



NAMES IN THE NEWS: TOM VILSACK

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OVERVIEW

On December 17, 2008, President-elect Barack Obama named former governor of Iowa Tom Vilsack as his nominee for Secretary of Agriculture. Vilsack served as governor from 1998 through 2006 and sought the 2008 Democratic presidential nomination during a 15-week campaign.¹ Since May 2007, he has been "of counsel" in the law firm Dorsey & Whitney, LLP.²

During his gubernatorial campaigns from 1998 to 2004, Gov. Vilsack raised \$11.4 million. This includes \$2.7 million for his initial 1998 bid for governor, slightly less than his Republican opponent, James Lightfoot, who raised almost \$3 million. In his re-election campaign in 2002, Vilsack collected almost \$6.1 million, again winning despite raising less than his opponent, Doug Gross, who raised \$6.3 million. Gov. Vilsack raised approximately \$1.3 million each year he was not up for election, in 2000 and 2004.

During his brief run to be the 2008 Democratic nominee for president, Gov. Vilsack raised \$2 million, according to data from the Center for Responsive Politics.³ Only \$23,350 was collected from the agribusiness sector.

| CONTRIBUTIONS TO VILSACK, 1998–2004 | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| ELECTION CYCLE | STATUS | TOTAL |
| 1998 | Won | \$2,687,880 |
| 2000 | Not up for election | \$1,367,451 |
| 2002 | Won | \$6,089,431 |
| 2004 | Not up for election | \$1,295,833 |
| TOTAL | | \$11,440,594 |

WHO GAVE?

Money from party and candidate committees formed the largest percentage of Gov. Vilsack's contributions, totaling \$2.1 million. As a combined sector, labor unions provided Vilsack with the next largest portion of his campaign war chest: \$1.9 million. Fellow lawyers gave Vilsack almost \$1.2 million, or more than 10 percent of his total.

The Secretary of Agriculture takes the lead over the nation's agriculture policy, as well as having a potential role in any new alternative energy policies, such as those proposed by the Obama administration involving biofuels. Vilsack is considered a "strong proponent of renewable energy and developing the nation's alternative fuel industry."⁴

¹ "Ex-Iowa Governor Drops 2008 Presidential Bid," *CNN*, Feb. 26, 2007, <http://www.cnn.com/2007/POLITICS/02/23/vilsack.2008/index.html>, accessed Dec. 17, 2008

² "Our Attorneys," *Dorsey & Whitney*, available from <http://www.dorsey.com/people/detail.aspx?attorney=2416>, accessed Dec. 17, 2008

³ "Agriculture Nominee Vilsack Couldn't Cultivate Funds During Presidential Bid," *Center for Responsive Politics*, available from <http://www.opensecrets.org/news/2008/12/agriculture-nominee-vilsack-co.html>, accessed Dec. 19, 2008.

⁴ "Tom Vilsack picked for Agriculture Secretary", *New York Times*, Dec. 17, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/17/us/politics/17appoint.html?_r=1&scp=2&sq=vilsack&st=cse, accessed Dec. 17, 2008

Since 1998, Vilsack has received only 2 percent of his campaign contributions, or \$224,958, from agricultural interests, significantly less than his Republican opponents. In 1998, Vilsack raised \$81,920 from agricultural interests, less than half of the \$178,360 raised by James Lightfoot, his Republican opponent in the general election. In 2002, agricultural donations again favored his Republican opposition, Doug Gross, this time by a nearly 4-to-1 margin. Gross received \$342,870; Vilsack received \$89,558.

**TOP CONTRIBUTIONS TO VILSACK
BY ECONOMIC SECTOR, 1998–2004**

| ECONOMIC INTEREST⁵ | TOTAL | % OF TOTAL |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Political Party/Other Candidates | \$2,144,642 | 18.7% |
| Labor | \$1,911,692 | 16.7% |
| Lawyers & Lobbyists | \$1,189,140 | 10.4% |
| Finance, Insurance & Real Estate | \$1,188,910 | 10.4% |
| Communications & Electronics | \$350,069 | 3.1% |
| Health | \$307,282 | 2.7% |
| Construction | \$267,383 | 2.3% |
| Candidate Self-finance | \$232,695 | 2.0% |
| Agriculture | \$224,958 | 2.0% |
| General Business | \$199,350 | 1.7% |
| TOTAL | \$8,016,121 | |

TOP 10 DONORS TO VILSACK, 1998–2004

| CONTRIBUTOR | TOTAL |
|---|--------------------|
| Democratic Governors Association | \$1,028,000 |
| Iowa Democratic Party | \$516,236 |
| AFSCME Iowa Council 61 | \$326,825 |
| Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee | \$250,000 |
| Knapp, William C. & Susan Terry | \$234,660 |
| United Auto Workers/UAW | \$213,650 |
| Service Employees International Union/SEIU | \$205,000 |
| Iowa Trial Lawyers Association | \$183,350 |
| Iowa State Education Association | \$169,440 |
| Food & Commercial Workers/Ufcw | \$156,750 |
| TOTAL | \$3,283,911 |

⁵ As identified by the Institute. Iowa does not require contributors to note their occupation and employer, making it difficult to classify many donors. For example, small-amount donors are difficult to identify. In Vilsack's case, 53 percent of the donors gave less than \$100 for a total of \$296,934.

- The **Democratic Governors Association** (DGA) was the top contributor, giving more than \$1 million, or 9 percent of Vilsack's total campaign funds. The DGA gave \$110,000 to Vilsack's 1998 campaign and \$918,000 to his 2002 re-election campaign. The DGA is an organization of all the Democratic governors and supports other Democratic gubernatorial nominees and incumbents. Gov. Vilsack served as chair of the DGA in 2004.
- The **Iowa Democratic Party** contributed \$516,236 to Vilsack's campaign coffers; 60 percent (\$309,161) was given during his 2002 re-election campaign.
- **AFSCME Council 61**, the Iowa council of the government employees union, gave \$326,825. Of that, \$276,700 (85 percent) was given during 2002. Vilsack also received \$78,100 from the national AFSCME headquarters in Washington, DC.
- Funding from the **Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee**, which supports Democratic candidates running for the U.S. House of Representatives, gave Vilsack \$25,000 in 1998; \$125,000 in 2000; and \$100,000 in 2002.
- The **United Auto Workers** gave the gubernatorial candidate \$213,650 through its political action committee, the Iowa State UAW PAC; \$101,650, (48 percent) of it was given for Vilsack's 2002 re-election campaign.
- The national organization of the **Service Employees International Union** (SEIU) gave \$205,000; 95 percent (\$195,000) was given in 2002 and 2004, after Vilsack had already completed one term as governor.
- The political action committee of the **Iowa Trial Lawyers Association**, Justice for All PAC, gave fellow lawyer Vilsack \$183,350 in contributions. The trial lawyers gave \$56,000 in 1998, \$3,000 in 2000, and \$124,350 in 2002.
- \$156,750 came from affiliates of the **United Food & Commercial Workers International Union** (UFCW) over all four election cycles. Of that total, 86 percent (\$134,700) came from the national organization based in Washington, D.C.

Top Individuals

- **William C. Knapp** and his wife, **Susan Terry**, of Des Moines, gave \$234,660 to Vilsack's election campaign between 2000 and 2004. Knapp owns Knapp Properties, which develops, brokers, and manages a wide variety of commercial and residential properties in Des Moines.
- **Jerry Crawford**, a lawyer with the Crawford Quilty Law Firm in Des Moines, gave \$107,430 between 1998 and 2002. Crawford has served on the board of

directors for the Democratic Governor's Association and is cited as "one of the leading Democratic strategists in Iowa."⁶

- \$99,135 came from **Doris Jean Newlin** over the four elections. Newlin is a prominent philanthropic member of the Des Moines community, contributing to many organizations.
- Chicago media mogul **Fred Eychaner**, owner of Newsweb Corp., gave \$75,000 to Vilsack's campaign: \$35,000 for his 2002 re-election campaign and \$40,000 in 2004, when Vilsack was not up for election.
- **Jon B. Lovelace** of Los Angeles, Calif., who served as chair of Capital Research & Mangement Co., along with his wife, **Lillian**, gave \$70,150 to Vilsack's campaigns. Capital Research & Management Co. manages over \$1 trillion, including the American Funds group of mutual funds.⁷ James Lovelace, who also works for Capital Research & Management Co., gave another \$7,000.

Contributions: Heartland PAC

Elected officials often form political action committees, sometimes known as leadership committees, to funnel money to other candidates. In 2005, Gov. Vilsack formed Heartland PAC, which has a self-described mission "to support the election of Democratic governors and other statewide offices."⁸ In 2006, Heartland PAC distributed \$598,288 dollars to candidates and political parties in 17 states.

Almost 60 percent of Heartland PAC's contributions (\$357,638) stayed in Iowa. In 2006, the governor's office was up for election in nearly all of the states favored by Heartland PAC's contributions. Heartland PAC also gave donations totaling over \$20,000 in New Hampshire, New Jersey, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Maine.

⁶ "Vilsack, First Democrat In, Is Quickly Out," *Washington Post*, Feb. 24, 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/23/AR2007022300775.html>, accessed Dec. 17, 2008

⁷ "Capital Research & Mangement Company (American Funds)," *Pacific Life*, <http://www.pacificlife.com/Life+Insurance/Portfolio+Managers/Capital+Research+and+Management+Company/>, accessed Dec. 17, 2007

⁸ "About Us: Heartland PAC 2006 Facts," *HeartlandPAC.org*, July 5, 2006, available at <http://www.heartlandpac.org/aboutus> via the Internet Archive's [WayBack Machine](http://www.archive.org/), accessed Dec. 17, 2008

HEARTLAND PAC CONTRIBUTIONS BY STATE, 2006

| STATE | TOTAL | % OF TOTAL |
|----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Iowa | \$357,638 | 59.8% |
| New Hampshire | \$67,500 | 11.3% |
| New Jersey | \$25,000 | 4.2% |
| Oregon | \$25,000 | 4.2% |
| Pennsylvania | \$25,000 | 4.2% |
| Maine | \$20,500 | 3.4% |
| Ohio | \$19,750 | 3.3% |
| South Carolina | \$12,500 | 2.1% |
| Arkansas | \$12,000 | 2.0% |
| Arizona | \$10,000 | 1.7% |
| Nevada | \$7,000 | 1.2% |
| Oklahoma | \$5,000 | 0.8% |
| Colorado | \$2,900 | 0.5% |
| Tennessee | \$2,500 | 0.4% |
| Delaware | \$2,000 | 0.3% |
| Georgia | \$2,000 | 0.3% |
| Kansas | \$2,000 | 0.3% |
| TOTAL | \$598,288 | |

Heartland PAC gave 56 percent (\$336,138) of its total contributions to Democratic Party state committees. Seventy-four percent (\$249,138) went to the Iowa Democratic Party. Gubernatorial campaigns were the next biggest recipients of Heartland PAC's money, receiving \$212,150, or 35 percent of the total. Gov. Vilsack's successor, Chet Culver, received \$100,000 from Vilsack's PAC. Other major donations went to sitting governors up for re-election: John Lynch (N.H.) received \$30,000 while Ted Kulongoski (Ore.) and Ed Rendell (Penn.) both received \$25,000. Other contributions went to the election committees for secretaries of state (\$22,000), legislative candidates (\$16,000), and state agriculture secretaries (\$12,000).

HEARTLAND PAC CONTRIBUTIONS BY OFFICE

| RECIPIENT TYPE | TOTAL | % OF TOTAL |
|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Party Committees | \$336,138 | 56.2% |
| Governor | \$212,150 | 35.5% |
| Secretary of State | \$22,000 | 3.7% |
| Legislative Candidates | \$16,000 | 2.7% |
| Agriculture Secretaries | \$12,000 | 2.0% |
| TOTAL | \$598,288 | |