

The Capital Research Center: A Comprehensive Analysis of its Mission, Operations, and Influence

I. Executive Summary

The Capital Research Center (CRC) is a conservative 501(c)(3) non-profit investigative think tank based in Washington, D.C., founded in 1984 by Willa Johnson.¹ Its foundational mission is to scrutinize non-profit organizations, with a particular emphasis on "reviving the American traditions of charity, philanthropy, and voluntarism".¹ CRC explicitly adheres to principles of "free markets, Constitutional government, and individual liberty".² It functions as a "watchdog group" specifically tasked with monitoring "liberal money in politics" and actively discouraging corporate donations to organizations it identifies as liberal or anti-business.¹

As a conservative watchdog, CRC engages in "fact-based investigations" to expose the agendas of funders, activists, and politicians who, in CRC's view, leverage governmental power for special interests.⁶ A cornerstone of its operational strategy is the publication of InfluenceWatch, an extensive online encyclopedia detailing political influencers², alongside producing documentaries via its Dangerous Documentaries project.²

CRC has garnered attention for its comprehensive investigations into "dark money" networks, such as Arabella Advisors, alleging their substantial impact on progressive causes and electoral processes.³ Conversely, CRC has faced its own share of scrutiny, including accusations of funding climate science disinformation advertisements and criticisms concerning its characterization of individuals affiliated with left-leaning organizations.¹³ Its media bias is independently rated as "Lean Right" by AllSides.⁵

CRC's stated mission to "revive American traditions of charity, philanthropy, and voluntarism"¹ is not merely an academic pursuit but a strategic ideological framework. By positioning itself as a defender of "traditional" philanthropy, CRC implicitly critiques contemporary philanthropic practices, particularly those it labels "liberal" or "progressive," as deviations from these traditions. This allows CRC to present its "watchdog" activities as upholding fundamental American values, rather than purely partisan opposition. The act of "reviving" implies that these traditions have been lost or corrupted, thereby establishing a normative framework for what "good" charity should be—aligned with their conservative, free-market values. This rhetorical choice provides a moral and historical justification for their investigative work, positioning

their critiques as a defense of foundational American principles rather than simply partisan opposition.

II. Introduction to the Capital Research Center

Founding, Location, and Legal Status

The Capital Research Center (CRC) was established in 1984, with its headquarters located in Washington, D.C..¹ The organization's founder, Willa Johnson, brought a significant background to its inception, having served as a former senior vice president of The Heritage Foundation and an official within the Reagan administration.¹ This lineage immediately situates CRC within the established conservative movement in the United States. CRC is officially recognized as an American conservative 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.³ This tax-exempt status is fundamental to its operational model, enabling it to receive tax-deductible contributions from its supporters, which are crucial for funding its investigative work.⁶

Stated Mission and Core Ideological Principles

The stated purpose of CRC is "to study non-profit organizations, with a special focus on reviving the American traditions of charity, philanthropy, and voluntarism".¹ This mission implies a perceived decline in these traditions and underscores CRC's role in their restoration. The organization unequivocally declares its adherence to core ideological principles: "free markets, Constitutional government, and individual liberty".² These principles serve as the lens through which all its research and critiques are conducted, guiding its analysis of various organizations and policy issues. CRC places a strong emphasis on its independence, explicitly stating that it "perform[s] no contract work and we accept no government funds—not one cent".⁶ This commitment to private funding is presented as a cornerstone of its integrity, asserting that it relies solely on "voluntary contributions" to finance its important work.⁶

Role as an "Investigative Think Tank" and "Watchdog"

CRC proudly identifies itself as "America's Investigative Think Tank" ⁶, signaling its commitment to in-depth research and analytical output. Its primary function is to serve as a "watchdog group" dedicated to "monitor[ing] liberal money in politics".³ This directly addresses the user's query regarding its focus on left-wing financiers. A

key component of its mission is to "expose the agendas of funders, activists, and politicians who use the power of government to benefit special interests".⁶ This includes an active stance of discouraging corporate donations to non-profits that CRC perceives as supporting "liberal or anti-business policies" ¹, thereby aiming to influence corporate philanthropic behavior. CRC asserts that its investigations are "fact-based" and aim to "connect the dots between donors and a wide variety of nonprofit and activist groups, including unions" ⁶, emphasizing a data-driven approach to its critiques.

CRC's consistent self-identification as an "investigative think tank" and "watchdog" ² serves a dual purpose. It aims to establish credibility and objectivity, asserting that "facts are facts, and our researchers and journalists go where the facts lead them".⁶ Simultaneously, this identity justifies its aggressive scrutiny of perceived ideological opponents. The organization's open declaration of a "Lean Right" bias ⁵ while maintaining a "watchdog" stance highlights a strategic and powerful rhetorical choice. This framing lends an aura of authority, public interest, and non-partisanship to its ideologically driven investigations, potentially making its critiques more impactful and harder to dismiss as mere partisan attacks. It functions both as a means to challenge its ideological opponents and as a defense against accusations of political bias, positioning CRC as a guardian of the public interest rather than solely an advocacy group.

III. Organizational Structure and Leadership

Key Personnel and Staff Roles

The Capital Research Center is led by **Scott Walter**, who holds the position of President.¹⁷ Mr. Walter is a highly visible figure within the organization and the broader conservative movement. He has notably briefed senior White House officials on a range of liberal and Democratic donors, non-profits, and fundraising techniques, demonstrating direct engagement at high levels of government.³ Furthermore, he is the author of a book specifically detailing Arabella Advisors, a key target of CRC's investigations.³ Mr. Walter has also been associated with spreading a conspiracy theory regarding the hijacking of the 2020 presidential election.¹⁸

Other integral members of the CRC leadership team include **Kristen Eastlick**, who serves as Senior Vice President and Editor-in-Chief of InfluenceWatch; **Christopher Krukewitt**, the Chief Financial & Operations Officer; **Michael E. Hartmann**, a Senior Fellow and Director of the Center for Strategic Giving; **Dan Thompson**, the Vice President of Philanthropy & Development, who is described as a long-time Republican

operative; and **Michael Watson**, the Research Director and Managing Editor for InfluenceWatch.¹⁷ The staff also comprises a team of investigative researchers (e.g., Ken Braun, Ryan Mauro, Parker Thayer, Robert Stilson), content editors (e.g., Jonathan Harsh, Jon Rodeback), and philanthropy officers (e.g., Beth Bottcher, Dave Muntsinger), reflecting a comprehensive operational structure dedicated to research, publication, and fundraising.¹⁷

Board of Trustees

The organization's Board of Trustees includes prominent conservative figures who contribute to its strategic direction and ideological alignment. Key members include **Michael Franc** (Chairman), **Hon. Edwin Meese III**, **William Meyersohn**, **Eric O'Keefe**, **Thomas S. Winter**, and **Gil Collins**.²

Hon. Edwin Meese III is a particularly significant member, having served as Attorney General in the Reagan administration. He is recognized as a key architect of the conservative movement's focus on the Supreme Court and judicial nominations.¹⁷ His presence lends considerable gravitas and historical continuity to CRC's conservative mission, connecting its contemporary work to foundational conservative legal and political thought.

Thomas S. Winter brings a strong media background to the board, having been the long-time former editor-in-chief of the conservative publication *Human Events*, notably cited as Ronald Reagan's "favorite reading".¹⁷ His roles as treasurer of the Republican PAC Conservative Victory Fund and vice chairman of the American Conservative Union further solidify CRC's ties to the broader Republican and conservative political infrastructure.¹⁷

Michael Franc, the Chairman of the Board, has held various positions within high-profile conservative think tanks, including the Buckeye Institute, the Hoover Institution, and the Heritage Foundation. He also served as policy director and counsel to then-House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA), demonstrating deep connections within conservative policy and legislative circles.¹⁷

The leadership and board composition of CRC illustrate deep and longstanding ties to the broader conservative movement and Republican political apparatus.¹⁷ The presence of individuals with backgrounds in the Reagan administration, prominent conservative think tanks, Republican PACs, and former government officials indicates that CRC is not an isolated entity but an integral part of a well-established and interconnected conservative ecosystem. This network facilitates information sharing, strategic alignment, and amplification of CRC's research within conservative media

and policy circles, contributing significantly to its ability to operate effectively and amplify its message within its target audience.

Key Leadership and Roles

Name	Current Role at CRC	Notable Past/Present Affiliations and/or Key Responsibilities
Scott Walter	President	Author of "Arabella: The Dark Money Network of Leftist Billionaires Secretly Transforming America"; Briefed White House officials on liberal donors; Accused Mark Zuckerberg of hijacking the 2020 presidential election ³

IV. Research Focus, Methodologies, and Publications

Primary Research Areas

CRC's research comprehensively covers "the influence sector," encompassing advocacy groups, think tanks, foundations, activists, and other opinion leaders who shape public policy.²⁰ The organization's investigative scope is broad, reflecting its mission to monitor and critique perceived threats to its core ideological principles.

Specific areas of intense scrutiny include:

- **Non-profit Organizations and Philanthropy:** A core focus is examining how foundations, charities, and other non-profits utilize their funds and engage in politics, often in ways CRC claims "donors never intended and would find abhorrent".⁴ This includes extensive critiques of "Big Philanthropy" for its perceived shift to become "more liberal and progressive," "more politicized," and "heavily concentrated".²¹ CRC argues that this trend can "weaken democracy"

and supports "radical agendas".²² They scrutinize specific large foundations like the Ford Foundation, questioning their grant-making practices and alignment with original donor intent.²³

- **Labor Unions:** CRC actively investigates union activities and advocates for enhanced transparency, particularly regarding union annual reporting.¹⁶ This includes analyses of specific unions like the Teamsters and Steelworkers, and historical examinations of Republican engagement with labor.¹⁹
- **Environmental Movement:** CRC aims to expose "left-wing bias in the environmentalist movement" ¹⁶, asserting that "radical climate activists advocate policy after policy that objectively strengthens China and weakens America".²⁴ They also critically analyze government initiatives, such as "climate smart" grants, labeling them as "lunacy" and financially wasteful, particularly when tied to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) criteria.²⁵
- **Election Integrity and Funding:** A significant area of investigation involves "private financing of government election offices," exemplified by the "Zuck Bucks" controversy in the 2020 election, which CRC claims "skewed voter turnout".³ Their work in this area highlights concerns about external influence on electoral processes.
- **Activist Groups and Social Movements:** CRC monitors groups like the Black Lives Matter Movement ¹ and "pro-Palestinian" protest groups. Their "When Charities Betray America" report and "Marching Toward Violence" study link these groups to "anti-Americanism" and "pro-terrorism" sentiments, respectively, based on their analysis of online rhetoric and organizational activities.²⁴
- **Crony Capitalism:** CRC also maintains vigilance over "crony capitalists who seek to profit by taking advantage of government regulations and by getting their hands on taxpayers' money" ⁶, aligning with its pro-free market stance and commitment to limited government.

Investigative Methodologies

CRC consistently emphasizes its commitment to "fact-based investigations" and "objective reporting" ⁶, aiming to "connect the dots" between financial flows and organizational activities. Their core approach involves "uncovering the tangled web of left-wing politics and the people who fund it".¹⁶

Specific methodologies employed include:

- **Documentation and Case Studies:** Projects like "The DOGE Files" are designed to "document some of the most egregious examples" of perceived abuses or

misdirection within the non-profit and government sectors.²⁴

- **Online Rhetoric and Content Analysis:** As demonstrated by their study of "online rhetoric from major 'pro-Palestinian' groups," CRC analyzes digital communications for thematic patterns and keyword usage, assessing shifts in messaging and calls for action.²⁴
- **Data Compilation and Financial Scrutiny:** This is a cornerstone of their work. CRC utilizes publicly available financial records, such as ProPublica's IRS Form 990 database, and conducts its own records requests to trace funding, particularly for complex networks like Arabella Advisors.²⁰ They also employ advanced tools like "Wealth Engine" for researching prospective donors¹⁶, indicating a sophisticated approach to financial intelligence gathering and analysis.
- **Policy Analysis:** CRC conducts in-depth analysis of existing and proposed policies related to philanthropy, environmental regulations, and election administration, assessing their impact through their ideological lens.²⁴ This often involves examining how policies might inadvertently or intentionally benefit certain ideological agendas.

Key Publication Platforms

The Capital Research Center disseminates its research through a diverse array of platforms, demonstrating a comprehensive strategy to reach various audiences and maximize its influence.

- **Official Website (capitalresearch.org):** This serves as a primary hub for disseminating original research and commentary, with approximately ten new posts published weekly.¹ It features articles, special reports, and updates on ongoing investigations.
- **Capital Research Magazine:** A flagship print publication that features long-form investigative articles, offering in-depth analysis on topics relevant to CRC's mission.²⁰
- **Special Reports:** These are in-depth, focused investigations on critical topics, such as "The DOGE Files," "When Charities Betray America: How 'Pro-Palestinian' Protest Groups Promote Anti-Americanism," and "Marching Toward Violence: The Domestic Anti-Israeli Protest Movement".²⁴ These reports often detail financial flows and organizational structures of targeted groups.
- **InfluenceWatch.org:** A central pillar of CRC's outreach, this online "wiki-style" encyclopedia provides "fact-based, accurate descriptions" and aims to bring "unprecedented transparency" to political donors, non-profits, and influencers.² It

has grown significantly, expanding to 13,500 total entries with 7,500 detailed profiles, and attracted 2.5 million unique users and 6.8 million pageviews in 2023.²⁰ InfluenceWatch also features an accompanying podcast, extending its reach into audio content.² A notable aspect of its influence is the monthly newsletter sent to federal and state legislators.²⁰

- **Dangerous Documentaries:** This film production arm extends CRC's reach into visual media, notably co-funding "No Safe Spaces," a documentary exploring free speech issues on college campuses.² This platform allows CRC to present its narratives through a more accessible and engaging format.
- **Podcasts:** Including the "InfluenceWatch Podcast," which offers audio discussions and analyses of various research topics, such as "China and the Left's Energy Lawfare" and "Explaining Basically Governmental Organizations to Congress".¹⁹
- **Books:** CRC has a history of publishing books that delve into its core research areas, such as corporate philanthropy, environmental issues, classical education, and the critical concept of donor intent.³⁰ CRC President Scott Walter has also authored a dedicated book on Arabella Advisors, further solidifying CRC's expertise in this area.³
- **Testimony:** CRC provides oral and written testimonies to legislative bodies, exemplified by Scott Walter's testimony to the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on "Climate Lawfare," indicating direct engagement with policymakers and an effort to influence policy debates.²⁴

CRC's multi-platform publication strategy demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of modern information dissemination.² This integrated approach allows the organization to reach diverse audiences—from policy researchers (via detailed reports and InfluenceWatch) to the general public (via podcasts, videos, and documentaries), and even directly to legislators (via InfluenceWatch newsletter and testimonies). This broad reach amplifies their "watchdog" findings and contributes significantly to shaping conservative narratives on philanthropy, activism, and political influence. The strategic investment in various formats underscores that CRC is a well-resourced and strategically astute organization that aims for widespread influence, not just academic output. This comprehensive dissemination is a key mechanism through which they fulfill their "watchdog" role and actively shape public and policy discourse.

V. Financial Overview and Funding Model

Detailed Analysis of Revenue, Expenses, and Assets

The Capital Research Center's financial records indicate a significant growth in its operational scale over the past decade. In 2023, CRC reported contributions and grants totaling \$7.46 million.³ This figure represents a substantial increase from its reported budget of \$1.4 million in 2009³, illustrating a considerable expansion in its financial capacity.

Historical financial data provides further insight into its scale:

- **Total Revenue:** The organization's total revenue has shown an upward trend, reaching \$7,055,273 in 2022 and \$5,737,290 in 2021. Earlier figures include \$4,627,330 in 2019, \$2,942,556 in 2018, \$2,544,852 in 2017, and \$2,990,989 in 2016.¹⁵
- **Total Expenses:** In 2023, CRC reported total expenses of \$7.17 million.³
- **Total Assets:** The organization's total assets were \$9,012,118 in 2022 and \$10,585,659 in 2021.¹⁵ Additionally, CRC reported an endowment of \$10.8 million in 2023.³
- **Donations/Contributions & Grants:** Specific donation figures include \$7,055,273 in 2022, \$5,737,290 in 2021, and \$4,352,988 in 2019.¹⁵

Program expenses in 2023 demonstrate the allocation of funds across CRC's core activities: RESEARCH accounted for \$1,943,323, INFLUENCEWATCH for \$1,090,247, and COMMUNICATIONS for \$426,871.²⁰ These figures highlight the significant investment CRC makes in its core investigative and dissemination activities, underscoring its operational priorities.

Funding Sources

CRC has historically received "millions of dollars from conservative philanthropists over the years".³ Its funding model relies heavily on contributions from a network of conservative foundations and donor-advised funds.

Specific major conservative foundations providing "substantial support" include:

- The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, which contributed \$3,312,500 between 1998 and 2021.¹³
- The Sarah Scaife Foundation, providing \$3,130,000 from 2012 to 2021.¹³
- DonorsTrust, with contributions totaling \$1,862,271 from 2002 to 2021.¹³
- The John William Pope Foundation, which gave \$380,000 from 1994 to 2019.¹³
- The William E. Simon Foundation.¹⁴

- Other notable conservative contributors include the Bradley Impact Fund (\$250,500 from 2013-2021), Charles Koch Foundation (\$60,888 from 2011-2017), Diana Davis Spencer Foundation (\$600,000 from 2015-2021), Donors Capital Fund (\$682,500 from 2002-2020), Searle Freedom Trust (\$580,000 from 2006-2021), Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund (\$91,300 in 2018), and Vanguard Charitable Endowment Program (\$26,000 from 2016-2018).¹³

Commitment to Independence

A defining characteristic of CRC's funding model is its explicit commitment to independence. The organization asserts that it "perform[s] no contract work and we accept no government funds—not one cent".⁶ This stance is presented as a cornerstone of its integrity, ensuring that its research and critiques are driven solely by its stated mission and ideological principles, rather than external governmental or contractual obligations. This reliance on "voluntary contributions" is central to how CRC frames its credibility and autonomy in its investigative work.⁶

Capital Research Center Financial Summary

Metric	2023	2022	2021	2019	2018	2017	2016	2009 (Budget)
Total Revenue	\$7.46M	\$7.06M	\$5.74M	\$4.63M	\$2.94M	\$2.54M	\$2.99M	N/A
Total Expenses	\$7.17M	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Assets	\$10.8M (Endowment)	\$9.01M	\$10.59M	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Donations/Contributions	\$7.46M	\$7.06M	\$5.74M	\$4.35M	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$1.4M

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Note: Financial figures are based on available data from various sources and may not reflect all years comprehensively. "N/A" indicates data not explicitly provided for that year in the research material.

VI. Key Investigations and Critiques of Left-Wing Entities

The Capital Research Center dedicates substantial resources to investigating and critiquing organizations and movements it identifies as left-wing, particularly focusing on their financial structures and influence on public policy.

Arabella Advisors Network

CRC has conducted extensive investigations into the Arabella Advisors network, characterizing it as a major "dark money" operation that channels billions into progressive causes through opaque networks and deceptive "pop-up groups".¹⁰ Arabella Advisors, founded in 2005 by Eric Kessler, is described as a philanthropic consulting firm that offers strategy, advocacy, impact investing, and management services.¹⁰

CRC's analysis highlights that Arabella manages a network of seven non-profits, often referred to as the "seven sisters," including the New Venture Fund, the Sixteen Thirty Fund, the Hopewell Fund, the Windward Fund, the North Fund, the Telescope Fund, and the Impetus Fund.¹⁰ These organizations serve as incubators, accelerators, and pass-through funders for a wide range of left-leaning political activism. From 2006 to 2023, these managed organizations generated combined revenues of \$9.2 billion and expenditures of \$7.8 billion, with over \$200 million paid to Arabella in consulting fees.¹⁰

A central point of CRC's critique is Arabella's use of "fiscal sponsorship" to create hundreds of "pop-up groups" that operate under the umbrella of an Arabella-managed non-profit.¹⁰ These pop-up groups, CRC alleges, are often little more than websites designed to look like standalone non-profits, and they are not required to file independent financial disclosure forms, thereby obscuring donor identities.¹⁰ CRC claims that leaked documents indicate Arabella maintains "centralized control" over these managed organizations and their pop-up groups,

despite Arabella's portrayal of itself as a simple service provider.¹⁰

Arabella's pop-up groups have targeted a wide range of political issues, including abortion, net neutrality, health care policy, Supreme Court confirmations, environmental regulations, election law, and tax policy.¹⁰ CRC's investigations have identified major donors to the Arabella network, including billionaires like Bill Gates, Hansjorg Wyss, George Soros, Mark Zuckerberg, Pierre Omidyar, and Warren Buffett, as well as foundations such as the Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, and William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.¹⁰

CRC's role in exposing Arabella has been significant, with CRC President Scott Walter authoring a dedicated book on the network.³ The organization's work has contributed to broader media scrutiny, with outlets like

The New York Times, *Politico*, and *The Washington Post* also criticizing Arabella's "dark money" operations.¹⁰

A prominent focus of CRC's critique has been the "Zuck Bucks" controversy, involving the Arabella-run New Venture Fund providing nearly \$25 million to the Center for Technology and Civic Life (CTCL), which then distributed approximately \$350 million in COVID-19 "relief funds" to election offices, largely from Mark Zuckerberg.³ CRC, along with

The Wall Street Journal, criticized this practice, noting that CTCL grants allegedly favored counties that voted for Joe Biden.¹⁰ This led to a lawsuit by the Louisiana Attorney General alleging unlawful private contributions to local election officials, which was eventually allowed to proceed by the Louisiana Supreme Court.¹⁰

CRC has also highlighted Arabella's alleged involvement in "fake news sites" that masqueraded as local news outlets to influence elections, a concern also reported by OpenSecrets.¹⁰ This includes Facebook pages like "Colorado Chronicle" and "Nevada News Now" used for political advertising, and networks like States Newsroom and Courier Newsroom.¹⁰ Furthermore, CRC has pointed to alleged coordination between Arabella founder Eric Kessler and USDA officials on agricultural policy, and an IRS complaint filed by Americans for Public Trust (APT) alleging that Arabella misled authorities to gain tax-exempt status for its non-profits.¹⁰ The D.C. Attorney General has also opened an investigation into Arabella Advisors and its controlled non-profits, issuing subpoenas for financial records.¹⁰

Tides Foundation

While the provided research material does not contain specific reports or investigations by CRC directly detailing the Tides Foundation, CRC's mission to monitor "liberal money in politics"³ and its focus on fiscal sponsors of left-wing groups¹³ logically extends to organizations like the Tides Foundation. General information about the Tides Foundation, often a subject of scrutiny in conservative circles, is available through InfluenceWatch.org, a CRC publication.³¹

The Tides Foundation is described as a significant center-left grantmaking organization and a major pass-through funder for numerous left-leaning non-profits, established in 1976 by Drummond Pike.³¹ A key aspect of Tides' operations is its use of Donor-Advised Funds (DAFs), which function as "charitable savings accounts" where donors contribute tax-deductible funds to Tides. Tides then invests these funds, and donors can advise on grant recipients, a system that effectively masks the original donors.³¹ The founder, Drummond Pike, noted that "Anonymity is very important to most of the people we work with".³¹

Tides also provides fiscal sponsorship services, using its 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status to incubate new center-left activist non-profits, offering financial, human resources, payroll, and compliance services.³¹ This network, known as the Tides Nexus, includes the Tides Center (for incubation) and Tides Advocacy (a 501(c)4 lobbying arm).³¹ Tides has reported substantial financial activity, with total revenues of \$2.6 billion since 2007, and disbursing \$607 million in grants in 2020.³¹ Major donors to Tides include center-left grantmaking foundations and commercial DAF providers, further obscuring original donors.³¹

Controversies associated with the Tides Foundation, as documented by sources like InfluenceWatch, include accusations of funneling funds into Canada to obstruct energy projects, involvement in the 1989 Alar apple pesticide scare, and a recent lawsuit from the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation alleging withheld donations.³¹ These issues align with the types of financial and operational scrutiny that CRC typically applies to left-leaning philanthropic entities.

Other Targeted Organizations and Movements

CRC's investigative efforts extend to various other organizations and social movements perceived as advancing left-wing agendas.

- **Black Lives Matter Movement:** CRC has notably criticized Thousand Currents,

the former fiscal sponsor of the Black Lives Matter Global Network Project. CRC President Scott Walter published a piece in June 2020 criticizing Thousand Currents for having Susan Rosenberg on its board, characterizing her as "a convicted domestic terrorist".¹³ Rosenberg was a member of the May 19th Communist Organization, which was responsible for a "string of violent and spectacular operations from 1979 to 1985," including armed robberies and bombings.¹³ While Snopes acknowledged Rosenberg's affiliation with a revolutionary left-wing organization involved in violent activities, it disputed the "domestic terrorist" label as subjective given the lack of a universally agreed definition.¹³ CRC claimed that Thousand Currents deleted its Board of Directors page hours after Walter's story was published.¹³

- **Environmental Movement:** CRC investigates what it perceives as "left-wing bias in the environmentalist movement".¹⁶ It asserts that "radical climate activists advocate policy after policy that objectively strengthens China and weakens America," particularly by hindering U.S. energy production and making supply chains dependent on Chinese inputs.²⁴ CRC has also critiqued government-funded "climate smart" grants, labeling them as "lunacy" for paying farmers not to produce crops and for mandating diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) criteria for grantees.²⁵
- **"Pro-Palestinian" Protest Groups:** CRC has published special reports, such as "When Charities Betray America: How 'Pro-Palestinian' Protest Groups Promote Anti-Americanism" and "Marching Toward Violence: The Domestic Anti-Israeli Protest Movement".²⁴ These reports study the online rhetoric of major "pro-Palestinian" groups and activists, claiming a significant surge in calls for violence and increased use of "anti-American and anti-police keywords" since October 7, 2023.²⁴ CRC's "Marching Toward Violence" study identified over 150 groups involved in anti-Israel protests as "pro-terrorism".²⁴

VII. Controversies and Criticisms Directed at Capital Research Center

Despite its self-proclaimed commitment to "fact-based investigations" and "objective reporting," the Capital Research Center has faced its own share of controversies and criticisms regarding its methodologies, funding, and public statements.

Climate Science Disinformation Ads

In October 2020, a report revealed that CRC was among nine right-wing non-profits that collectively spent \$42,000 funding 51 Facebook advertisements.¹³ These ads questioned the credibility of climate science and were viewed over 8 million times in the first six months of 2020. This activity occurred despite Facebook's stated policy to prohibit ads debunked by third-party fact-checking organizations.¹³ The other organizations involved included Clear Energy Alliance, Competitive Enterprise Institute, CO2 Coalition, Mackinac Center for Public Policy, Prager University, Texas Public Policy Foundation, Turning Point USA, and Washington Policy Center.¹³

CRC's "Climate Dollars" section on its website also disputes a study by Drexel University sociologist Robert J. Brulle, which examined the funding of climate change denial groups. Brulle's study found that 91 organizations had an annual income of over \$900 million between 2003 and 2010, with significant foundation support, and noted a trend towards concealing funding sources through donor-directed philanthropies.¹³ CRC argues that Brulle's study measured income rather than spending and did not determine how much of the funds were specifically directed towards climate change denial versus other political projects.¹³ CRC also used a

Guardian article as an example of media mischaracterizing Brulle's findings and presented its own comparisons of funding for climate skeptic groups versus environmental advocacy groups.¹³

Susan Rosenberg Controversy

In June 2020, CRC President Scott Walter published a piece criticizing Thousand Currents, which served as the fiscal sponsor of the Black Lives Matter Global Network Project from 2016-2020.¹³ Walter's criticism centered on Susan Rosenberg, a member of Thousand Currents' board, whom he characterized as "a convicted domestic terrorist" on prominent conservative radio and television programs.¹³

Rosenberg was a member of the May 19th Communist Organization, which was responsible for a "string of violent and spectacular operations from 1979 to 1985," including armed robberies that resulted in the murder of police officers and security guards, prison breakouts, and a bombing campaign that targeted government buildings in Washington and New York, including the U.S. Capitol.¹³ She was arrested in 1984 on charges including possession of unregistered explosives and firearms, and was sentenced to 58 years in prison, with her sentence commuted by Bill Clinton in 2001.¹³ CRC claimed that Thousand Currents deleted its Board of Directors page from

its website within hours of Walter's story being published.¹³

Fact-checker Snopes, while acknowledging Rosenberg's active membership in a revolutionary left-wing organization involved in violent illegal activities, disputed her characterization as a "domestic terrorist." Snopes stated that without a universally agreed definition of "terrorism," it is a subjective determination whether her actions, for which she was convicted and imprisoned (possession of weapons and explosives), should be described as acts of "domestic terrorism".¹³

External Media Bias Ratings and Broader Critiques

AllSides, a media bias rating organization, has rated the Capital Research Center with a "Lean Right" bias, indicating that the source displays media bias in ways that moderately align with conservative, traditional, libertarian, or right-wing thought and/or policy agendas.⁵ AllSides maintains medium confidence in this rating, which is based on independent review and community feedback.⁵ CRC openly acknowledges its specific point of view, stating, "We believe in free markets, Constitutional government, and individual liberty. But facts are facts, and our journalists and researchers go where the facts lead them".⁵

Beyond specific controversies, CRC is sometimes described as "right wing" or as being part of the "New Right".¹ Other organizations, such as SourceWatch, also categorize CRC as a right-wing "investigative think tank".¹³ CRC itself has acknowledged receiving criticism for its content, particularly a video titled "Communism will ALWAYS be Violent," which garnered over 4,000 comments, with the majority coming from "Communists or Communist sympathizers disputing my ideas".³⁴ This indicates that CRC's strong ideological stance and its critiques of communism elicit significant opposition from those with differing viewpoints.

VIII. Impact and Influence on Public Discourse and Policy

The Capital Research Center, through its extensive research, publications, and strategic engagements, plays a significant role in shaping conservative policy debates and influencing public discourse.

Shaping Conservative Policy Debates and Narratives

CRC actively promotes the principles of free markets, constitutional government, and individual liberty.² Its investigations and analyses are designed to influence conservative narratives across various domains. For instance, its critiques of "Big Philanthropy" contribute to a narrative that large foundations are becoming increasingly liberal, politicized, and concentrated, potentially undermining democratic processes and supporting agendas outside the mainstream.²¹ Similarly, its scrutiny of labor unions, environmentalist movements, and election integrity issues provides ammunition for conservative arguments against what it perceives as overreach or undue influence by left-leaning entities.¹¹

Engagement with Government Officials

CRC actively engages with government officials to disseminate its findings and influence policy. A notable example is CRC President Scott Walter's briefing to senior White House officials in March 2025 on a range of liberal and Democratic donors, non-profits, and fundraising techniques, including ActBlue and Arabella Advisors.³ This direct engagement indicates CRC's ability to provide intelligence and analysis that informs executive branch strategy in countering perceived left-wing influence. Furthermore, Walter has provided oral testimony to the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on topics such as "Climate Lawfare," demonstrating CRC's direct contribution to legislative discussions and its efforts to shape policy outcomes.²⁴

Reach of InfluenceWatch

InfluenceWatch.org, CRC's online encyclopedia, is a key tool for disseminating its research and expanding its influence.² It is designed to provide "fact-based, accurate descriptions" of political donors, non-profits, and influencers, aiming to bring "unprecedented transparency" to the funding, motives, and interconnections of the entities profiled.⁹ The platform has achieved significant reach, growing to 13,500 total entries with approximately 7,500 detailed profiles, and attracting 2.5 million unique users and 6.8 million pageviews in 2023.²⁰ The fact that InfluenceWatch began sending a monthly newsletter to federal and state legislators in 2023 underscores its strategic intent to directly inform policymakers and influence legislative processes.²⁰ This broad reach and targeted dissemination amplify CRC's "watchdog" findings and

contribute significantly to shaping conservative narratives on philanthropy, activism, and political influence.

Contribution to Broader Discussions

CRC's work contributes to several broader public and policy discussions:

- **Philanthropy Debate:** Through its "Eight Things About Big Philanthropy" series and other publications, CRC actively participates in the public debate surrounding the role and impact of large-scale giving.²² It raises questions about the political nature of philanthropy, its deep connections to government, perceived lack of media scrutiny, potential to weaken democracy, and alleged support for "radical agendas".²² CRC advocates for greater transparency and accountability in the philanthropic sector, arguing that the public deserves to know how philanthropic money is spent and its actual impact.²²
- **Campaign Finance Reform:** While not directly influencing specific legislation in the provided information, CRC's focus on "dark money" and election integrity, particularly its investigations into issues like "Zuck Bucks" and private financing of election offices, contributes significantly to the ongoing public and policy discussions around campaign finance and electoral processes.³ Its work highlights concerns about external financial influence on elections, aligning with broader calls for reform.
- **Conservative Legal Movement:** CRC's efforts, particularly through its critiques of left-wing legal strategies (e.g., "lawfare" in the environmental context) and its strong ties to figures like Edwin Meese III, a key architect of the conservative legal movement, align with broader conservative efforts to influence the judiciary and legal advocacy.¹⁸ By exposing what it perceives as abuses of the legal system for political ends, CRC contributes to the intellectual and strategic underpinnings of conservative legal counter-movements.

IX. Conclusion

The Capital Research Center stands as a prominent and influential conservative watchdog organization, firmly rooted in its mission to scrutinize non-profit

organizations and monitor "liberal money in politics." Since its founding in 1984, CRC has consistently operated from a clear ideological framework, advocating for free markets, constitutional government, and individual liberty. Its commitment to these principles guides its extensive investigative reporting, which aims to expose what it perceives as the undue influence of left-wing financiers and activist groups on American society and policy.

CRC's operational model is characterized by its reliance on "fact-based investigations" and a multi-platform dissemination strategy. Through its flagship publication, *Capital Research* magazine, its comprehensive online encyclopedia, InfluenceWatch.org, various special reports, podcasts, and documentaries, CRC effectively amplifies its findings to a diverse audience, ranging from policy researchers to the general public. This integrated approach underscores its strategic intent to not only inform but also to actively shape conservative narratives and influence public and policy discourse. The organization's financial growth, combined with its deep connections to a network of conservative philanthropists and political figures, further solidifies its position as a well-resourced and impactful entity within the conservative ecosystem.

While CRC asserts its objectivity and independence, its explicit "Lean Right" bias and the nature of its critiques position it as a partisan actor in the broader political landscape. Controversies, such as those surrounding its funding of climate science advertisements or its characterization of individuals associated with left-wing movements, highlight the contentious nature of its work and the ideological lens through which its investigations are conducted.

Ultimately, the Capital Research Center continues to play a significant role in the ongoing ideological battles within American politics and philanthropy. By meticulously tracking financial flows and dissecting the operations of organizations it deems ideologically opposed, CRC serves as a consistent voice in the conservative movement, contributing to debates on issues ranging from election integrity and environmental policy to the very nature and purpose of charity in a democratic society. Its ongoing efforts underscore the complex interplay between philanthropy, political advocacy, and ideological influence in the contemporary United States.

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