

## GMOM - Our strategy did not work. What now?



December 12, 2024

### What GMOM has done and tried to do

Get Money Out - Maryland has always been an all-volunteer organization. We've never had paid staff, but we did have popular support.



GMOM supporters after a House of Delegates hearing in 2018, the year the Democracy Amendment Resolution passed that chamber.

- From 2013-2020, we worked on the convention of the states path to a **constitutional amendment** to: 1) reserve constitutional rights to natural persons; 2) affirmatively guarantee the right to vote to all citizens; and 3) regulate big money in elections at the federal and state levels. In doing this work, we

placed special emphasis on the extreme danger of economic inequality. We signed up 10,000 Marylanders and passed a resolution through the Maryland Senate in 2015 and the House of Delegates in 2018. But our national ally, Wolf PAC has sustained key losses, and this path is a dead end for the foreseeable future.

- We supported other organizations on **fair elections legislation** for Maryland. Much of that agenda has been accomplished.
- In the wake of the 2020 election, we helped form **Count Every Vote – Maryland**, which was endorsed by 78 faith and civic organizations and 56 elected officials across the State. We successfully pressured Governor Hogan to publicly ask election officials in every state to adhere to the law.
- We created the **For the People – Maryland** coalition with 28 other Maryland organizations with the goals of enacting federal legislation to stop partisan gerrymandering, end dark money, protect the security of elections, increase access to the ballot and the ballot box, initiate public campaign financing for federal elections, and reform the Supreme Court. Leading this coalition has been our main activity since 2020.

## **Prospects for progress with our agenda**

Constitutional Amendment – There are no current identifiable paths to getting 67 U.S. senators and 290 representatives to propose an amendment.

### Democracy Legislation

- State – There may be a few areas of incremental progress available. I am currently working with Howard County Indivisible on a draft bill to exclude ineligible candidates from Maryland ballots.
- Federal – The only option is to play defense by opposing bad Republican bills that would ban same-day voter registration, restrict mail-in voting, cut election aid to the states, and require forms of voter ID designed to discriminate against targeted voter populations. But Maryland, in my opinion, does not have any Democrats in Congress who will vote for that agenda and Republican Andy Harris is not persuadable by us.

## **We've had it backwards**

The idea of GMOM is that we would have massive popular support for breaking the connection between big money and election finance. Then, the President and Congress as well as local and state governments would be able to enact budgets and laws to benefit the public instead of only helping wealthy campaign spenders.

We do have broad popular support. In fact, there are [super-majorities](#) for many other policies that never are enacted such as Medicare for all, environmental protection, and expanding Social Security benefits. But these popular policies are blocked in Congress.

The 2024 election shows very clearly that **promoting economic equality must be the bedrock principle of any successful political movement**. Reforming democracy and other popular causes have lower attractive power compared with pocketbook issues. Trump and the Republicans were able to convince enough people that their economic interests would benefit from another Trump administration. Trump received about 3 million more votes in 2024 than in 2020 while Harris received 6.4 million fewer than Biden did in 2020.

While in office, Democrats took some important steps toward enforcing antitrust laws, reducing the power of big business to raise prices, and promoting labor unions. They also made a few favorable -- albeit tepid -- policy statements during the campaign. But they did not inform or inspire the electorate. What explains Biden's and Harris's silence on their own accomplishments on behalf of the working class? Was it lack of interest or an attempt to endear themselves to big donors?

## **What role did big money play in the 2024 election?**

Open Secrets reports that the total cost of the election fell about 17% in inflation-adjusted dollars compared with 2020. (Note that there were not expensive presidential primaries in 2024.) Our ally American Promise [reports](#) that of the \$20 billion spent at the federal, state, and local levels, "\$4.45 billion came from outside groups like Super PACs -- more than double the amount of outside spending in 2022. [Dark money](#) contributions totaled over \$1 billion." Cryptocurrency companies and related individuals spent \$245 million. Pro-Israel AIPAC spent over \$42 million, and Zionist [Miriam Adelson](#) (owner of the Dallas Mavericks NBA team and widow of casino magnate Sheldon) spent \$132 million. Although this money was not technically dark, these spenders' ads did not identify themselves nor even mention crypto deregulation or Israel. Rather, they generally followed the messaging of the campaigns they were supporting.

The Federal Election Commission recently reported that Elon Musk spent \$277 million on the 2024 election. An [Open Secrets report](#) (filed prior to the most recent FEC data) tracks the biggest independent spenders. Republicans dominated this category. Timothy Mellon, grandson of banker and tycoon Andrew Mellon, spent \$197 million on behalf of Republicans. The ultraconservative Uihlein family and Adelson each spent about \$132 million. Financiers Kenneth Griffin, the Yass family, Paul Singer, and Stephen Schwartzmann combined for almost \$300 million. Michael Bloomberg and the Moskovitz family together spent \$82 million on behalf of Democrats. The next 10 biggest donors spent a total of about \$215 million, with almost \$150 going to

Democrats. As reporting is completed, more mammoth spending and donations may come to light.

This election is evidence that we are moving toward an era in which small donations from citizens are swamped by big donors.

This harmful level of corporate/billionaire influence does not have to be permanent. Previous eras of oligarchy have given way to grassroots organizing.

## **Fascism is here – how to respond?**

I expect that Trump will govern as a fascist, using nationalist, racist, and misogynist appeals while collaborating with big corporations to extract even more from working people. His right-wing collaborators (e.g., The Heritage Society) are much better organized than when he took office in 2016. Trump will operate under a broad grant of criminal immunity granted by the right-wing majority on the Supreme Court. We don't know what kinds of challenges we will face to freedom and personal liberty under this new administration.

GMOM started as a group because of the injustice of billionaires and giant corporations buying political favors. They were not buying these favors primarily to keep certain people out of certain bathrooms or even primarily because of racism. They were motivated by unlimited arrogance and greed.

***I recommend that we should join already existing efforts to create a grassroots progressive movement against wealth and income inequality with sufficient power to influence major political parties.*** These efforts would include supporting union expansion, taxing the rich, and breaking up monopoly power. We should continue to support racial, ethnic, and gender equality, and conversion of our economy to sustainability and peaceful pursuits, but economic equality should be in the forefront.

## **Get Money Out Maryland will not continue as an organization**

**The Board of Directors, with my full support has decided not to continue operating GMOM.** There will be other priorities in building/strengthening grassroots movements and in resisting attacks upon our freedoms, our environment, and our shared prosperity.

Wolf PAC and GMOM sought to build a grassroots movement for a constitutional amendment to weaken the power of big money in our elections. There is a parallel in the way that Washington-based liberal organizations rejected and destroyed that strategy (in favor of pursuing the amendment through Congress) and the way many of the mainstream leaders of the Democratic Party disregarded a working-class voters. Let's

hope that type of elite arrogance disappears and that a more democratic spirit can create unity among the citizens of this nation.

I cannot thank you enough for your support over the past 11 years. So many hundreds of you gave your time, energy, creativity, and money to bolster our work. I will retain your contact data and may provide you with information or suggestions on how to participate in movement-building. I will not give your information to other organizations without your consent.

## **Building Blocks of a New Movement**

- Union Movement and [Working America](#)
- [Poor People's Campaign](#)
- [National Domestic Workers Alliance](#)
- [Sunrise Movement](#) and [Chesapeake Climate Action Network](#)
- [Public Citizen](#)

## **Information Resources (some require paid subscription)**

- For general news: [Drop Site News](#) and [Democracy Now](#)
- For anti-monopoly info: [BIG by Matt Stoller](#)
- For labor union info: [More Perfect Union](#)

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## **Appendix of election-related information**

The domination of big business NY Times by Isabella Weber:

Synopsis: Using artificial intelligence and natural language processing in an upcoming paper, several co-authors and I analyzed more than 130,000 earnings calls of publicly listed U.S. companies and found that businesses can coordinate price hikes around cost shocks. This enabled companies, by and large, to pass on or amplify the impact of the initial cost increase in response to shocks in the wake of Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine.

We need strategic redundancies and commodity reserves to hedge unexpected bottlenecks caused by global emergencies and also price-gouging laws and windfall-profit taxes.

U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (via Trading Economics website)

## U.S. Corporate Profits by Year (in billions of dollars)

Corporate profits rose from \$1.88 trillion in 2015 to \$3.1 trillion in 2023 – an increase of 60%. During the same period, U.S. GDP and total wages rose 50%. The disproportionate increase of corporate profits represents over \$300 billion per year that went primarily to wealthy shareholders – almost \$900 per U.S. resident. These data confirm what Ms. Weber wrote in her Times op-ed.

### **The party of elites by Thomas Frank:**

Synopsis: Working families were once the heart and soul of left-wing parties the world over. Democratic proclamations in the '90s about trade and tech and globalization and financial innovation have backfired as has their support for wars. A party of the left that identifies with people like Mr. Cheney is a contradiction in terms, a walking corpse.

Liberals had nine years to decipher Mr. Trump's appeal — and they failed. The Democrats are a party of college graduates. Mr. Trump is a con man straight out of Mark Twain; he will say anything, promise anything, do nothing. But his movement baffled the party of education and innovation. Its most brilliant minds couldn't figure him out. Scolding by Clintons and Obamas only make things worse.

The Democratic Party must embrace: a vision of broad, inclusive prosperity, including universal health care, higher minimum wage, robust financial regulation and antitrust enforcement, unions, social safety net, and higher taxes on billionaires. To achieve these policies requires, above all, liberalism as a social movement, as a coming together of ordinary people.

### **“How to root out Trumpism” by Robert Reich**

Reich talked to voters of all stripes in swing states in 2016, who were angry with the federal government and Wall Street. They hadn't been able to save for their retirements, had no job security, and were angry about costs, including housing. They had lost in the financial crisis and could not earn enough to recover. Elsewhere, Reich has said, “The median wage of the bottom 90 percent buys less today than it did 40 years ago.”

Trump has been able to channel the intensifying anger of the white working class away from the real causes of working-class distress – corporate greed embodied by monopoly, globalism (outsourcing jobs), and Wall Street bailouts.

Democrats must see where the anger in America's heartland has come from, to channel it toward its real causes, and to commit to taking power back from the big corporations, CEOs, and billionaires.

## **Bernie Sanders' Post-Election Statement:**

*BURLINGTON, Vt. — Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) today released the following statement in response to the outcome of the 2024 presidential election:*

It should come as no great surprise that a Democratic Party which has abandoned working class people would find that the working class has abandoned them. First, it was the white working class, and now it is Latino and Black workers as well. While the Democratic leadership defends the status quo, the American people are angry and want change. And they're right.

Today, while the very rich are doing phenomenally well, 60% of Americans live paycheck to paycheck and we have more income and wealth inequality than ever before. Unbelievably, real, inflation-accounted-for weekly wages for the average American worker are actually lower now than they were 50 years ago.

Here are some of the priorities Bernie Sanders is urging Democrats to fight for in 2025:

- End Citizens United and stop billionaires from buying elections
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- Pass the PRO Act to make it easier for workers to unionize
- Protect and expand Social Security benefits by lifting the cap
- Cut prescription drug prices in half
- Guarantee equal pay for equal work
- Build 3 million housing units of affordable housing
- Tuition free higher education
- Make childcare affordable
- Raise public school teacher pay
- Tax the rich
- Slash the massive Pentagon budget

With Gratitude and Determination,

Charlie Cooper

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