



# Public Disclosure Commission

SHINING LIGHT ON MONEY IN POLITICS SINCE 1972

# Background

- ▶ Initiative 276 created the campaign finance reporting requirements, the Public Disclosure Commission and the state's Public Records Act in 1972.
- ▶ The initiative declared "That the public's right to know of the financing of political campaigns and lobbying and the financial affairs of elected officials and candidates far outweighs any right that these matters remain secret and private."

# What the PDC does

- ▶ Regulate millions of campaign contributions a year, or more than \$1.5 billion since 2007
- ▶ Collect 80,000 to 100,000 reports annually of campaign contributions and expenditures, lobbying expenses, and financial affairs disclosures of elected and appointed officials and candidates.
- ▶ Operate a helpdesk for the public seeking information and the regulated community trying to report it. We answer 8,000 emails and at least that many phone calls every year.
- ▶ Build reporting applications to allow filers to submit reports electronically and to get the public better and quicker information.
- ▶ Publish 13 years of data on the website, encompassing more than 7 million records.
- ▶ Review 400-500 cases of potential violations annually.

# What we don't do

- ▶ Handle public records requests (except our own)
- ▶ Enforce ethics laws
- ▶ Investigate use of public resources for election activities by state lawmakers or state employees
- ▶ Administer elections or determine eligibility for the ballot (although we do share information with the Secretary of State and vice versa)

# The Commission

- ▶ The commission is a five-member body appointed by the governor.
- ▶ Commissioners cannot hold or campaign for office, serve as an officer of any political party or committee, support or oppose a candidate or ballot measure, participate in any election, or lobby or assist a lobbyist (except on PDC matters).
- ▶ No more than three members can be from one political party.
- ▶ The commission meets in regular session once a month.
- ▶ The commission acts as a quasi-judicial body to hear enforcement cases. Its penalty authority is \$10,000 per violation unless parties stipulate otherwise.

# Information we collect

- ▶ Campaign contributions and expenditures, including by incidental committees
- ▶ Lobbying expenditures (inc. by public agencies) on matters before the Legislature and state agencies
- ▶ Personal financial affairs disclosures from state and local elected officials, state appointed officials and certain professional staff.

All of that information is available online and updated within minutes of receipt.

# The PDC's first database

Who Gave ?

Who Got ?

How Much ?

by Jolene Unsoeld



MENU



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Regulating Candidates,  
Campaigns, and Lobbyists

Search

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## Learn

Filing Requirements & Due Dates, Contribution Limits, Laws & Rules ...



## Browse

Campaign Contributions, Lobbying Expenditures, Complaints ...



## Engage

Commission Meetings, Enforcement, Rule Making ...



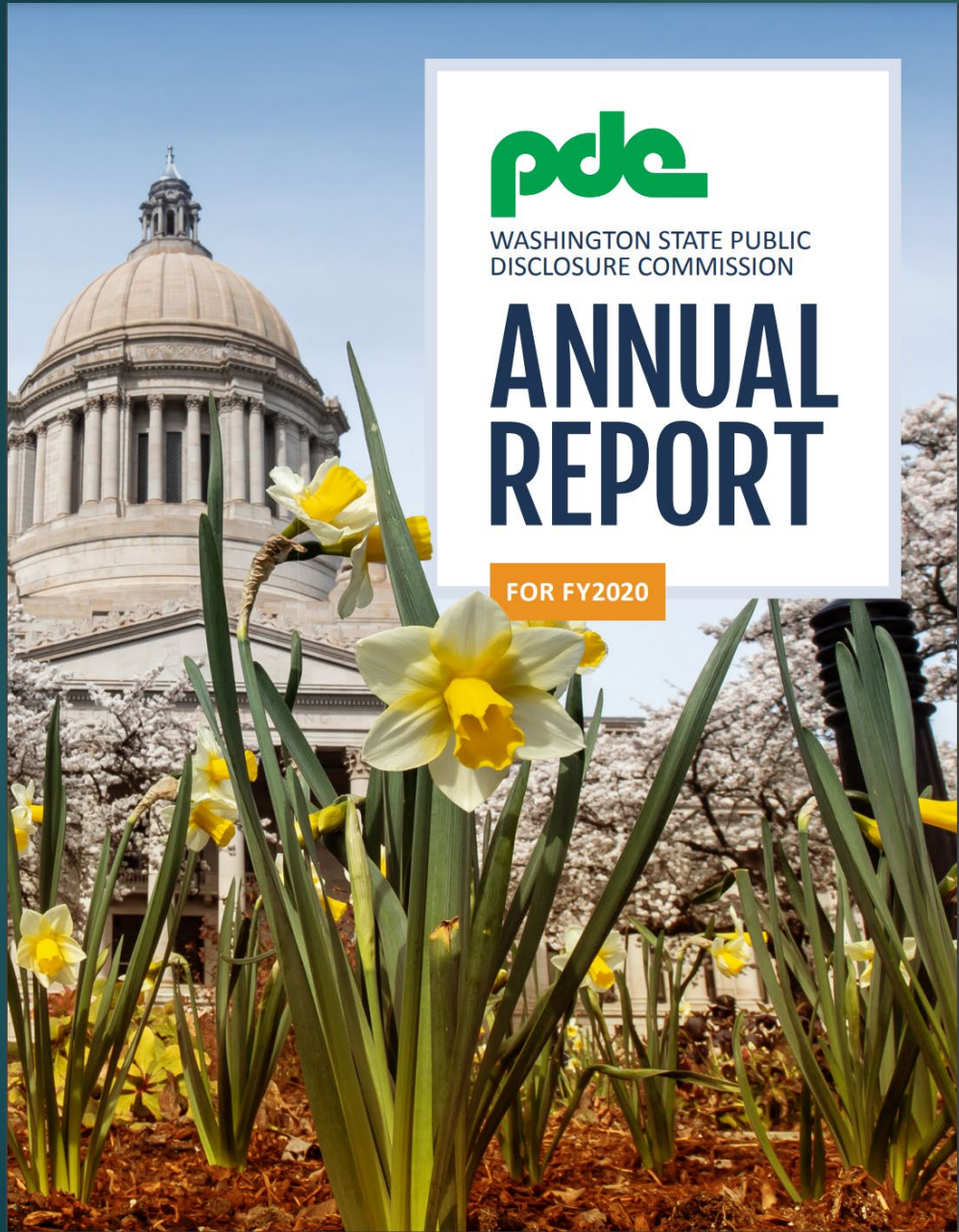
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## Follow the Money





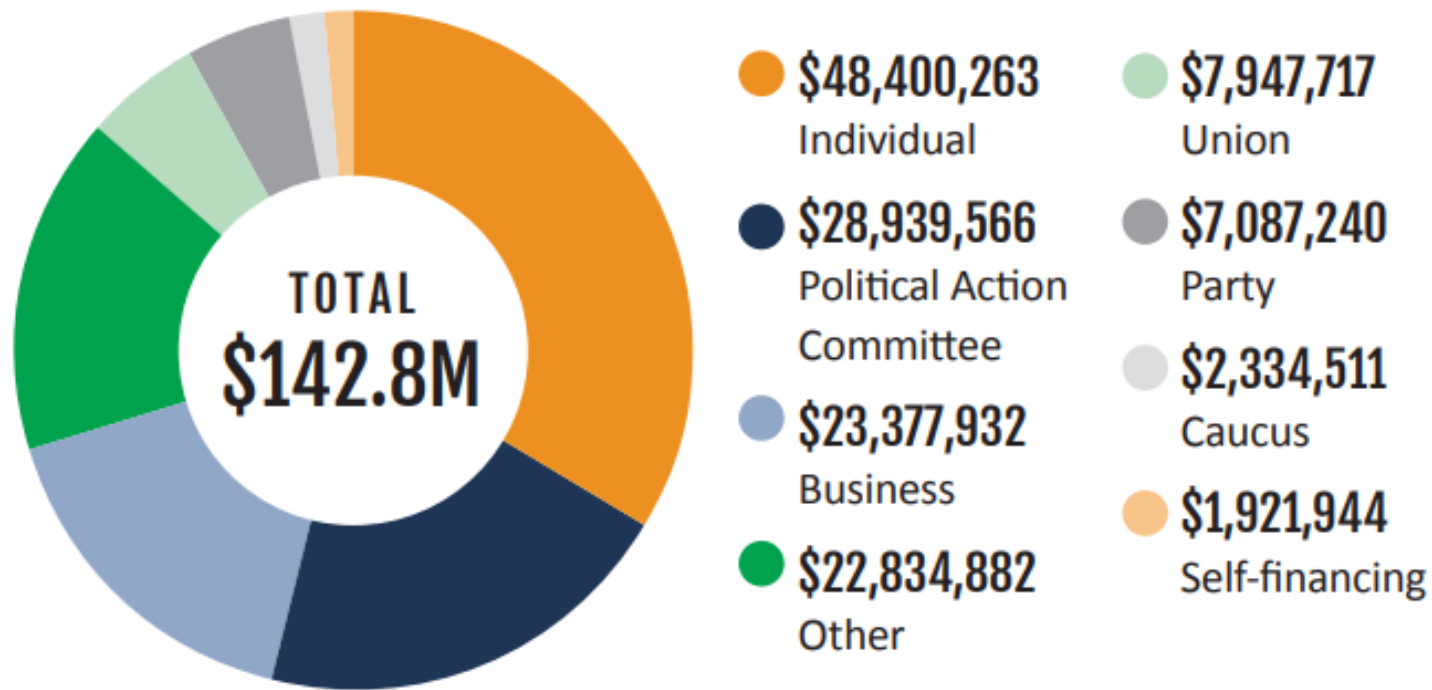
Check out the  
annual report:

[tinyurl.com/PDCAnnualreport2020](https://tinyurl.com/PDCAnnualreport2020)

# The landscape now

## Who gave, how much?

*Total contributions to candidates and political committees in 2020*



Candidate  
spending  
in 2020 =  
\$66 million

## Top candidate campaign spending

For election year 2020

- CANDIDATE EXPENDITURES
- INDEPENDENT EXPENDITURES "FOR"
- INDEPENDENT EXPENDITURES "AGAINST"

Jay R. Inslee, Governor **\$7,596,328**



Loren D. Culp, Governor



Mark Mullet, State Senate Dist. 5



T'wina Nobles, State Senate Dist. 28



Helen Price Johnson, State Senate Dist. 10



Ingrid Anderson, State Senate Dist. 5



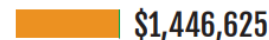
Joshua D. Freed, Governor/Lt. Governor



Steven O'Ban, State Senate Dist. 28



Robert Ferguson, Attorney General



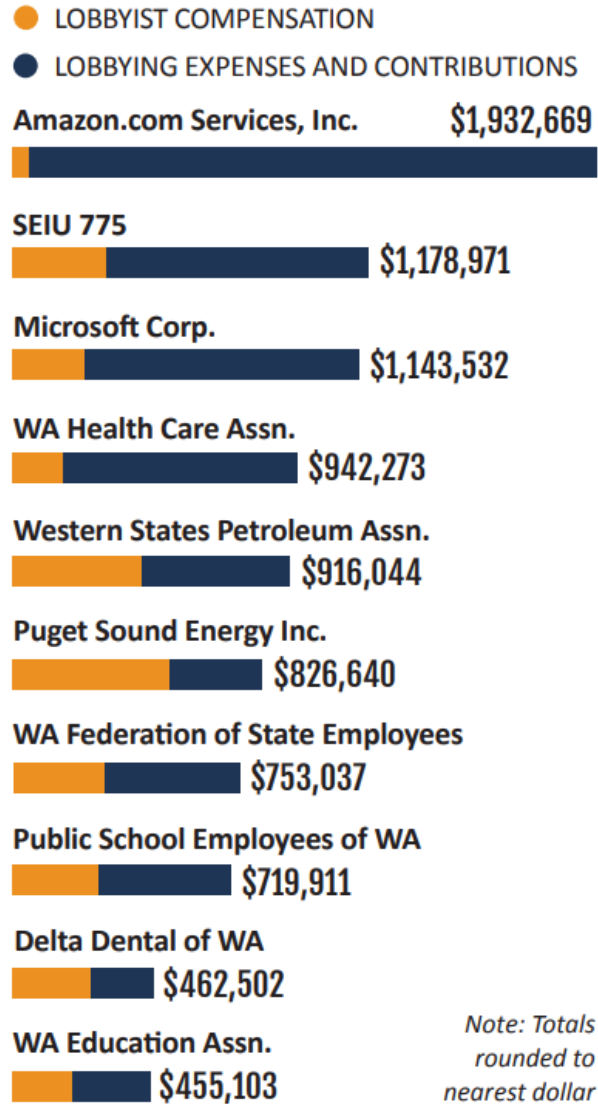
Gael D. Tarleton, Secretary of State



Note: Totals rounded to nearest dollar

## Top lobbyist employers

For fiscal year 2020



Note: Totals rounded to nearest dollar

Lobbying expenditures in 2020 = \$76 million

# How to get information

- ▶ Looking for just information about races on your ballot? Campaigns in your voting district ([www.pdc.wa.gov](http://www.pdc.wa.gov))
- ▶ Looking for this year's (or last year's) campaigns? Use "candidates by year" or "committees by year" searches on [www.pdc.wa.gov/browse/more-ways-to-follow-the-money/candidates/](http://www.pdc.wa.gov/browse/more-ways-to-follow-the-money/candidates/)
- ▶ Want to search across years and campaigns? Use "Advanced Search" at [www.pdc.wa.gov/browse/more-ways-to-follow-the-money/advanced-search/](http://www.pdc.wa.gov/browse/more-ways-to-follow-the-money/advanced-search/)
- ▶ Need raw data for a deep dive? Use PDC Open Data datasets on state's Socrata portal or download for use in tool of your choice [www.pdc.wa.gov/browse/open-data](http://www.pdc.wa.gov/browse/open-data)

# Enforcement cases

- ▶ PDC cases are usually initiated by a complaint from the public.
- ▶ Complaint volume rose sharply between 2016 and 2018 to a high of 648. In Fiscal Year 2020, we received 508 complaints.
- ▶ Of those 508, we opened 336 cases.
- ▶ Seventy-five percent of cases were closed in within the first 90 days.
- ▶ Most cases are closed with no evidence of violations or with a reminder or warning.

# What we're working on in 2021

- ▶ Improving digital political advertising disclosure
- ▶ Campaign audits to identify common problem areas
- ▶ New campaign finance reporting system
- ▶ Expanded training program for regulated community and public
- ▶ Further improvements in timely handling of enforcement cases

All that, and a new website

# How to get involved

- ▶ Spread the word about information available about money in politics
- ▶ Encourage civically minded people to apply for commission vacancies
- ▶ Get involved in our stakeholder work. Sign up at our website to get alerts or email us at [pdc@pdc.wa.gov](mailto:pdc@pdc.wa.gov).







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