

Dark Money—Not the Grassroots—Is Behind the Convention of States Organizations

By Judi Caler



Patriots are rightly concerned that Mark Meckler, lobbyist and President of the Convention of States organizations (COS), has spent tens of millions of dollars spreading misinformation and cajoling State Legislatures into passing applications asking Congress to call a convention under Article V of the U.S. Constitution. Thirty-four States are needed to pass such applications to trigger a constitutional convention, where a new Constitution would likely be proposed, along with an easier mode of ratification.

[Andy Schlafly](#), attorney and son of conservative icon Phyllis Schlafly, asks "...[W]ho's funding [COS]? ... There's a lot of *money* behind this. And they're not disclosing where the money behind this push to change the Constitution is coming from.

Meckler responds, "I can tell you who my donors are. See, because the person that raises the money for...this organization is my wife of 26 years who works in the office next to mine, who has raised money from over 80,000 individual grassroots patriots all over this country. So, if those are the millionaires and billionaires that Mr. Schlafly is afraid of, well, he might want to talk to the grandmas who send me checks and say, 'it's five bucks a month out of my fixed income, and I'm sorry I can't afford any more' ... an outrageous slander on the tens of thousands of people supporting this movement."

So, what's the truth? Let's go straight to the tax-exempt returns that Meckler is required to file with the IRS every year under penalty of perjury (see Chart below). These returns, also known as 990s, are public information and filed by all nonprofits; but they are not required to disclose the identity of their contributors—only the amount from each contributor of \$5,000 or more. Still, those figures are revealing.

The most recent 990s available for Meckler's organizations are for the years 2020, 2019, and 2018. The Meckler organizations appear to include Convention of States Action (COSA); Citizens for Self-

Governance (CSG); Citizens for Self-Governance Action (CSG Action); and Defending Liberty, Inc. (DLI). Donations of \$5,000 or more to each entity are summarized by year on the Chart below. The source documentation for figures on the Chart can be found mostly on Schedule B of the linked 990s. Here's the short version:

Between 2018 and 2020, contributions ranging from \$5,000 to \$2,000,000 per donor, to the four entities totaled \$16,751,011, or 63% of the \$26.7 million in contributions reported on Meckler's combined 990s for the 3-year period. And that \$16.7 million was from *at most* 168 unique anonymous persons; thus, their average contribution was almost \$100,000 [$\$16,751,011 \div 168 = \$99,708$].

But likely, Meckler has fewer than 168 major donors, as repeat donors over the 3-year period are to be expected. So, depending upon how many major donors gave in one, two, or three years and/or gave to multiple Meckler entities, the average donation per major donor over the three-year period amounts to *at least* \$99,708, *and may be more than \$200,000 or \$300,000! So, COS isn't a grassroots organization funded from the bottom up by small donors.* Schedule B provides proof that COS's agenda to replace our Constitution is coming mostly from major donors.

The 990s (pg. 7 or 8) also reveal that Meckler is drawing salaries for himself and his wife totaling hundreds of thousands of dollars annually. And while Meckler's organizations may well receive some small donations, he denies that the bulk of his money comes from the superrich.

We know why the liquor, drug, and tobacco industries invest millions in lobbyists to influence state legislation. But why would major donors invest millions in COS to bring about a convention to rewrite the U.S. Constitution?

You can download the 990 forms from the accompanying Chart and copy Schedule B, so you'll have ammo to push back with, the next time Meckler plays the Grandma card.

Meckler Entities Anonymous Major Contributions (≥ \$5,000) for Years 2018 Through 2020

Meckler Organizations' Forms 990	(A) # of Major Donors (Sched. B)	(B) Total \$ from Major Donors (Sched. B)	(C) Total of all Contributions: Form 990 p.1, line 8	B ÷ C Major Contributions' % of Total	B ÷ A Average Major Donation
COSA 2020 47-2245708	55	\$4,112,370	\$7,159,560	57%	\$74,770
COSA 2019	45	3,884,001	6,777,645	57%	86,311
COSA 2018	26	2,239,125	4,872,216	46%	86,120
CSG 2020 27-1657203	8	1,016,800	1,622,566	63%	127,100
CSG 2019	13	633,100	961,914	66%	48,700
CSG 2018	13	1,844,815	2,319,810	80%	141,909
CSG Action 2020 27-4648506	1	2,000,000	2,000,000	100%	2,000,000
CSG Action 2019	2	305,800	305,800	100%	152,900
CSG Action 2018	2	535,000	581,000	92%	267,500
DLI 2018: 812320022 No Rev. 2019-20	3	180,000	180,000	100%	60,000
TOTALS	168	\$16,751,011	\$26,780,511	% of total contributions ≥ \$5,000*	Avg. \$ per Major Donor – at the very least*
				63%	\$99,708