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Proposal 3 draws more than \$50M for ballot box battle over abortion rights



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Lansing — Groups supporting and opposing Proposal 3 raised a combined \$51.6 million in direct contributions between July and October, fueling a pricey ad war over the future of abortion rights in Michigan ahead of the Nov. 8 election.

Of the \$51.6 million total, about \$35.1 million was raised by the Proposal 3 ballot committee Reproductive Freedom for All and about \$16.5 million was raised by the anti-Prop 3 group Citizens to Support MI Women and Children.

The ballot committee's biggest supporters included several left-leaning non-profits, former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Planned Parenthood, the American Civil Liberties Union and several business leaders and philanthropists.

The fundraising totals for the ballot committee are a "testament" to the support for the proposal, said Darci McConnell, a spokeswoman for Reproductive Freedom for All.

"We know Michiganders support keeping the abortion protections we've had in Michigan for 50 years, and we're grateful they are willing to show that support with contributions," McConnell said in a statement.

The opposition group's largest contributors were Right to Life of Michigan, the Michigan Catholic Conference and dozens of churches, dioceses and local Right to Life groups.

"We're proud of the tremendous grassroots financial support we've received and that the overwhelming majority of the funds we've raised came from here in Michigan, where our constitution is in danger of radical revision," said Christen Pollo, a spokeswoman for Citizens to Protect MI Women and Children.

Reproductive Freedom for All reported receiving \$35.1 million in direct contributions, spending about \$26 million and having still on hand about \$9.7 million. The anti-abortion coalition Citizens

to Protect MI Women and Children reported receiving \$16.5 million in direct contributions and spent all but \$23,340 largely on advertising.

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The abortion rights group received \$5.4 million in direct contributions from the Washington, D.C.-based liberal nonprofit Sixteen Thirty Fund; \$4.5 million from the George Soros-backed nonprofit Open Society Policy Center; \$4 million from Nishad Singh, engineering director for crypto exchange FTX; \$2 million from Bloomberg, \$2 million from the national and state ACLU branches, and more than \$3 million from state and national Planned Parenthood organizations.

The group also received more than 13,500 individual contributions, including \$1 million from Farmington philanthropist Jill Foss, \$200,000 from Grand Rapids' Liesel Meijer and \$75,000 from Cynthia Ford.

Citizens to Support MI Women and Children received about 2,400 contributions between July and October, but its largest donors were Right to Life of Michigan, which contributed about \$9.2 million in direct contributions, and the Michigan Catholic Conference, which contributed nearly \$5.9 million.

Local Right to Life groups contributed thousands of dollars more as did individual Catholic dioceses and churches. High-dollar individual donors included Howard City land developer Jamie Powell, who contributed \$100,000; Boji Group developer Ron Boji, who gave \$25,000; and Grand Rapids businessman J.C. Huizenga, who contributed \$50,000. Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey, R-Clarklake, gave roughly \$120,000 to a separate opposition group Protect Life Committee Supporting Women & Children.

Props 1 & 2 see big spending

Proponents of Proposal 1, which would alter Michigan's term limits, reported raising about \$826,100 in the third quarter in direct contributions and had about \$17,108 on hand as of Oct. 23.

Voters for Transparency and Term Limits' largest donors were Miami Dolphins owner Stephen Ross, who chipped in about \$125,000; Penske Team owner Roger Penske, who contributed \$100,000; and Doug, Daniel and Dick DeVos, who contributed a total of \$100,000. DTE Energy's Michigan Energy First pitched in \$100,000, Consumers Energy \$50,000, Blue Cross Blue Shield \$100,000 and United Wholesale Mortgage \$25,000.

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The majority of the group's spending appears to involve TV ads and communications consultation.

Opposition group No More Time for Career Politicians reported only in-kind services from the group U.S. Term Limits, economist Patrick Anderson and the Virginia-based Liberty Initiative Fund.

Proponents of Proposal 2 — which would change Michigan's voting laws including allowing nine days of early voting — reported raising \$10.9 million in the third quarter in direct contributions and had \$3 million still on hand as of Oct. 23.

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Promote the Vote 2022 received about \$4.8 million and thousands more in in-kind services from the Sixteen Thirty Fund. The pro-Prop 2 group also received money from several other D.C.-based groups, including about \$1 million from the Open Society Foundation, \$675,000 from the Hopewell Fund and \$500,000 from the Democracy Fund Voice.

Philanthropists Lynn Schusterman and Lisa Primus gave \$500,000 and \$300,000, respectively. The ACLU contributed about \$500,000 and Walmart's James Walton \$200,000

Opposition group Protect MI Voter ID reported receiving nearly \$2.2 million in direct contributions in the third quarter and had \$476,389 on hand as of Oct. 23.

Among the group's biggest donors were Illinois conservative businessman Richard Uihlein, who chipped in \$1.5 million, and the conservative Virginia-based Liberty Initiative Fund, which contributed \$855,000.

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