

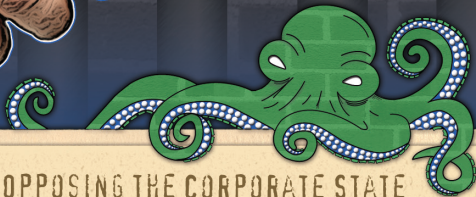


ALEC

AMERICAN LEGISLATIVE EXCHANGE COUNCIL



OCCUCARD #14



EXPOSING AND OPPOSING THE CORPORATE STATE

The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) is both a state lobbying organization and a corporate front group. Its primary activity is providing corporations with a way to secretly draft bills and get them introduced in statehouses across the country.

To do this, ALEC disguises itself as a membership organization for state lawmakers, who pay a nominal fee of \$50 per year to sit alongside representatives of corporations and vote on “model legislation.” Under ALEC’s by-laws, membership confers a “duty” upon these lawmakers to get ALEC-approved bills passed in their home states. Operating in secret, ALEC’s legislative members introduce these bills in their own name, without giving any indication they came from ALEC or were pre-approved by corporate interests. Approximately 1,000 ALEC-drafted bills are introduced in state legislatures each year, of which approximately 20% are enacted into law.

Because ALEC has closely guarded its secrecy, not much was known about the organization until July of 2011, when a whistleblower leaked over 800 internal documents to the Center for Media and Democracy, a nonprofit public interest group. Thanks to this whistleblower, we now know that much of the nation’s most regressive legislation over the last three decades has come directly from ALEC.

For example, ALEC was instrumental in promoting legislation in the 80s and 90s that privatized state prisons as well as imposed new and longer prison sentences for a wider variety of crimes, particularly non-violent drug offenses. “Mandatory minimums,” “three strikes” and “truth in sentencing” laws spread across the country as ALEC-approved bills, helping quadruple the U.S. prison population since 1980. More recently, ALEC member corporations pre-approved Arizona’s notorious 2010 anti-immigration bill, SB1070, which directly benefits the private prison industry by putting more immigrants behind bars.

In 2011 ALEC legislative members also introduced over 500 anti-labor bills, including laws restricting collective bargaining, barring automatic union dues

collection, pre-empting local living wage standards, and more. In Wisconsin, public sector unions were severely curtailed by ALEC-approved legislation pushed through by Governor Scott Walker, a former ALEC member.

From tax loopholes for big business and the super rich to tort reform measures that make it harder for Americans to sue corporations when their products injure or kill; from restrictive voter ID laws to legislation undermining efforts to mitigate climate change, ALEC has reshaped the American political system in the interests of the 1% more than any other lobbying organization. As Lisa Graves of the Center for Media and Democracy writes, “It is a worrisome marriage of corporations and politicians, which seems to normalize a kind of corruption of the legislative process, of the democratic process... where the government is supposed to be of, by, and for the people, not the corporations.”

While ALEC has about 2,000 legislative members, 98% of its funding comes directly from corporations like Exxon Mobil, Pfizer and Altria/Phillip Morris, and from pro-corporate entities like the Charles G. Koch Foundation and the Heritage Foundation. Despite its corporate funding and its blatant lobbying activity, ALEC is organized as a “charity” and receives tax-exempt status from the IRS. As of October 2012, this status is being challenged in two separate complaints filed with the IRS, one by the government watchdog organization, Common Cause, and another by Clergy VOICE, a group of Ohio ministers. Whether the IRS revokes ALEC’s charitable status or not, the criminal collusion between corporations and government will continue until a mass movement of **education, protest and civil disobedience** grows large enough to hold politicians accountable and get money out of politics.

GET INVOLVED!

alecexposed.org • prwatch.org • commoncause.org

**References / more info /
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