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Opinion: Keep dark money out of Colorado

Jane Everham 7:07 a.m. MT June 1, 2017



(Photo: Jane Everham)

The League of Women Voters supports campaign finance methods that ensure the public's right to know, combat undue influence, and enable candidates to compete equitably.

A May 19 article in the Coloradoan, "Koch adds muscle to Trump agenda," stated Koch's Freedom Partners Chamber of Commerce plans to spend \$300 to \$400 million on policy and political campaigns.

The Bradley Foundation, a conservative powerhouse from Wisconsin, has targeted Colorado, according to Public News Service. This includes school board elections where they seek to funnel public school dollars toward charter schools.

The Koch and Bradley networks have massive charitable organizations that are legally allowed to anonymously spend 50 percent of their charitable donations without accountability. That is dark money — money spent to influence politics without revealing the original source. The result is that Coloradans will not know the extent that our elections are influenced from outside our state.

Colorado is a successful state with a voter-friendly election process and citizens who want to serve in government. We have a Democratic governor, a Republican Senate and a Democratic House. The General Assembly exhibits both bipartisan wrangling and b-partisan cooperation. Nationally, we have a senator from each party and are represented in the House by four Republicans and three Democrats. Overall, our state political system works — for Coloradans.

We are 19 months away from the mid-term election in November 2018, and the campaigning has already started. Candidates have stepped up for governor, attorney general and U.S. representative.

Who will decide these races? Coloradans or immense wealth from Wisconsin, Kansas or elsewhere? Why should dark money from out of state be allowed to influence our elections?

It is not illegal to donate money to candidates in other states. But what weight does the average Coloradan, who may legally donate only \$100, carry when up against millions from hidden sources?

The League of Women Voters supports keeping elections local. Support candidates who refuse the influence of out-of-state billionaires. One resource to discover them is CleanSlateNow.org, headquartered in Denver.

Jane Everham is on the PR team of the League of Women Voters of Larimer County.

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