

Trump's political operation has raised over \$500 million since 2020 election



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Palm Beach, September 12 (RHC)-- Former President Donald Trump's political operation has raised more than \$500 million since the 2020 presidential election while using donor money to pay millions of dollars in legal bills and steer millions more to the coffers of January 6 rally organizers, a new OpenSecrets analysis of federal campaign finance filings found.

ABC News reports that a federal grand jury investigating the push to overturn 2020 election results and activities leading up to the January 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol has expanded its probe. Federal investigators are now seeking information about a central node of Trump's political operation — his leadership PAC, Save America. The New York Times confirmed that the federal grand jury issued subpoenas related to the probe.

Save America leadership PAC raised over \$100 million during the 2022 election cycle and more than \$30 million in the final weeks after Election Day in 2020, totaling over \$135 million since its inception. The leadership PAC's fundraising slowed to under \$6,000 in July despite spending about \$4 million, OpenSecrets' analysis of campaign finance data found, leaving Save America with under \$100 million cash on hand left at the end of July.

Much of the leadership PAC's funds have come in the form of transfers from the Save America joint fundraising committee, which files quarterly reports with the Federal Election Commission and won't have to disclose its July fundraising until October.

The actual total may be even greater than the conservative \$500 million estimate of the Trump political operation's total fundraising through June 30, 2022, which excludes transfers between Trump-aligned political committees to avoid double-counting. That amount also does not include funds raised by 501(c) nonprofits that do not report fundraising to the FEC.

Trump has not formally announced his decision on running for president in 2024. Delaying the announcement enables Trump to solicit bigger checks and continue to work closely with groups that may go on to spend in support of his candidacy when, as a candidate, he would be barred from illegally coordinating strategy with them.

But he has used his political operation to build up a political war chest and base of loyal supporters while steering millions of dollars to cover legal fees amid mounting controversies. Trump's political operation has used recent media attention to rile up the former president's base and bring in even more cash.

In the aftermath of the FBI's search of Mar-a-Lago, Save America PAC fundraising reached as high as \$1 million per day, according to The Washington Post. Trump has also fundraised off of the Jan. 6th Committee hearings.

Several of the fundraising emails reference an "Official Trump Defense Fund," a name that bears resemblance to the "Official Election Defense Fund" that Trump's campaign and joint fundraising committee used to solicit donations in the final weeks of 2020. Despite a massive fundraising haul in the final weeks of 2020, the Select Committee to Investigate the Jan. 6 Attack on the United States Capitol found no evidence that the defense fund was even a real entity.

While there is no evidence either "defense fund" exists, Trump's political operation has steered more than \$16 million to firms to cover legal fees from the start of the 2022 cycle through June 30. The political operation racked up nearly \$1 million in additional legal fees in July alone.

Trump's political operation shelled out more than \$6.6 million to cover legal costs since January of this year, filings as of August 20 show.

As Trump's political operation pays millions to law firms known to represent Jan. 6 witnesses, Republican Party committees have footed the bill for some of Trump's own legal fees.

The Republican National Committee has helped cover Trump's legal bills related to New York Attorney General Letitia James' investigation into the former president's private businesses and other cases following his departure from the White House. But POLITICO reported that the RNC is not covering Trump's legal fees related to the FBI search of Mar-a-Lago and would completely stop paying Trump's legal fees if he formally declares his candidacy for president in the 2024 election — a step he has hinted at but has yet to take.

Trump's political operation also continued to route payments to at least one firm involved in the rally that preceded the Jan. 6 Capitol attack, even after the public hearings kicked off in June, OpenSecrets' analysis of campaign finance filings found.

Groups aligned with Trump have paid about \$15 million to Event Strategies Inc., a firm named in the permit for the January 6 rally and also employed two individuals involved in the demonstration, since the 2016 election cycle. About half of that — over \$7.2 million — came in the first seven months of this year, OpenSecrets found. The bulk of those payments to Event Strategies Inc. came from Trump's Save America leadership PAC.

Overall, individuals and firms involved in organizing the Jan. 6 rally have received about \$17 million in payments from Trump's political operation with about \$14 million since the start of the 2020 cycle — including in the weeks leading up to Jan. 6, 2021.

The Truth and Courage PAC also started paying Event Strategies in 2022, racking up about \$73,000 in payments. The super PAC, which is aligned with Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas), has spent over \$315,000 supporting Republican candidates in 2022 midterms.

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