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# HEDGE PAPERS NO. 62

DAN MCKEE AND THE RIGHT-WING  
BILLIONAIRES WHO BACK HIM





DAN MCKEE



BETSY DEVOS



JONATHAN SACKLER

*Dan McKee has made some very powerful and very wealthy friends. It's worked out well for him—but not so great for regular families in Rhode Island.*

As the former Mayor of Cumberland and current Lieutenant Governor, McKee has pushed policies that have undermined Rhode Island's public schools and thrown into question his commitment to holding accountable those who profited from the opioid crisis.

McKee's biggest campaign backers include the Walton family, heirs to the Wal-Mart fortune and patrons of the Betsy DeVos education agenda. It's no mystery why—Billionaire Betsy herself has praised McKee at closed-door meetings in Washington, DC.

Troublingly, McKee has also taken thousands of dollars from the Sackler family, heirs to the OxyContin fortune.



## DAN MCKEE AND HIS RIGHT-WING BILLIONAIRE BUDDIES

Dan McKee is a flat-out pro-charter school politician, pushing for privatization of our public schools. He is running for re-election as Lt. Governor of Rhode Island.

A supporter of DeVos-style education privatization, McKee has earned praise from Trump Education Secretary DeVos who referred to him as a champion and thanked him for promoting her reform agenda.<sup>1</sup>

But McKee's ties to DeVos don't end there—Dan McKee is being boosted by several other supporters of Betsy DeVos and the Trump agenda.

## WALTON BILLIONAIRES PUSH RI WORKERS INTO POVERTY—AND MCKEE INTO POLITICS

McKee's biggest patron is the Walton family, the multi-billionaire heirs and heiresses to the Wal-Mart fortune.

Wal-Mart treats Rhode Islanders terribly—in 2014, Americans for Tax Fairness estimated that Wal-Mart pay for its Rhode Island workers was so low that employees were forced to rely on \$11 MILLION in public assistance—but the Walton family couldn't love Dan McKee more.

In 2014 alone, Walton family members supported McKee to the tune of \$100,000. In the 2018 race, McKee has accepted contributions from Wal-Mart heiress Carrie Walton Penner, a major charter school proponent.

Just like McKee, the Walton family is also sweet on Betsy DeVos.

The Walton Family Foundation has donated a total of \$24,740,501 to Betsy DeVos's school privatization group, the Alliance for School Choice. In the past ten years for which data is available, Walton Family Foundation contributions to Alliance for School Choice have amounted to an average of 32.29% of the organization's annual revenue.

### 2014 WALTON & 2018 PENNER SPENDING:

REPORT OF INDEPENDENT EXPENDITURES, ELECTIONEERING COMMUNICATIONS OR COVERED TRANSFERS (CF-8)		Time Stamp (Office Use Only)
Identify Person, Business Entity or PAC responsible for Independent Expenditure, Electioneering Communication or Covered Transfer EDUCATION REFORM ADVOCACY NOW		
Street Address 928 Broadway Suite 605	City/Town, State and Zip Code New York, NY 10010	Telephone Number 212-614-3213
Employer (If applicable)	Occupation (If applicable)	
The Person, Business Entity or PAC has expended more than \$1000 to support or defeat a Candidate or Referendum as follows:		
Identify the Candidate(s) on the ballot and whether funds were expended to support or defeat this candidate <input type="checkbox"/> Support <input type="checkbox"/> Defeat		
Identify the Referendum on the ballot and whether funds were expended to support or defeat this referendum <input type="checkbox"/> Support <input type="checkbox"/> Defeat		
Any person, business entity or political action committee making independent expenditures, electioneering communications, or covered transfers shall report all such expenditures provided the total of the money so expended exceeds \$1000 within a calendar year to the Board of Elections within 7 days of making the expenditure.		
Date of Expenditure	Amount of Expenditure	EXPENDITURES Name and Full Address: Person, Business Entity, PAC Receiving Expenditure
08/27/2014	\$ 100,000.00	50CAN Action Fund Inc., 1112 16th Street NW Suite 240, Washington, DC 20036
	\$	
	\$	
	\$	
	\$	
Year to Date Total of All Expenditures in Support or Defeat of This Candidate or Referendum: \$		
Reports of independent expenditures, electioneering communications or covered transfers by a person, business entity or PAC shall disclose the identity of all donors of an aggregate of \$1000 or more within the current election cycle.		
Date Donation Received	Donation Amount	DONATIONS Name, Address and Place of Employment of Donor
5/13/14	\$ 100,000.00	Alice Walton, P.O. Box 1880, Bentonville, AR 72712, Self-employed Philanthropist

## JUST LIKE MCKEE, THE WALTON FAMILY IS ALSO SWEET ON BETSY DEVOS.

The Walton Family Foundation has donated a total of \$24,740,501 to Betsy DeVos's school privatization group, the Alliance for School Choice. In the past ten years for which data is available, Walton Family Foundation contributions to Alliance for School Choice have amounted to an average of 32.29% of the organization's annual revenue.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/prepared-remarks-secretary-education-betsy-devos-national-lieutenant-governors-association>

*The Walton Family Foundation has donated a total of \$24,740,501 to Betsy DeVos's school privatization group, the Alliance for School Choice. Walton Family Foundation contributions to Alliance for School a Choice have amounted to an average of 32.29% of the organization's annual revenue.*

## CONTRIBUTIONS

YEAR	CONTRIBUTION TOTAL	WFF TOTAL	PERCENT WFF
2014	\$9,311,753.00	\$3,540,000.00	38.02%
2013	\$9,360,660.00	\$3,163,500.00	33.80%
2012	\$5,193,313.00	\$1,700,000.00	32.73%
2011	\$6,309,253.00	\$1,202,000.00	19.05%
2010	\$3,906,508.00	\$2,308,376.00	59.09%
2009	\$3,232,978.00	\$1,350,379.00	41.77%
2008	\$5,766,683.00	\$2,231,880.00	38.70%
2007	\$10,443,330.00	\$1,624,686.00	15.56%
2006	\$6,855,656.00	\$2,247,095.00	32.78%
2005	\$6,883,856.00	\$1,862,034.00	27.05%
2004	\$4,181,879.00	\$695,551.00	16.63%
Average:			32.29%

## SCHOOL PRIVATIZERS SWARM DAN MCKEE

Another McKee backer, tech entrepreneur Angus Davis, donated \$10,000 to a PAC supporting McKee's candidacy in 2014.



BETSY DEVOS

Davis is a former board member of the Center for Education Reform, a pro-voucher organization headed by Heritage Foundation alumn Jeanne Allen. Jeanne Allen has repeatedly acted as a DeVos surrogate, defending Trump's embattled secretary of education in the media,<sup>2</sup> and the Center for Education Reform has been one of the few school choice organizations that hasn't condemned the Trump/DeVos school privatization agenda.

McKee is also being supported by 50CAN, a national education reform organization whose former director, Jim Blew, leads DeVos's office of planning, evaluation and policy analysis.<sup>3</sup> 50CAN has raised \$125,000 to date to support McKee's candidacy.

McKee is also being boosted by the so-called Democrats for Education Reform ('DFER') and their affiliates, to the tune of at least \$6,500 since 2012.

2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5mvzrFTLKul> ; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=auIrl-eYK1aY>

3 [http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2017/09/trump\\_taps\\_school\\_choice\\_champion\\_jim\\_blew\\_education\\_post.html](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2017/09/trump_taps_school_choice_champion_jim_blew_education_post.html)

4 <https://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/co/2018/04/14/colorado-democrats-overwhelming-reject-democrats-for-education-reform-at-state-assembly/> ; [https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/craig/mailings/7/attachments/original/CDP\\_Fracking.pdf?1371135169](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/craig/mailings/7/attachments/original/CDP_Fracking.pdf?1371135169)

5 <https://web.archive.org/web/20110705054402/http://dferwatch.wordpress.com/2011/04/22/ern-advocacy-update-donation-to-american-federation-for-children-a/>

6 <http://ltgov.ri.gov/opioid/>

Despite the word 'Democrats' in their name, which state Democratic parties in Colorado and California have attempted to prevent them from using,<sup>4</sup> DFER has close ties to Betsy DeVos's Alliance for School Choice, with their 501(c)4 arm donating \$25,000 to DeVos's school privatization organization in 2010.<sup>5</sup>

## DAN MCKEE AND THE BILLIONAIRES WHO BROUGHT US THE OPIOID CRISIS

To hear Dan McKee tell it, he's been the state's staunchest fighter of the opioid manufacturers. But the truth is very different.

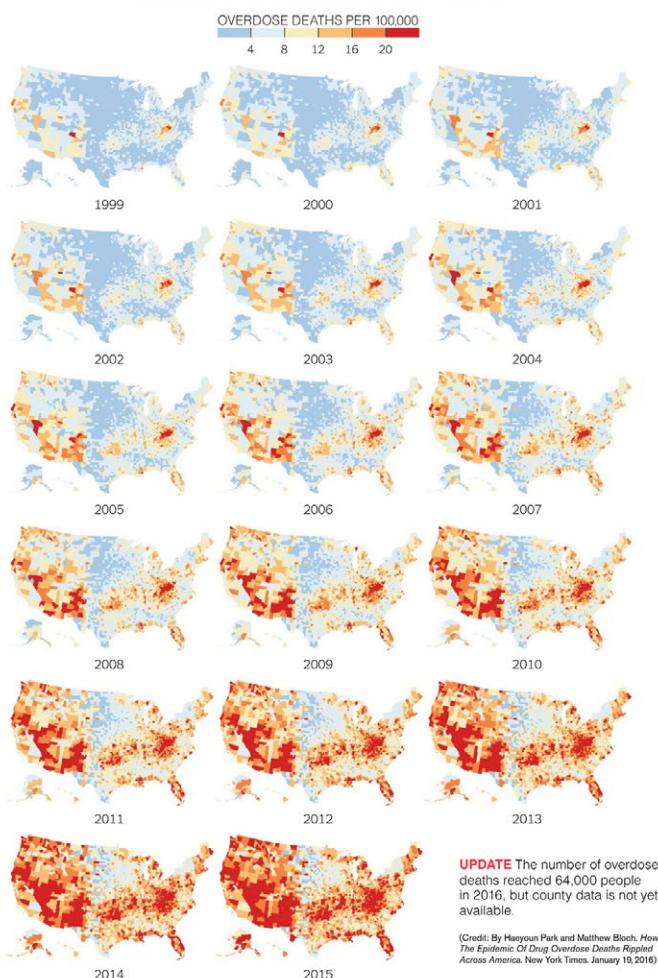
His own website claims that McKee "is leading Rhode Island communities in the fight against the prescription opioid epidemic by filing a suit against the companies responsible for fueling the epidemic across Rhode Island."<sup>6</sup> That probably makes for awkward table talk with one of his largest campaign donors, the billionaire heirs to the OxyContin fortune.

McKee has accepted thousands of dollars in direct contributions from the Sackler family and their employees.

The Sacklers are the billionaire heirs to the OxyContin fortune, and their company, Purdue Pharmaceuticals, is being sued by several states attorneys general (including Rhode Island), for their role in fueling the opioid crisis.

DATE	DONOR	AMOUNT	DFER CONNECTION
12/10/2012	DFER RI PAC (DEMOCRATS FOR EDUCATION REFORM)	\$500.00	DFER's PAC
10/21/2013	Tilson, Whitney R	\$500.00	DFER founder
5/4/2014	Williams, Joeseph	\$1,000.00	FER exec. Director
3/30/2013	Williams, Joseph Clarke	\$1,000.00	DFER exec. Director
3/30/2013	Williams, Anne Martin	\$1,000.00	Joe Williams' wife
6/25/2014	Tilson, Susan	\$250.00	Tilson's wife
3/5/2013	Tilson, Whitney R	\$250.00	DFER founder
3/12/2014	Tilson, Whitney R	\$1,000.00	DFER founder
3/30/2013	Curry IV, Ravenel Boykin	\$500.00	DFER member
3/23/2012	DFER RI PAC (DEMOCRATS FOR EDUCATION REFORM)	\$500.00	DFER

## HOW THE EPIDEMIC OF DRUG OVERDOSE DEATHS RIPPLED ACROSS THE UNITED STATES



McKee has accepted a total of \$6,500 from Jonathan Sackler, Sackler's spouse, and two of the employees of the company that manages his private fortune.

Dan McKee got the backing of billionaires — charter school billionaires, poverty-wage billionaires, opioid billionaires — while regular families in Rhode Island got hurt.

Voters in this year's Democratic primaries should consider going in a different direction: away from opioids and school privatization, and towards elected officials that put the interests of regular Rhode Island families ahead of the pet projects of the wealthy and powerful.

DATE	CONTRIBUTOR	EMPLOYER	AMOUNT
6/28/2013	Olson, Brian	Kokino LLC	\$1,000.00
4/2/2014	Olsen, Brian	Kokino LLC	\$500.00
12/26/2013	Olsen, Jill	Kokino LLC	\$1,000.00
6/24/2013	Sackler, Jonathan D	Purdue Pharma	\$1,000.00
10/1/2015	Sackler, Jonathan D	Purdue Pharma	\$1,000.00
4/1/2014	Sackler, Jonathan	North Bay Associates	\$1,000.00
06/24/2013	Corson, Mary	Not Employed	\$1,000.00

# WHO ARE THE HEDGE CLIPPERS?

Every day, the most unscrupulous hedge fund managers, private equity firms and Wall Street speculators impact the lives of Americans. They play an outsized role in our political process, our education system, and our economy. Hedge Clippers is a national campaign focused on unmasking the dark money schemes and strategies the billionaire elite uses to expand their wealth, consolidate power and obscure accountability for their misdeeds. Through hard-hitting research, war-room communications, aggressive direct action and robust digital engagement, Hedge Clippers unites working people, communities, racial justice organizations, grassroots activists, students and progressive policy leaders in a bold effort to expose and combat the greed-driven agenda that threatens basic fairness at all levels of American society.

The Hedge Papers are researched, written, edited, reviewed and designed by a distributed, networked team of researchers, writers, academics, attorneys, industry experts, community organizers and designers from around the United States, with contributions from international activists.

We welcome contributions from whistleblowers, industry insiders, journalists, lawmakers and regulatory officials as well as from regular Americans who have felt the destructive impact of hedge funds, private equity funds and the billionaire class in their daily lives.

Our collective includes individuals associated with labor unions, community organizations, think tanks, universities, non-governmental organizations, national and international organizing and advocacy networks, student and faith groups as well as non-profit and for-profit organizations.

The Hedge Clippers campaign includes leadership and collaborative contributions from labor unions, community groups, coalitions, digital activists and organizing networks around the country, including: the Strong Economy for All Coalition, New York Communities for Change, Alliance for Quality Education, VOCAL-NY and Citizen Action of New York; Make the Road New York and Make the Road Connecticut; New Jersey Communities United; the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE) and Courage Campaign; the Grassroots Collaborative in Illinois; the Ohio Organizing Collaborative; ISAIAH in Minnesota; Organize Now in Florida; Rootstrikers, Every Voice, Color of Change, 350.org, Greenpeace, the ReFund America Project and United Students Against Sweatshops; the Center for Popular Democracy and the Working Families Party; the United Federation of Teachers and New York State United Teachers; the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, and the Communication Workers of America.

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