family, founded MFF. [...] Mackinac promoted ‘Operation Gridlock’ in April, and more recently, Mackinac’s law firm, the Mackinac Center Legal Foundation, teamed up with the Michigan Chamber of Commerce to sue Whitmer over her lockdown orders. In September, the conservative state Supreme Court heard the case, and on Oct. 2 it issued a 4-3 decision nullifying the orders, ruling that she lacked the authority to issue emergency orders after April 30. Most states are currently under some form of emergency declaration, making Michigan an outlier.” [Center for Media and Democracy, [10/21/20](#)]

The Mackinac Center Advocated To Undermine The Science Behind Global Warming, Opposed The Use Of Renewable Energy Sources, And Fought To Lower Environmental Standards. According to a report from Progress Michigan, “The Mackinac Center is an active member of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a corporate bill mill. Over the years, Mackinac staffers have proposed numerous bills at ALEC taskforce meetings, where elected officials and private sector members (like corporate lobbyists and special interest groups) vote as equals behind closed doors on templates to change the law. Under ALEC’s public bylaws, its state legislative leaders are tasked with a ‘duty’ to get those bills introduced into law. The coordinated agenda that ALEC and the Mackinac Center advocate for includes: [...] Denying the science behind climate change and global warming, while also opposing the use of clean and renewable energy sources. [...] The Mackinac Center is largely funded by right-wing special interest foundations, individuals and corporations, including the Koch brothers, the DeVos family, ExxonMobil, the Bradley Foundation and the Walton family of Walmart. Not surprisingly, much of Mackinac’s agenda benefits the corporate and financial interests of its funders and ALEC, including so-called Right to Work, lowered environmental standards and privatization. “ []

The Mackinac Center Was Funded By Charles Koch, One Of The Koch Brothers

Charles G. Koch, The Chairman And CEO Of Koch Industries, Was The Chairman And CEO Of The Charles Koch Foundation. According to the Charles Koch Foundation, “Charles Koch is chairman and CEO of Koch Industries, one of the largest privately held American companies. An influential philanthropist for more than 50 years, he supports education, a community of organizations addressing persistent poverty, and public-policy research focused on developing effective solutions to societal problems. He has founded numerous nonprofit organizations, including Stand Together. He holds two master’s degrees in nuclear and chemical engineering from MIT and lives in Wichita, Kansas, with his wife, Liz.” [Charles Koch Foundation, About Us, accessed [6/11/24](#)]



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CHAIRMAN & CEO

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[Charles Koch Foundation, About Us, accessed [6/11/24](#)]

2018-2019: The Charles Koch Foundation Donated At Least \$600,000 To The Mackinac Center For Public Policy. According to the Charles Koch Foundation's IRS 990 forms from 2018 to 2022, "2018 Form 990-PF, Part XV – Grants and Contributions paid during the year...Recipient Name and Address: MACKINAC CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY, 140 W MAIN ST. PO BOX 568, MIDLAND, MI 48640-0568...Amount: GENERAL OPERATING SUPPORT 500,000 [...] 2019 Form 990-PF, Part XV – Grants and Contributions paid during the year...Recipient Name and Address: MACKINAC CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY, 140 W MAIN ST. PO BOX 568, MIDLAND, MI 48640-0568...Amount: GENERAL OPERATING SUPPORT 100,000. [Charles Koch Foundation, IRS 990 Return of Private Foundation, [2018](#) and [2019](#), accessed 6/11/24]

National Heritage Academies Was Affiliated With The Rightwing Lobby Group ALEC, Which Was Funded By The Koch Brothers

National Heritage Academies Was Affiliated With The Rightwing Lobby Group ALEC. HuffPost reported, "National Heritage Academies has important political ties that have helped in keeping in operation. Its founder and chair, J. C. Huizenga, is a member of the board of directors of the Michigan affiliate of the right-wing Mackinac Center for Public Policy think tank and a major Michigan Republican Party donor. National Heritage Academies is affiliated with the rightwing lobby group ALEC and is a member of its Education Task Force. Huizenga was also a major campaign donor to the presidential campaigns of George W. Bush and Mitt Romney." [HuffPost, [5/27/14](#)]

- **National Heritage Academies Sat On The Education Task Force Of ALEC.** HuffPost reported, "National Heritage Academies has important political ties that have helped in keeping in operation. Its founder and chair, J. C. Huizenga, is a member of the board of directors of the Michigan affiliate of the right-wing Mackinac Center for Public Policy think tank and a major Michigan Republican Party donor. National Heritage Academies is affiliated with the rightwing lobby group ALEC and is a member of its Education Task Force.

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ALEC Received More Than \$3.3 Million From Koch-Controlled Foundations Since 1993. According to Greenpeace, “ALEC Has Received More Than \$3.3 Million from Koch-controlled Foundations since 1993 [...] Greenpeace maintains a database of funding from the three main philanthropies controlled by Charles Koch, his family, or his lieutenants, to organizations involved in obstructing solutions to the climate crisis. The total from Koch foundations to ALEC in the past quarter century exceeds \$3.3 million. However, this amount understates the true amount of financial support for ALEC from the Koch fortune. [...] Koch Industries has financed ALEC in a variety of ways, most often through membership dues. Koch Industries pays additional task force fees, ranging from \$2,500 – \$10,000 per task force in recent years, allowing Koch to and vote on proposed ALEC model policies ‘as equals’ to ALEC’s member legislators. [...] Documents published by The Guardian in 2013 revealed that one of the Koch foundations spent \$150,000 financing ALEC’s annual Rich States, Poor States report, which ranks all 50 states based on how favorable their laws are to the corporate agenda ALEC advances.” [Greenpeace, [9/4/19](#)]