



HOW THE TEAMSTERS UNION FUNDS ITS POLITICAL AGENDA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In an ongoing effort to shed light on how unions allocate their members’ dues, the Center for Union Facts analyzed spending data from the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and its local unions between the years of 2019 and 2022. Using annual financial filings with the Department of Labor (known as LM-2 forms), we found that the Teamsters union and its locals send a significant portion of its members’ dues to left-leaning political advocacy, typically without the consent of its membership.

In that time frame alone, the Teamsters spent over \$240 million on notable entities, including Super PACs, advocacy groups and other special interests, and consultants.

Our analysis found that Teamsters spending is primarily focused on three key areas: support for member branches, and Teamsters political action committees consulting efforts, and contributions to left-leaning advocacy. Notably, a significant portion of the Teamsters budget is allocated towards funding special interests.

Teamsters union spending is overwhelmingly partisan. Between the years 2019 and 2022, the Teamsters sent over \$9 million to left-leaning advocacy, while only directing \$57,050 toward bipartisan efforts and \$7,877 toward GOP-led initiatives and campaigns.

NOTABLE TEAMSTERS SPENDING BY YEAR

2019

- Super PACs: \$0
- Consultants & Misc.: \$33,522,665
- DNC & Aligned: \$623,915
- Bipartisan Efforts: \$11,550
- GOP & Aligned: \$0
- Separate Union Funds: \$40,987,270
- Special Interests: \$417,750
- Economic Left: \$552,934
- Civil Rights: \$39,200
- Environmentalists: \$161,136
- Left-Wing Media: \$37,500

Total: \$76,353,920

2020

- Super PACs: \$0
- Consultants & Misc.: \$28,417,372
- DNC & Aligned: \$893,918
- Bipartisan Efforts: \$10,000
- GOP & Aligned: \$7,877
- Separate Union Funds: \$19,109,986
- Special Interests: \$2,353,530
- Economic Left: \$630,567
- Civil Rights: \$56,500
- Environmentalists: \$137,500
- Left-Wing Media: \$69,188

Total: \$51,686,438

2021

- Super PACs: \$100,000
- Consultants & Misc.: \$35,703,218
- DNC & Aligned: \$517,929
- Bipartisan Efforts: \$18,500
- GOP & Aligned: \$0
- Separate Union Funds: \$18,195,977
- Special Interests: \$198,650
- Economic Left: \$466,100
- Civil Rights: \$30,000
- Environmentalists: \$15,000
- Left-Wing Media: \$120,689

Total: \$55,366,063

2022

- Super PACs: \$5,000
- Consultants & Misc.: \$37,637,401
- DNC & Aligned: \$471,680
- Bipartisan Efforts: \$17,000
- GOP & Aligned: \$0
- Separate Union Funds: \$17,144,401
- Special Interests: \$1,423,400
- Economic Left: \$303,680
- Civil Rights: \$15,500
- Environmentalists: \$10,000
- Left-Wing Media: \$120,459

Total: \$57,148,521

TEAMSTERS SPENDING TOTALS – 2019-2022

- Super PACs: \$105,000
- Consultants & Misc.: \$135,280,656
- DNC & Aligned: \$2,507,442
- Bipartisan Efforts: \$57,050
- GOP & Aligned: \$7,877
- Separate Union Funds: \$95,437,634
- Special Interests: \$4,393,330
- Economic Left: \$1,953,281
- Civil Rights: \$141,200
- Environmentalists: \$323,636
- Left-Wing Media: \$347,836

Total: \$240,554,942

TOP 20 RECIPIENTS BETWEEN 2019-2022

- \$4,014,062 — Berlin Rosen LTD
- \$1,801,216 — AMS Communications
- \$1,500,000 — Coalition to Protect Riders & Drivers
- \$1,020,751 — Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy
- \$925,000 — Advocates for Justice
- \$600,000 — Ballot Initiatives Strategy Center
- \$566,000 — New Deal Advisors
- \$479,806 — Catalist, LLC
- \$453,903 — No on Prop 22 Committee
- \$390,403 — Land Use Strategies, LLC
- \$313,646 — Align: The Alliance for a Greater New York
- \$300,000 — Economic Policies Institute
- \$300,000 — State Innovation Exchange
- \$275,000 — Fair Fight Action
- \$149,702 — Preserve Middle Class
- \$144,000 — Jobs with Justice (national, state, and local-level)
- \$144,000 — New Direction PAC
- \$120,700 — The Peggy Browning Fund
- \$100,000 — Capital & Main
- \$77,500 — Roosevelt Institute

The top twenty recipients between 2019-2022 included well-known progressive PR and consulting firms including Berlin Rosen LTD and Catalist, LLC. Both firms frequently work with labor unions and other advocates on the left, including the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Fight For \$15, and Planned Parenthood.

Other top recipients included a Stacey Abrams-founded left-leaning political organization, and several progressive advocacy groups including the Economic Policies Institute and the Roosevelt Institute, both of which receive funding from labor unions and put out research that supports a left-of-center agenda.

POLITICAL ADVOCACY BREAKDOWN BY PARTY

Of the money the Teamsters spent on political or issue advocacy between 2019-2022 (DNC & Aligned, Bipartisan Efforts, GOP & Aligned, Economic Left, Civil Rights, Environmentalists, Special Interests, and Left-Wing Media), the vast majority went to issues on the left.



RECIPIENTS ON THE LEFT BETWEEN 2019-2022 INCLUDE

DNC & ALIGNED

\$2,507,442

- Democratic Majority
- The Bronx Democratic County Committee
- National Democratic Club
- Ballot Initiative Strategy Center
- America Votes
- Fair Elections Center
- Community Change
- Int'l Labor Rights Forum
- New Direction PAC
- One Minnesota Inaugural Committee
- Michigan Transition 2019
- Catalyst, LLC
- State Innovation Exchange
- Fair Fight Action

ECONOMIC LEFT

\$1,953,281

- Roosevelt Institute
- Jobs with Justice
- Arise Chicago
- Economic Policies Institute
- United Students Against Sweatshops
- National Employment Law Project
- Economic & Policy Impact Center
- Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE)

ENVIRONMENTALISTS

\$323,636

- ALIGN: The Alliance for a Greater New York
- Clean Water for our Future

SPECIAL INTERESTS

\$4,393,330

- Citizens for Better Transit
- New York Immigration Coalition
- Alliance for Global Justice
- United Way
- Preserve Middle Class
- The Accountability Project
- Equal Means Equal
- Coalition to Protect Riders & Drivers
- Plastic Pollution Coalition
- Plumbers Without Borders
- Commission on Eliminating Sexual Harassment
- San Franciscans for Fair Rates
- Committee for Safer Streets
- Pension Rights Center
- Kentuckians for Checks & Balances
- The Peggy Browning Fund
- No on Prop 22 Committee
- Advocates for Justice

CIVIL RIGHTS

\$141,200

- Equal Justice Initiative
- N.A.A.C.P
- American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
- National Action Network
- Community Change
- The Freedom Riders
- The Urban League

LEFT-WING MEDIA

\$347,836

- Netroots Nation
- The American Prospect
- The Rick Smith Show
- Labor Press Inc
- Capital & Main

METHODOLOGY

This data is based on annual financial reports filed with the Department of Labor (LM-2 reports). The Center for Union Facts analyzed all payments made by all national and local Teamsters chapters to an entity (otherwise known as “payees”) for the years 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022. These payments are classified by the union as “Political Activities,” “Representational Activities,” “Contributions, Gifts & Grants,” “Union Administration,” or “General Overhead.”

We then sorted each payment entry into one of eleven groups: Super PACs, Consultants & Misc., DNC & Aligned, Bipartisan Efforts, GOP & Aligned, Separate Union Funds, Special Interests, Economic Left, Civil Rights, Environmentalists, and Left-Wing Media. Certain line items, including overhead costs and other general spending, that did not fit into these defined categories were not included in the final analysis.

Once the data points were sorted, we added up the totals within each group to provide a holistic image of how the International Brotherhood of Teamsters allocates a large share of the dues dollars it receives from its members.

DEFINITIONS

The Super PACs section consists of political action committees that raise money from individuals, corporations, labor unions, and other political action committees for the purpose of financing political activities.

The Consultants & Misc. section has two components. “Consultants” refers to contracted consultants, lobbyists, public relations firms, communications and marketing corporations, legislative consultants, research firms, and publicity-oriented groups. “Misc.” includes promotional items, communications/messaging software, mail and printing, advertising expenses, election services, newspaper subscriptions, and, more broadly, airfare expenses, hotel expenses, and utility expenses.

The DNC & Aligned section consists of payments made towards registered Democrats, Democrat Party-funded initiatives, Democratic campaigns, and organizations that focus on advancing the interest of the Democratic Party.

The Bipartisan Efforts section consists of individuals, coalitions, or initiatives that are truly non-partisan and neither endorse, nor advance the interests of, a political party.

The GOP & Aligned section consists of payments made towards registered Republicans, Republican Party-funded initiatives, Republican campaigns, and organizations that focus on advancing the interest of the Republican Party.

The Separate Union Funds section consists of parent organizations, local branches, labor federations, joint councils, union-funded political action committees, and affiliated labor

organizations. Politically motivated funds are also included in this section, including strike funds and union organizing drive funds.

The Special Interests section consists of payments made towards ballot measures, initiatives, funds, and coalitions that address unique policy matters over a larger party or union agenda.

The Economic Left section consists of organizations that focus on advancing the economy through a progressive lens. Some examples include non-union groups that push for higher wages, workers' rights coalitions, and progressive think-tanks.

The Civil Rights section consists of payments made towards organizations that have race and identity-related agendas. Examples range from larger organizations like the NAACP and the ACLU to smaller groups that focus on prisoner and immigrant rights.

The Environmentalists section consists of organizations and initiatives that fund progressive climate and sustainability-centric campaigns.

The Left-Wing Media section consists of media groups, radio hosts, conferences, and nonprofits that train, support, sponsor, and project the messages of labor unions, activists, progressive policymakers, or Democrat-led initiatives.

Certain overhead payments were not included in the final spending estimate. Some of the more common examples include payments towards rent, cable companies, insurance, office supplies, building maintenance, internet service providers, accountants, lawyers and attorneys, auditors, social outings, and grocery stores.

Non-political charities, funds, and nonprofits were also removed from the final estimate. Such examples include The Red Cross, The Boy Scouts of America, Heroes to Heroes, museum societies, and children's hospitals.