

Written Testimony**To Ohio Senate General Government Committee****Sen. Michael A. Rulli, chairman**

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Chairman Rulli, distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the honor of testifying. I'm Scott Walter, president of the Capital Research Center, a Washington think tank that specializes in identifying special interests and the money flows they use to push state and federal policies.

We track the special interests that aim to influence how Americans vote, including efforts to introduce ranked-choice voting, or RCV.¹ Though this scheme was first used in America a century ago, it was largely forgotten until tens of millions of dollars began to be put behind it in the last several years.

Like many special interests, the donors pouring money into this election scheme frame it as a "nonpartisan" idea. But the cash behind RCV demonstrates that is *not* true. Left-wing Democrats are its largest boosters.

You may or may not decide RCV is desirable. As an out-of-stater, I won't presume to tell you what's best for Ohio. But please don't fall for false claims that centrists or nonpartisans are the main backers of RCV, or that lots of conservative donors support it.

Left-wing megadonors who've put cash behind RCV include Sam Bankman-Fried, the disgraced cryptocurrency tycoon who was the second largest Democratic Party donor in the 2022 cycle, behind

¹ See <https://capitalresearch.org/article/ranked-choice-voting-part-1/>.

only George Soros.² Second, a Wisconsinite, Katherine Gehl, former head of Gehl Foods, is almost certainly the largest single donor to RCV campaigns. She was a bundler for Obama,³ though she now donates to some Republicans who are needed to pass RCV laws. But it's almost impossible to find her giving to Republicans before 2018.⁴

Ebay billionaire Pierre Omidyar is another major donor to RCV. He's a megadonor to numerous left-wing causes and probably the largest donor in America to so-called NeverTrump efforts.⁵ On election issues, he not only supports RCV but also such dubious policies as expanding vote by mail.

The two most prominent groups pushing RCV are FairVote and Unite America, both supported by left-wing megadonors. FairVote receives support not only from George Soros but also from his son Jonathan.⁶ Omidyar also supports FairVote, as do the Tides Foundation and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund—two left-wing philanthropies currently under fire for funding left-wing activists linked to anti-Semitic protests and even Palestinian terrorist groups.⁷

FairVote also receives major support from Laura and John Arnold. Some RCV boosters point to the Arnolds' ties to Texas oil and gas interests, implying the Arnolds are conservative or Republican donors, but as our InfluenceWatch reports, their giving in recent years is "center-left."⁸

Unite America is the other major group supporting RCV. It tries to camouflage its leftward tilt to Democrats by having an advisory board with a roughly bipartisan split, but members of its *governing*

² See <https://www.nbcnews.com/meet-the-press/meetthepressblog/sam-bankman-frieds-downfall-deprives-dems-key-donor-rcna57091>.

³ See <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/23412858/nevada-question-3-final-five-voting-katherine-gehl>.

⁴ See <https://www.opensecrets.org/donor-lookup/results?name=Katherine+Gehl&order=desc&page=1&sort=D>. The lone exception I can find is \$500 to Republican Jack Ryan in 2003.

⁵ For Omidyar personally, see <https://www.influencewatch.org/person/pierre-omidyar/>. For his network of politically active nonprofits, see <https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/omidyar-nexus/>.

⁶ See <https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/fairvote/>.

⁷ See <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/hamas-protests-bankrolled-democratic-dark-money-tides-israel>, <https://www.ngo-monitor.org/funder/tides-network/>, <https://nypost.com/2023/12/02/metro/rockefeller-brothers-fund-funding-palestinian-terror-groups/>, https://www.ngo-monitor.org/funder/rockefeller_brothers_fund/, and <https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/rockefeller-brothers-fund/#anti-israel-activities>.

⁸ See <https://www.influencewatch.org/for-profit/arnold-ventures/>.

board overwhelmingly donate to Democrats.⁹ Its largest donor is Kathryn Murdoch, whom RCV supporters sometimes imply is not a left-leaning Democrat because she married into the family of Fox News' owner Rupert Murdoch. In fact, she *is* a left-wing Democrat who worked for the Clinton Climate Initiative and donated heavily to the Hillary Victory Fund.¹⁰

In short, though occasionally a Republican donor like Ken Griffin or Michael Porter has supported RCV, it's overwhelmingly a crusade funded by left-wing Democrats. I suspect they support it because by ending partisan primaries, it would gravely weaken *both* political parties,¹¹ which in turn would strengthen the billionaires' political power, because both parties would lack the power to oppose billionaires' whims.

Thank you.

⁹ See <https://www.influencewatch.org/political-party/unite-america/>.

¹⁰ See <https://www.influencewatch.org/person/kathryn-murdoch/>.

¹¹ That RCV would profoundly weaken political parties is admitted in this left-leaning defense of RCV: <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/23412858/nevada-question-3-final-five-voting-katherine-gehl>.