

THE LYNDE AND HARRY BRADLEY FOUNDATION

Organizational Profile & Threat Assessment

We Are the Resistance — Corporate Collaborators Series

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This document is part of the Corporate Collaborators research series. All claims are based on verifiable public records, IRS filings, leaked internal documents, and credible investigative reporting. For civic education and lawful accountability purposes only.

I. Organization Overview

Full Name	The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation
Type	Private charitable foundation — 501(c)(3)
Founded	1942 (as Allen-Bradley Foundation); expanded dramatically in 1985 when Allen-Bradley was sold to Rockwell International for \$1.65 billion, swelling assets from \$14 million to over \$290 million
Headquarters	Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Assets	Nearly \$1 billion as of 2023
Total Grants	\$1.3 billion in grants since 1985
Annual Giving	Approximately \$37–49 million per year in recent years; approximately 70% to national groups, 30% to Wisconsin-based organizations
Bradley Prize	Annual awards of \$300,000 each to individuals whose work aligns with the foundation's conservative mission — recipients have included Leonard Leo (2009), John Bolton (2007), Roger Ailes (2013), Christopher Rufo (2025)
Key Characterization	The New York Times: 'a leading source of ideas and financing for American conservatives.' The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: 'The Bradley Foundation acts like a venture capital fund for conservative ideas.'

The Bradley Foundation is one of the most influential — and least visible — funders of the conservative movement. While the Koch network receives significant public attention, the Bradley Foundation operates with far less scrutiny despite comparable influence. It funds Heritage, ALEC, the Federalist Society, the State Policy Network, Americans for Prosperity, the Cato Institute, and dozens of state-level organizations simultaneously — functioning as the financial backbone of the entire network.

II. What Bradley Has Funded

The Core Network

Bradley's grants reach virtually every major organization in the conservative infrastructure documented in this library:

- The Heritage Foundation — consistent major funder since Heritage's early years; Heritage is the primary architect of Project 2025
- ALEC — Bradley grants fund the corporate bill-mill that produces model state legislation
- The Federalist Society — Bradley funding supports the judicial pipeline; Leonard Leo received a \$300,000 Bradley Prize in 2009
- The State Policy Network — \$1.6 million directly to SPN plus \$6.5 million to SPN member think tanks; created the Bradley Freedom Grants Program providing ongoing support to SPN affiliates
- Americans for Prosperity — \$550,000 to AFP Foundation from 2011 to 2015; AFP is the Koch network's primary electoral and grassroots operation
- The Cato Institute — Bradley funds Koch's co-founded libertarian think tank
- DonorsTrust — Bradley is a documented contributor to DonorsTrust, the 'dark money ATM' of the conservative movement, which then redistributes to hundreds of right-wing organizations anonymously

Anti-Union Campaigns

Bradley has been one of the most aggressive funders of anti-union legislation and advocacy in the country. In Wisconsin alone, Bradley-funded groups helped orchestrate Governor Scott Walker's 2011 legislation severely restricting public employee collective bargaining — a template replicated across Republican-controlled states.

The leaked 2016 strategic documents revealed Bradley's multi-state anti-union strategy:

- \$1.5 million to organizations in Washington and Oregon to 'educate union workers about their rights' and 'defund Big Labor' — a grant that enabled the Freedom Foundation to obtain names of 34,000 union workers and urge them to leave their union; 4,000 SEIU Local 925 members subsequently left
- \$575,000 to five organizations in Colorado, including groups aimed specifically at 'defunding teachers unions and achieving real education reform'
- More than \$37 million in a single year to support right-to-work, collective bargaining restrictions, and anti-union initiatives through SPN and related networks

School Privatization

Education privatization has been a consistent Bradley priority since the 1990s. Bradley funding has supported:

- School voucher programs across multiple states
- Charter school expansion and the defunding of public school systems
- Opposition to teachers unions as both an educational and a political strategy — weakening unions reduces Democratic political funding and organizing capacity

- \$1.5 million to Art Pope's organizations in North Carolina to create a 'disruptive communications framework' to amplify conservative education messaging

Election Denial and Democratic Erosion

Investigative reporting by Jane Mayer in The New Yorker revealed that the Bradley Foundation became one of the largest funders of groups working to undermine the 2020 election results — spreading the 'Big Lie' that Biden was not legally elected.

Bradley board member Cleta Mitchell was identified as a key figure coordinating this funding while also working as a lawyer and activist with major groups seeking to invalidate the 2020 election results.

Bradley also co-funded (with the Scaife Foundation) a 2020 joint report by The Claremont Institute and Texas Public Policy Foundation called the '79 Days Report' — which suggested legal and messaging strategies in advance of the 2020 election to 'sow seeds of conspiracy in the event Trump lost.'

Conservative Media Infrastructure

Bradley has funded the development of conservative media infrastructure at the state level as part of its strategic plan to shift the information environment in targeted states. This includes:

- Funding for news sites operated by SPN-affiliated organizations — sites that present conservative advocacy as independent journalism
- \$1.5 million to Art Pope's organizations in North Carolina to build 'disruptive communications frameworks'
- Support for media operations that blur the line between think tank research and news reporting

The State-Level Strategic Plan

Internal Bradley Foundation documents hacked and published in 2016 revealed a deliberate long-term strategy to shift influence away from the federal level and concentrate on state legislatures — particularly in Wisconsin, North Carolina, Colorado, Washington, and Oregon.

The plan called for building coordinated networks of political, media, and advocacy groups in these states — funded by Bradley, coordinated through SPN, and executing the ALEC legislative agenda while appearing to be independent local organizations.

This is the clearest documented example of national dark money strategy deliberately designed to appear as local grassroots activity.

III. The Bradley Prize — Rewarding the Network

The Bradley Prize — \$300,000 awarded annually to as many as four individuals — functions as a financial reward and signal of network approval for individuals whose work advances Bradley's agenda. Selected recipients reveal the network's priorities:

- Leonard Leo (2009) — the architect of the Federalist Society's judicial pipeline and the dark money network that funded three Trump Supreme Court nominations
- John Bolton (2007) — former National Security Advisor and hawkish foreign policy advocate
- Roger Ailes (2013) — founder of Fox News
- Jeb Bush (2011) — governor, education privatization advocate
- Edwin Meese III (2012) — Reagan's Attorney General; Heritage Foundation senior fellow
- Christopher Rufo (2025) — the strategist behind the anti-CRT and anti-DEI campaign that has reshaped education and corporate policy nationally
- Jay Bhattacharya (2024) — COVID lockdown critic; appointed by Trump to lead the National Institutes of Health

The prize recipients map the network's priorities across time: judicial capture (Leo), media infrastructure (Ailes), education privatization (Bush, Rufo), deregulation (Meese), and COVID contrarianism (Bhattacharya).

IV. The Radicalization of Bradley

Investigative journalists and longtime observers of the foundation have documented a significant radicalization of Bradley over the past decade — a shift from a foundation that 'believed in the power of ideas' and even funded cross-ideological dialogue to one that funds election denial, coordinated anti-democratic campaigns, and the most extreme elements of the conservative movement.

This radicalization is particularly significant because Bradley's assets — nearly \$1 billion — were accumulated from the sale of a manufacturing company whose founders never intended the proceeds to fund a national political operation. The 1985 sale of Allen-Bradley to Rockwell International was orchestrated by five trustees who, according to reporting, directly violated the wishes of the Bradley brothers who had maintained the company as a privately-owned entity and opposed its sale.

The foundation that bears their name is, in important respects, a different institution than what Lynde and Harry Bradley established — one whose donor base is anonymous, whose strategic plan was shaped by professional political operatives, and whose agenda extends far beyond the local civic causes the brothers originally supported.

V. What Can Be Done

Track the Money

- SourceWatch (sourcewatch.org) — the most comprehensive database of Bradley Foundation grants and recipient organizations
- OpenSecrets — Bradley Foundation donor profile and any disclosed political spending
- IRS Form 990 filings — Bradley's annual tax filings disclose grants to recipient organizations; these are public records available through ProPublica's Nonprofit Explorer
- Center for Media and Democracy (CMD) — investigative reporting on Bradley's role in anti-union, election denial, and state-level campaigns

Expose Recipients in Your State

- Use SourceWatch's SPN Portal to identify Bradley-funded think tanks in your state
- When your state legislators cite research from a think tank, check whether it is a Bradley grantee
- Contact local journalists with information about Bradley funding of organizations that present themselves as independent local voices

Support Counter-Organizations

- Center for Media and Democracy (CMD) / SourceWatch — primary investigative resource on Bradley
- ExposedbyCMD (exposedbycmd.org) — real-time tracking of Bradley-funded networks
- People for the American Way (Right Wing Watch) — monitors Bradley Prize recipients and grantees
- ProPublica Nonprofit Explorer — free access to Bradley's IRS Form 990 filings

VI. Sources

Overview / Assets	Wikipedia, Bradley Foundation (January 2026) Wisconsin Democracy Campaign SourceWatch
Grant Recipients	Wisconsin Democracy Campaign AlterNet / Bill Moyers (2017) InfluenceWatch
Anti-Union	Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 2011 CMD Wisconsin Democracy Campaign
Election Denial	Jane Mayer, The New Yorker (reporting) Urban Milwaukee, 2021 Baptist News Global, 2025
79 Days Report	Baptist News Global — following Leonard Leo's dark money, February 2025
Leaked Documents	Milwaukee Journal Sentinel AlterNet / Bill Moyers (2017) — hacked 2016 strategic plan
Bradley Prize	Wikipedia, Bradley Foundation — full prize recipient list
Radicalization	Urban Milwaukee, 2021 Jane Mayer reporting

DonorsTrust Link	Center for Public Integrity SourceWatch — DonorsTrust funder profiles
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