

Soros Gave \$1.35M to Character Assassination Group Inundating Trump with Lawsuits

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington shares employees with Media Matters, state filings show

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George Soros / Getty Images

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Liberal billionaire George Soros provided \$1.35 million to a "nonpartisan" government watchdog organization last year that is hitting the Trump administration with a steady flow of complaints and lawsuits in an attempt to "damage" his presidency, according to tax filings provided to the *Washington Free Beacon*.

Separate state filings also reveal that the "nonpartisan" watchdog shares employees with the liberal Media Matters for America, an organization that was founded by Democratic operative and Clinton loyalist David Brock. Confidential documents handed out by Brock to big money donors in early 2017 and [obtained](#) by the *Free Beacon* previously shed light on how Brock planned to attack Trump over the course of his presidency using his constellation of organizations.

Soros gave \$1.35 million to Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW), a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit that does not reveal its donors. The group has been involved with a number of high-profile lawsuits and complaints against Trump and other Republicans. Its top members regularly appear on news programs attacking the administration and

members of the GOP but are rarely [identified](#) as having a left-wing mission by the outlets and on-air personalities.

Soros's donations to CREW came from two entities in his Open Society Foundations network [including \\$1,250,000](#) from the Foundation to Promote Open Society and [\\$100,000](#) from the Open Society Policy Center, according to a review of his groups' most recent tax forms covering the 2017 fiscal year that were provided by Soros's spokesperson.

CREW's most recent [tax forms](#), which were provided by the organization, show that the group more than quadrupled its contributions from \$1,853,672 in 2016 to \$7,773,524 in 2017.

The drastic uptick was a byproduct of its planned expansion as Trump took office, documents handed out by Brock to deep-pocketed donors at a January 2017 retreat revealed. The gathering was attended by more than 100 wealthy liberals who huddled alongside Brock at the posh Turnberry Isle Resort just outside Miami as they mapped out how they [would](#) "kick Donald Trump's ass" in the upcoming years.

The *Free Beacon* was on site for the retreat and [obtained the confidential documents](#) that show how the seasoned liberal operative planned to damage Trump using Media Matters, American Bridge, Shareblue, and CREW.

Brock chaired CREW's board from 2014 to late 2016 but stepped down from the position as he did not want the organization to appear overly partisan as Trump was entering the White House.

"Due to my stepped-up political activities in the American Bridge opposition research super PAC, I decided to step off CREW's

board to ensure its public reputation for non-partisanship," Brock said at the time. "I'm very proud of the work CREW has accomplished during my two years on board, and its work is more relevant now than ever."

Brock's influence on the organization can still be felt, however.

The [internal memo explained](#) how CREW would focus on afflicting Trump with "a steady flow of damaging information, new revelations, and an inability to avoid conflicts issues," forcing the Trump administration to defend "illegal conduct in court," reducing the influence of powerful industries and interest groups, and making dark money a political liability in key states.

The documents boasted of CREW's communications team placing regular stories in the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and other publications. The organization also gloated that the group partners "with top reporters to move major stories forward."

Its budget was set at \$5.8 million for 2017, which would "double" its size from the previous year, to allow them to expand its staff and scope of their investigations.

"In 2017 CREW is planning to expand to a staff of at least 38," the documents read. "We will more than double the size of our legal team, and add to our research and communications shop (including web and social media). We will also expand our administrative and paralegal capabilities. The increased budget will also cover outside legal services, web and social media services, and research and investigative resources."

In October of this year, as CREW was renewing its registration in North Carolina, the group submitted an [independent auditor's report](#) that reveals they share employees with Media Matters, a search of state records found.

"The organization shares employees and other related expenses with Media Matters for America (MMFA), a not-for-profit organization exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code," the [report](#) states. "As of December 31, 2017, \$4,790 was owed to MMFA, which is included in accounts payable in the accompanying Statement of Financial Position."

CREW's address on its 2017 tax forms is the same as Media Matters, American Bridge, and Shareblue. However, the address listed on its website is a different location that is a 10-minute walk from Brock's main headquarters. This is due to the group leasing office space at two locations, according to the auditor's report.

CREW's spokesperson did not respond to emails seeking comment on the Soros donation, the group being located at the same address as Brock's other organizations, and its sharing of employees with Media Matters after Brock "left" the group.

CREW is an [approved](#) organization of the Democracy Alliance, the left's biggest secretive dark money donor network whose members each vow to steer hundreds of thousands in funding to its network of progressive groups each year.

Soros, a member of the alliance, and Brock were both in attendance at the alliance's 2017 fall investment conference in Carlsbad, Calif. The *Free Beacon* was also present at the resort during its gathering [and obtained its confidential agenda](#), which

did not list Brock, although he was spotted at the resort. Media Matters is also an approved group of the secretive club.

CREW has been involved with a number of complaints and lawsuits against Trump since he took office, including the recent high-profile suit accusing Trump of violating the Constitution's emoluments clause, which bars foreign governments from paying U.S. officials through his private businesses.

The lawsuit was filed by the attorneys general in D.C. and Maryland and mimicked an earlier suit filed by CREW in New York that was ultimately dismissed by a federal judge.

The suit was identical in nature because it was [aided](#) by top executives from CREW.

Noah Bookbinder, CREW's executive director, and Stuart McPhail, CREW's litigation counsel, [are both listed on](#) the original lawsuit under the respective attorneys general.

CREW reported spending \$1,645,270 on "large scale litigation" and filed "numerous ethics complaints and administrative complaints and legal complaints with the Office of Government Ethics, the Department of Justice, and other agencies against executive branch officials and members of Congress" throughout 2017. The group additionally reports filing complaints with the Federal Election Commission, Internal Revenue Service, and other agencies "concerning violations of finance and tax laws" by government officials.

In a fundraising email this week, the group took credit for its "pioneering legal and investigative work" and an IRS complaint they say laid the groundwork for the New York Attorney

General's investigation that recently led to the Trump Foundation agreeing to shut down its operations.

Soros's spokesperson did not reply to an inquiry on the donations from the financier and his relationship with Brock by press time.