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## Who Speaks for Small Business? Not the NFIB

ELLENBRAVO MAY 23, 2012 AT 12:50 PM PDT



The National Federation of Independent Businesses loves to wrap itself in the flag of neighborhood Mom and Pop shops when it lobbies on Capitol Hill, but many small business owners maintain the NFIB's agenda doesn't address their priorities, and say the lobbying group even fights against policies that small businesses need. As Reuters [recently reported](#), "the NFIB uses the politically valuable mantle of small business to pursue an agenda that may take its cues from elsewhere."

Listen to Frank Knapp, president of the South Carolina Small Business Chamber of Commerce, who identifies the NFIB as a "[small-business pretender](#)" and 'lapdog' of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce" in the Reuters article.

Or take it from Freddy Castiblanco, owner of Terraza 7 Live Music, a café and music venue in Elhurst, NY. "They disguise themselves as mom and pop shops," says Castiblanco. "But they don't speak for me."

Reuters details the NFIB's record of lobbying for issues that benefit big businesses, not necessarily small ones: "Consider [a widespread state tax loophole](#) that lets big-box retailers like Wal-Mart and Home Depot transfer income to out-of-state subsidiaries. This loophole often allows the chain retailers to pay no state income tax, while small businesses do. Yet the NFIB has fought against closing such loopholes."

Reuters also referred to New Jersey cabinetmaker [J. Kelly Conklin](#), who in April wrote this in the *Hill*: "Whether we're talking about health care or taxes (or both at the same time), NFIB always seems to side with the big fellas – big insurance, big banking, big business – not little guys like me. Why? I don't know."

For more information, see the piece Family Values @ Work published together with Democracy Strategies, titled: "[The National Federation of Independent Business? Driving a far-right political agenda far from the needs of small business.](#)"

As that document points out, the NFIB in 2010 received a gift of \$3.7 million from Karl Rove's group Crossroads GPS – a contribution which a *Wall Street Journal* opinion piece described as part of a "trial run" at what Crossroads called "funding the right," adding that Crossroads CEO Steven Law considered the initiative "money well spent."

The appreciation was mutual. In that same year, the NFIB reported paying more than \$3 million for "advertising services" to Crossroads Media LLC, a Virginia-based firm that does media placement for American Crossroads and shares office space with a number of other Super PACs.

Figures for 2011 and 2012 are not yet public.

The NFIB has also been far from independent in its allocation of PAC money. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, nearly 94% of NFIB's PAC contributions went to Republicans in 2010. This election cycle, the figure is closer to 98%.


NFIB leadership is deeply rooted in conservative Republican politics. The organization's president, Dan Danner, served as deputy director in the White House Office of Public Liaison under Reagan. Chief lobbyist Susan Eckerly worked in George W. Bush's Labor Department. And the group recently retained Mark Warren, former chief counsel of the Senate Republican Policy Committee, as a lobbyist.

Yet small business owners are much more diverse in their political views. According to a [New York Times blog](#), in a poll of small-business owners commissioned by American Express OPEN, respondents were nearly evenly divided among those identifying as Republicans (33 percent), Democrats (32 percent) and independent or unaffiliated (29 percent).

Who speaks for small business? Many voices – but not the NFIB.


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