


Google and Facebook use covert Dark Pattern Technology to steer many internet users into making bad political decisions

By [David Lazarus](#)

Dark patterns' are steering many internet users into making bad decisions

A European study last year found that Facebook and Google are masters of steering people into making choices that aren't in their best interest. (Kimihiro Hoshino / AFP/Getty Images)

Even if you've never heard the phrase "dark patterns," you're almost certainly familiar with them. They're the sneaky ways online companies trick you into agreeing to stuff you'd normally never assent to.

Classic example: You encounter a prompt asking if you want to sign up for some program or service, and the box is already checked. If you don't uncheck it — that is, if you do nothing — you're enrolled.

A bipartisan bill has been introduced in Congress that would prohibit websites and online platforms (hi, Facebook!) from employing such deliberately deceptive tactics, and would

empower the Federal Trade Commission to crack down on sites that keep trying to fool people.

The Deceptive Experiences to Online User Reduction Act (a.k.a. [the DETOUR Act](#)) is the brainchild of Sens. Mark Warner (D-Va.) and Deb Fischer (R-Neb.). They're hoping the legislation will be included as part of sweeping privacy regulations now under consideration in the Senate Commerce Committee.

Warner and Fischer will be hosting tech and privacy experts on Tuesday for a Capitol Hill seminar on the various ways consumers can be hoodwinked online.

"For years, social media platforms have been relying on all sorts of tricks and tools to convince users to hand over their personal data without really understanding what exactly it is that they're handing over," Warner told me.

He says website developers aren't stupid. They closely study behavioral psychology to understand how internet users can be most easily misled.

"Our bill is pretty simple," Warner said. "We just want consumers to be able to make more informed choices about how and when to share their personal information."

Fischer told me separately that there needed to be far greater transparency surrounding the click of an "OK" button.

"These manipulative user interfaces intentionally limit understanding and undermine consumer choice," she said. "Any privacy policy involving consent is weakened by the presence of dark patterns."

This sort of deception is one of those things most internet users probably are aware of but likely don't give much thought to. Many of us just take for granted that websites are trying to separate us from our personal info.

But this perpetual siege on our privacy doesn't have to be the default setting. There's no reason for consumers to simply accept that just because online businesses are desperate for our data, there's nothing we can do about it.

The fact that there's a term of art for these practices — “dark patterns” — tells us that increasingly sophisticated methods are being employed.

A [European study](#) last year found that Facebook and Google in particular had become masters of steering people into making choices that weren't in their best interests.

“The combination of privacy-intrusive defaults and the use of dark patterns nudge users of Facebook and Google, and to a lesser degree Windows 10, toward the least privacy-friendly options to a degree that we consider unethical,” the study's authors said.

They found that the companies used misleading wording, take-it-or-leave-it choices and hidden privacy options to compel users to reveal as much about themselves as possible.

“When digital services employ dark patterns to nudge users toward sharing more personal data, the financial incentive has taken precedence over respecting users' right to choose,” the researchers concluded.

In response to the study, eight U.S. consumer advocacy groups, including Santa Monica's Consumer Watchdog, called on the FTC to investigate use of dark patterns by internet companies.

"The entire online ecosystem, at least the commercial ecosystem, manipulates users into doing what companies want them to," said Carmen Balber, executive director of Consumer Watchdog.

"Every internet site on some level drives people where companies want them to go," she said. "But it's one thing to try to drive clicks to your shoe ad — people expect that. They don't expect a site to intentionally misdirect them."

She observed that federal authorities decades ago clamped down on subliminal advertising on TV — the [planting of messages](#) that could make an impression on consumers even though they appeared too quickly to be consciously noted. Authorities, however, have yet to acknowledge the similar effect of dark patterns.

"It's time online users were protected from internet companies' intentionally deceptive designs," Balber said. "Rules of the road for privacy design are overdue."

The DETOUR Act would provide such rules.

It would make it illegal "to design, modify or manipulate a user interface with the purpose or substantial effect of obscuring, subverting or impairing user autonomy, decision-making or choice to obtain consent or user data."

The bill would introduce more transparency to the online experience by requiring sites to disclose "any form of behavioral

or psychological research” and “any experiments” they employ to manipulate user behavior.

It also would create an independent review board to oversee “any behavioral or psychological research, of any purpose, conducted on users.”

Language like that would seem far-fetched if this wasn’t really happening, as the European study illustrated. It said many of the techniques now being employed online are based on “the fields of behavioral economy and psychology.”

In just one example, the study showed how Facebook steered users into accepting the company’s desired privacy settings by making the “accept” button an appealing bright blue, while the option for changing those settings was a dull gray.

“The option that the service provider wants users to choose was deliberately made more eye-catching,” researchers said. Moreover, “users that were in a rush to use Facebook were inclined to simply click the blue button and be done with the process, which results in the maximum amount of data collection and use.”

Dark patterns also can take the form of ads disguised as navigation links, hidden costs that don’t appear until the very last step of a transaction, or free trials that turn into recurring payments that are very difficult to cancel.

Some might say these tactics are too simplistic to pose a threat to tech-savvy consumers. But the same could be said of [hiding sexual images](#) in magazine ads and movie posters.

Companies do it because they know, from years of quiet research, that it works.

Dark patterns are real. And they'll keep being used to influence our online behavior.

Unless we do something about it.

THIS CASE IS ENTIRELY ABOUT BRIBERY

If you thought that Mossack Fonseca and the Panama Papers was "The Story": IT WAS ONLY THE BEGINNING AND THE BRIBES, STOCK MARKET RIGGING AND CORRUPTION ARE STILL INCREASING!!!

In the USA; Mofo, Wilson Sonsini, Perkins Coie, Covington & Burling, and other firms, do the same corruption today that Mossack Fonseca did when they got caught.

THIS IS ABOUT THE U.S. SENATORS AND THEIR CRONY DARK MONEY POLITICAL BRIBES AND CRIMINAL KICK-BACKS, THE TECH OLIGARCHS WHO DEPLOYED THE BRIBES AND THE VICTIMS OF THESE CRIMES.

- Google, Tesla, Facebook, LinkedIn and their VC's (and deeply bribed Senators) ordered and operated hit-jobs on the public and their competitors, supported by the Obama White House and U.S. Dept. of Energy. The FBI raided their scheme and the

investigations tracked all the way back to the Oval Office!

- How Obama's U.S. Department of Energy Defrauded Americans Out Of Their Life Savings In A Massive Dark Money Crony Crime Cover-up

- "DARK MONEY" IS THE WAY THAT CORRUPT POLITICAL CRIMINALS EXCHANGE COMPENSATION, BRIBES AND INFLUENCE WITHOUT THE FBI CATCHING THEM

- For these politicians to say: "We are excluded from the law for these crimes because we changed the laws in order to exclude ourselves" is like the Mafia saying: "Killing people isn't illegal only if we do the killing".

- This is about a group of tech oligarchs, and their corrupt Senators, who commit crimes in order to manipulate over a trillion tax dollars (YOUR MONEY) into their, and their friends pockets.

- They create fake issues that they hype-up through their controlled media. They use media monopoly tricks to try to shut out any other viewpoints. They push pretend issues that they believe will get more tax money allocated to "issue solutions" that they, and their friends, happen to already own the monopolies for.

- They are felons yet they control some of the offices of the agencies who are supposed to arrest them. Silicon Valley bought K Street and U.S. Senators, gave them more Dark Money than history has ever seen and then had giant tech-law firms bribe, hit-job and blockade any attempts to solve the problem.

- Some of the largest bribes in American history were paid via billions of dollars of pre-IPO cleantech stock, insider trading, real estate, Google search engine rigging and shadow-banning, sex workers, revolving door jobs, nepotism, state-supported black-listing of competitors and under-the-table cash. Why are these Silicon Valley Oligarchs and their K-Street law firms and lobbyists immune from the law?

https://pilotonline.com/news/government/politics/article_c6836711-70ed-588c-b73f-547d6d82cb62.html

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HOW SILICON VALLEY'S "SCALED" CRIME CARTEL WORKS:

- A crime with hookers and a very big shark

There are millions of sharks in the ocean but only "Jaws" was big enough to earn himself (The Shark) so many feature films about trying to kill him. It was simply because he was so big and so hungry. Judging by the endless sequels, Jaws seems pretty hard to kill.

This is about the biggest sharks. They are from Silicon Valley.

Google, Facebook, Amazon, LinkedIn, Netflix, et al; exist because they operate under the criminal umbrella of the tech Cartel frat boys.

These guys are addicted to sex, and they are also huge assholes,

so they can't keep any partners around unless they pay them to be trophy wives or "beard" wives. Buying sex from Italian escorts, young girls and New York Rent Boys is really, really expensive. This drives them to do anything to suck up huge amounts of cash.

These guys are also addicted to power, so they buy East and West Coast U.S. Senators, British Parliament members and partner with corrupt Russian oligarchs. Buying Senators is also really, really expensive. This also drives them to do anything to suck up huge amounts of cash.

These guys need, and spend, massive amounts of cash. Being a tech oligarch is really, really expensive. They can't have the IRS cutting into their hooker-budgets. They spend massive amounts on big law firms to hide money in real estate, trusts, fake charities and in a huge array of off-shore spider holes.

These guys can't afford to get caught so they hire In-Q-Tel, Gawker Media, Black Cube, Fusion-GPS, and a huge army of other attackers, to destroy anybody who questions their motives.

Their Cartel exists because they own all of the main servers, banks, venture capital firms, tech law firms, K Street lobbyists and tech HR firms.

They control their entire eco-system and black-list anybody that offends them.

They own the internet and they delete anybody who steps in their circle.

Nobody can operate outside of it.

No start-up can compete with them without getting a hit-job put on it.

Since the year 2000, together, they have put over a million smaller companies out of business.

They exist because of "Scaling": the ability to use monopolized networks to reach everyone on Earth, have lower prices, and destroy all competition because they control all infrastructure. Scaling is all they talk about at their AngelGate "power lunches" in the back rooms of Restaurants on University Avenue in Palo Alto.

The FBI can't stop them because they owned James Comey, the head of the FBI.

The SEC, FEC and FTC can't stop them because they own the regulators at those agencies.

They Obama White House could not stop them because most of the Obama Administration was staffed by, and directed by, the staff of Google, Amazon and Facebook, et al.

The Silicon Valley tech Cartel makes the Mafia look like small potatoes.

They are a criminal organization!

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SEE MORE AT:

<https://www.propublica.org>

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<http://fbi-report.net>

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If certain politicians are as 'impassioned to serve the public' as they say, then shouldn't they volunteer for office and allow the public to see all of their bank accounts?

Of course they will never do that because many of them are getting "DARK MONEY" covert payola and they are in office only to serve criminal kick-back schemes.

Politician's Dianne Feinstein, Barbara Boxer, Nancy Pelosi, Harry Reid and 42 others, sent out letters, emails, meeting requests and pitches to solicit members of the public to join a cause. The top staff of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) sent out the same pleas. They promised a "wonderful new opportunity for all" in the first market break for outsiders in 30 years.

In meetings, on camera, they promised to give members of the public a fair shot at a group of new Department of Energy funds that Obama had put in place.

They failed to mention one key fact: ALL OF THE TAXPAYER MONEY HAD ALREADY BEEN SECRETLY PROMISED ("Hard Wired" it is called) TO OBAMA'S, AND THE DOE BOSSES, FRIENDS, IN ADVANCE.

That is a felony violation of the law. A crime which FBI Director James Comey, and his staff covered up and which DOE Boss Steven Chu and his staff actively implemented. Our team knows this, as fact, because they reported directly to Comey, Chu and their offices.

It was not an 'accident', it was not an 'oversight', it was not 'an agency just overwhelmed with paper'. It was a precision controlled, coordinated organized crime effort designed to rape, both, the U.S. taxpayers and the non-crony applicants for these funds.

The crime used the traditional bribes, crony payola contracts, revolving doors, sex worker payoffs and other political corruption but it mainly used a new tactic called "Dark Money".

Our team knows this because some of them were solicited to participate in these crimes and some of them had close personal relationships with the politicians who are now known to have operated these crimes. Some of our witnesses and insiders have been involved with the DOE since before 2000. They have 'seen it all'.

Companies, their executives and their investors were induced by California and New York Senators, White House Staff and the top staff of the U.S. Department of Energy to invest many years of their lives, and tens of millions of dollars of their personal cash in a fake government program which only existed to pay off Obama's political financiers.

American taxpayers were lied to and ruined by the U.S Department of Energy and their damages are increasing monthly. The DOE never apologized, offered fixes or provided anything other than Fusion-GPS kinds of attacks on those who asked for help or who reported the crimes.

This scam happened in 2008. History has proven that the DOE funds, since then, were rigged. Congress, the news media and special investigations have proven that these crimes happened. Nothing has ever been done to help the victims (over 100 companies and over 1800 individuals) recover from their state-sponsored losses.

Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi bought stock in initial public offerings (IPOs) from the very Cleantech companies that earned hefty returns (ie: Solyndra, Tesla, Abound, etc.) while she had access to insider information that would have been illegal for an

average citizen to trade with – even though it's perfectly legal for elected officials, CBS's "60 Minutes" reported Sunday night.

In a piece relying on data collected from the conservative Hoover Institution, "60 Minutes" revealed that elected officials like Pelosi are exempt from insider trading laws – regulations that carry hefty prison sentences and fines for any other citizen who trades stocks with private information on companies that can affect their stock price.

In the case of elected officials – this secret information ranges from timely details on lucrative federal contracts to legislation that can cause companies' stocks to rise and fall dramatically.
Editor's Note: Repeal Obamacare? Vote Here Now

How do they get away with it? Lawmakers have exempted themselves from the laws that govern every other citizen.

Pelosi, D-Calif., and her husband have participated in at least eight IPOs while having access to information directly relating to the companies involved. One of those came in 2008, from Visa, just as a troublesome piece of legislation that would have hurt credit card companies, began making its way through the House.

“Undisturbed by a potential conflict of interest the Pelosis purchased 5,000 shares of Visa at the initial price of \$44 dollars. Two days later it was trading at \$64. The credit card legislation never made it to the floor of the House,” Steve Kroft of "60 Minutes" reported.

Kroft confronted Pelosi at a regular press conference after she

declined an interview.

Kroft: Madam Leader, I wanted to ask you why you and your husband back in March of 2008 accepted and participated in a very large IPO deal from Visa at a time there was major legislation affecting the credit card companies making its way through the —through the House.

Nancy Pelosi: But —

Kroft: And did you consider that to be a conflict of interest?

Pelosi: The — y — I — I don't know what your point is of your question. Is there some point that you want to make with that?

Kroft: Well, I — I — I guess what I'm asking is do you think it's all right for a speaker to accept a very preferential, favorable stock deal?

Pelosi: Well, we didn't.

Kroft: You participated in the IPO. And at the time you were speaker of the House. You don't think it was a conflict of interest or had the appearance--

Pelosi: No, it was not —

Kroft: — of a conflict of interest?

Pelosi: —it doesn't — it only has appearance if you decide that you're going to have — elaborate on a false premise. But it — it — it's not true and that's that.

Kroft: I don't understand what part's not true.

Pelosi: Yes sir. That — that I would act upon an investment.

“There are all sorts of forms of honest grafts that congressmen engage in that allow them to become very, very wealthy. So it's not illegal, but I think it's highly unethical, I think it's highly offensive, and wrong,” he told Kroft.

“... Insider trading on the stock market. If you are a member of Congress, those laws are deemed not to apply,” Schweizer added. “The fact is, if you sit on a healthcare committee and you know that Medicare, for example, is — is considering not reimbursing for a certain drug that's market moving information. And if you can trade stock on — off of that information and do so legally, that's a great profit making opportunity. And that sort of behavior goes on.”

Pelosi's office issued a statement Sunday saying, “It is very troubling that ‘60 Minutes’ would base their reporting off of an already-discredited conservative author who has made a career out of attacking Democrats.”

Schweizer's books include “Do as I Say (Not as I Do): Profiles in Liberal Hypocrisy,” and “Architects of Ruin,” according to Schweizer's page on the Hoover Institution website.

What happened when the victims of these crimes reported the incidents to authorities? The Obama Administration ordered and operated attacks on the victims. Those attacks included the following reprisal, retribution and revenge efforts:

- DOE solicited the victims with false promises and caused them to expend millions of dollars and years of their time for projects which DOE had covertly promised to their friends and were using the victims as a “smokescreen” to cover their illegal DOE slush-fund for the victims competitors and personal enemies.

- Social Security, SSI, SDI, Disability and other earned benefits were stone-walled. Applications were “lost”. Files in the application process “disappeared”. Lois Lerner hard drive “incidents” took place in order to seek to hide information and run cover-ups.

- DOE’s Jonathan Silver, Lachlan Seward and Steven Chu contacted members of the National Venture Capital association (NVCA) and created national “black-lists” to blockade Victims from ever receiving investor funding. This was also confirmed in a widely published disclosure by Tesla Motors Daryl Stry and in published testimony.

FOIA requests were hidden, frozen, stone-walled, delayed, lied about and only partially responded to in order to seek to hide information and run cover-ups.

- State and federal employees played an endless game of Catch-22 by arbitrarily determining that deadlines had passed that they, the government officials, had stonewalled and obfuscated applications for, in order to force these deadlines that they set, to appear to be missed.

- Some Victims found themselves strangely poisoned, not unlike the Alexander Litvenko case. Heavy metals and toxic

materials were found right after their work with the Department of Energy weapons and energy facilities. Many wonder if these “targets” were intentionally exposed to toxins in retribution for their testimony. The federal MSDS documents clearly show that a number of these people were exposed to deadly compounds and radiations, via DOE, without being provided with proper HazMat suits which DOE officials knew were required.

- Victims employers were called, and faxed, and ordered to fire Victims from their places of employment, in the middle of the day, with no notice, as a retribution tactic.

- On orders from Obama White House officials, DNC-financed Google, YouTube, Gawker Media and Gizmodo Media produced attack articles and defamation videos and locked them on the internet on the top line, of the front page of all Google searches for a decade in front of 7.5 billion people, around the world, at a cost of over \$40 million dollars in server farms, production costs and internet rigging. The forensic data acquired from this attack proved that Google rigs attacks against individuals on the internet and that all of Google’s “impressions” are manually controlled by Google’s executives who are also the main financiers and policy directors of the Obama Administration. This data was provided to the European Union for it’s ongoing prosecution of Google’s political manipulation of public perceptions.

- Victims HR and employment records, on recruiting and hiring databases, were embedded with negative keywords in order to prevent them from gaining future employment.

- Our associates: Gary D. Conley, Seth Rich, Rajeev Motwani

and over 30 other whistle-blowers in this matter, turned up dead under strange circumstances. They are not alone in a series of bizarre deaths related to the DOE investigations.

- Disability and VA complaint hearings and benefits were frozen, delayed, denied or subjected to lost records and "missing hard drives" as in the Lois Lerner case.

- Paypal and other on-line payments for on-line sales were delayed, hidden, or re-directed in order to terminate income potential for Victims who competed with DOE interests and holdings.

- DNS redirection, website spoofing which sent Victims websites to dead ends and other Internet activity manipulations were conducted. All commercial storefronts and on-line sales attempts by Victims, had their sites hidden, or search engine de-linked by an massively resourced facility in order to terminate revenue potentials for those victims.

Over 50,000 trolls, shills, botnets and synth-blog deployments were deployed to place defamatory statements and disinformation about victims in front of 7.5 billion people around the world on the internet in order to seek to damage their federal testimony credibility by a massively resourced facility.

- Campaign finance dirty tricks contractors IN-Q-Tel, Think Progress, Black Cube, Podesta Group, Stratfor, Fusion GPS, IN-Q-Tel, Media Matters, Gawker Media, Gizmodo Media, Syd Blumenthal, etc., were hired by DOE Executives and their campaign financiers to attack Victims who competed with DOE executives stocks and personal assets.

- Covert DOE partner: Google, transferred large sums of cash to dirty tricks contractors and then manually locked the media portion of the attacks into the top lines of the top pages of all Google searches globally, for years, with hidden embedded codes in the links and web-pages which multiplied the attacks on Victims by many magnitudes.

Covert Cartel financier: Google, placed Google's lawyer: Michelle Lee, in charge of the U.S. Patent Office and she, in turn, stacked all of the U.S. Patent Office IPR and ALICE review boards and offices with Google-supporting employees in order to rig the U.S. Patent Office to protect Google from being prosecuted for the vast patent thefts that Google engages in. Google has hundreds of patent lawsuits for technology theft and a number of those lawsuits refer to Google's operations as "Racketeering", "Monopolistic Cartel" and "Government Coup-like" behaviors. Thousands of articles and investigations detail the fact that Google, "essentially" ran the Obama White House and provided over 80% of the key White House staff. A conflict-of-interest unlike any in American history. Google's investors personally told Applicant they would "kill him". Google and the Obama Administration were "the same entity". Applicant testified in the review that got Michelle Lee terminated and uncovered a tactical political and social warfare group inside Google who were financed by Federal and State funds.

- Honeytraps and moles were employed by the attackers. In this tactic, people who covertly worked for the attackers were employed to approach the "target" in order to spy on and misdirect the subject.

- Mortgage and rental applications had red flags added to them in databases to prevent the targets from getting homes or apartments.

- McCarthy-Era "Black-lists" were created and employed against Victims who competed with DOE executives and their campaign financiers to prevent them from funding and future employment.

- Targets were very carefully placed in a position of not being able to get jobs, unemployment benefits, disability benefits or acquire any possible sources of income. The retribution tactics were audacious, overt..and quite illegal.

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How does DOE Dark Money work? Let's take a look:

In the politics of the United States, dark money is funds given to nonprofit organizations—and include 501(c)(4)(social welfare) 501(c)(5) (unions) and 501(c)(6) (trade association) groups—that can receive unlimited donations from corporations, individuals, and unions, and spend funds to influence elections, but are not required to disclose their donors.[3][4] Dark money first entered politics with Buckley v. Valeo (1976) when the United States Supreme Court laid out Eight Magic Words that define the difference between electioneering and issue advocacy.

According to the Center for Responsive Politics, "spending by organizations that do not disclose their donors has increased from less than \$5.2 million in 2006 to well over \$300 million in the 2012 presidential cycle and more than \$174 million in the

2014 midterms."[3] The New York Times editorial board has opined that the 2014 midterm elections were influenced by "the greatest wave of secret, special-interest money ever raised in a congressional election." [5]

The term was first used by the Sunlight Foundation to describe undisclosed funds that were used during the United States 2010 mid-term election.[6][7] Its practical effect has been described by Donald Trump as Congress "being under the magical spell of the donors." [8]

In some elections, dark money groups have surpassed traditional political action committees (PAC) and "super PACs" (independent-expenditure-only committees) in the volume of spending.[4] In 2014, the group Freedom Partners was identified as the "poster child" for the rise of dark money.[4] In 2012, Freedom Partners had the ninth-highest revenues among all U.S. trade associations which filed tax returns that year, more than "established heavyweights" such as the American Petroleum Institute, PhRMA, and U.S. Chamber of Commerce.[4] Freedom Partners largely acted as a conduit for campaign spending; of the \$238 million it spent in 2012, 99 percent went to other groups, and Freedom Partners itself did not have any employees.[4] This was a major distinction between other high-revenue trade associations, which typically have many employees and devote only about 6 percent of spending to grants to outside groups.[4]

The rise of dark money groups was aided by the U.S. Supreme Court decisions in *FEC v. Wisconsin Right to Life, Inc.* (2008) and *Citizens United v. FEC* (2010).[4] In *Citizens United*, the Court ruled (by a 5–4 vote) that corporations and unions could spend

unlimited amounts of money to advocate for or against political candidates.[9]

2010 election cycle

According to the Center for Responsive Politics, dark money (which it defined as funds from outside groups that did not publicly disclose donors, plus groups that received a substantial portion of their contributions from such nondisclosing groups) accounted for nearly 44% of outside spending in the 2010 election cycle.[10]

In the 2012 election cycle, more than \$308 million in dark money was spent, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.[11] An estimated 86 percent was spent by conservative groups, 11 percent by liberal groups and 3 percent by other groups.[11]

The three dark money groups which spent the largest sums were Karl Rove's American Crossroads/Crossroads GPS (\$71 million), the Koch brothers' Americans for Prosperity (\$36 million) and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (\$35 million), all conservative groups.[11][12] Aside from a complex, and still highly covert network created by The Clinton Foundation, Media Matters and The Podesta Group, the three liberal groups with the largest dark-money expenditures were the League of Conservation Voters (\$11 million), Patriot Majority USA, a group focusing on public schools and infrastructure (\$7 million), and Planned Parenthood (almost \$7 million).[11]

The 2014 election cycle saw the largest amount of dark money ever spent in a congressional election; the New York Times editorial board described 2014 "the greatest wave of

secret, special-interest money ever." [5] On the eve of the election, Republican-leaning dark money groups dominated, with \$94.6 million in expenditures, exceeding dark money expenditures by Democratic-leaning dark money groups (\$28.4 million), and by expenditures that could not be classified (\$1.9 million). [13] Karl Rove's dark money group Crossroads GPS alone spent over \$47 million in the 2014 election cycle. [14]

In the Senate elections, dark money spending was highly concentrated in a handful of targeted competitive states, and especially in Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Kentucky, and North Carolina. [15] In the eleven most competitive Senate races, \$342 million was spent by non-party outside groups, significantly more than the \$89 million spent by the political parties.

In the 2014 Kentucky election, a key player was the "Kentucky Opportunity Coalition," a group supporting Mitch McConnell, Republican of Kentucky, [16] whom the New York Times editorial board has described as "the most prominent advocate for unlimited secret campaign spending in Washington." [5] The Kentucky Opportunity Coalition, a 501(c)(4) "social welfare" group, [17] raised more than \$21 million, while McConnell raised about \$32 million and McConnell's opponent, Democratic candidate Alison Lundergan Grimes, raised about \$19 million. [17] According to a Center for Public Integrity analysis of data provided by advertising tracking firm Kantar Media/CMAG, the group ran more than 12,400 television advertisements. [17] Every Kentucky Opportunity Coalition's television advertisements mentioned either McConnell or Grimes; overall, about 53 percent of the group's ads praised McConnell while the rest were attack ads against Grimes. [18] The Kentucky Opportunity Coalition relied heavily on political consultants in Washington, D.C. and

Virginia linked to Karl Rove's Crossroads groups,[19] and received \$390,000 in a grant from Crossroads GPS.[17] Described as "mysterious," the group was listed by a Post Office box,[17] and the only name formally associated with the group was political operative J. Scott Jennings, a deputy political director in the George W. Bush administration, a worker for McConnell's previous campaigns.[18] Melanie Sloan of the watchdog organization Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington said that the Kentucky Opportunity Coalition was "nothing more than a sham." [17]

In North Carolina, the pro-Tillis group "Carolina Rising" received nearly all (98.7%) of its funds from Crossroads GPS; the Center for Responsive Politics highlighted this as an example of how Crossroads GPS, a 501(c)(4) group, "evades limits on political activity through grants" to other 501(c)(4) groups.[16][21] In the 2014 cycle, Crossroads GPS also gave \$5.25 million to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, \$2 million to the American Future Fund, and \$390,000 to the Kentucky Opportunity Coalition.[21] In total, Crossroads GPS spent more than \$13.6 million on grants to other groups, which it described as being for the purposes of "social welfare." [21]

In 2014, the Democratic Party-aligned dark money group Patriot Majority USA, a 501(c)(4), spent almost \$13.7 million on "direct and indirect political campaign activities," airing 15,000 television ads in targeted Senate races.[22] About half of the \$30 raised by the group came from five anonymous donors.[22] The group was led by Craig Varoga, "a staunch ally" of Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, Democrat of Nevada.[22]

In Alaska, Mark Begich was "one of the few Democratic

candidates to come close to receiving as much support from dark money as his Republican opponent." [15] The pro-Begich Alaska Salmon PAC, funded entirely by the League of Conservation Voters and its Alaska affiliate, spent funds in support of Begich. [15]

According to the Center for Responsive Politics, by October 2015, \$4.88 million in dark money had already been spent for the 2016 election cycle, "more than 10 times the \$440,000 that was spent at this point during the 2012 cycle." [11] The money was spent by six groups - five conservative groups (including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which spent \$3 million, and Americans for Prosperity, which spent \$1.5 million) and one liberal group (Planned Parenthood, which spent just under \$75,000). [11] According to Richard Skinner of the Sunlight Foundation, "the focus of early dark money being spent in the 2016 cycle" is on competitive U.S. Senate elections and some U.S. House of Representatives races. [11] However, dark money also is playing a role in the 2016 Republican presidential primaries; by June 2015, at least four Republican presidential candidates were raising funds via 501(c)(4) organizations: Bobby Jindal's America Next, Rick Perry's Americans for Economic Freedom, John Kasich's Balanced Budget Forever, and Jeb Bush's Right to Rise. [23]

501(c) "dark money" groups are distinct from super PACs. [25] While both types of entity can raise and spend unlimited sums of money, super PACs "must disclose their donors," while 501(c) groups "must not have politics as their primary purpose but don't have to disclose who gives them money." [25] However, a single individual or group can create both types of entity and combine their powers, making it difficult to trace the original source of funds. [25] [26] ProPublica explains: "Say some like-

mindful people form both a Super-PAC and a nonprofit 501(c)(4). Corporations and individuals could then donate as much as they want to the nonprofit, which isn't required to publicly disclose funders. The nonprofit could then donate as much as it wanted to the Super-PAC, which lists the nonprofit's donation but not the original contributors." [25] In at least one high-profile case, a donor to a super PAC kept his name hidden by using an LLC formed for the purpose of hiding their personal name. [27] One super PAC, that originally listed a \$250,000 donation from an LLC that no one could find, led to a subsequent filing where the previously "secret donors" were revealed. [28]

During the 2016 election cycle, "dark money" contributions via shell LLCs became increasingly common. [29] The Associated Press, Center for Public Integrity, and Sunlight Foundation all "flagged dozens of donations of anywhere from \$50,000 to \$1 million routed through non-disclosing LLCs to super PACs" backing various presidential candidates, including Marco Rubio, Hillary Clinton, Ted Cruz, John Kasich, Jeb Bush, and Carly Fiorina. [29]

Bradley A. Smith, a former FEC chairman who is now with the Center for Competitive Politics, a group that opposes campaign-finance reform, argues that this practice is not problematic, writing that "it is possibly the making of a campaign contribution in the name of another," a violation of existing law. [30]

According to Kathy Kiely, managing editor of the Sunlight Foundation, "untraceable dark money is a preferred tactic of conservatives, while Democrats tend to use traceable super PACs." [31]

The first federal law requiring disclosure of campaign

contributions, the Federal Corrupt Practices Act, was passed in 1910. By the late 1970s, virtually all states and the federal government required public disclosure of campaign contributions and information on political donors. Most states and the federal government also required public disclosure of information about donors and amounts spent on independent expenditures, that is, expenditures made independently of a candidate's campaign.

In January 2010, at least 38 states and the federal government required disclosure for all or some independent expenditures or electioneering communications, for all sponsors.[32]

Yet despite disclosure rules, it is possible to spend money without voters knowing the identities of donors before the election.[33][34] In federal elections, for example, political action committees have the option to choose to file reports on a "monthly" or "quarterly" basis.[35][36][37] This allows funds raised by PACs in the final days of the election to be spent and votes cast before the report is due.

In addition to PACs, non-profit groups ranging from Planned Parenthood to Crossroads may make expenditures in connection with political races. Since these non-profits are not political committees, as defined in the Federal Election Campaign Act, they have few reporting requirements beyond the amounts of their expenditures. They are not required by law to publicly disclose information on their donors. As a result, voters do not know who gave money to these groups. Reports have disclosed instances where non-profits were managed by close associates, former staff, or a candidate's family member, and this has led to concern that the candidates benefiting from their expenditures would be able to know who donated the funds to the non-profit

group, but the public would not.[38] [39]

For example, in the 2012 election cycle, one organization, the National Organization for Marriage, or NOM, operated two non-profit arms that received millions in donations from just a few donors. It in turn funded several different PACs. While these PACs had to disclose that NOM contributed the funds, they were not required to disclose who gave money to NOM.[40]

On March 30, 2012 a U.S. District Court ruled that all groups that spend money on electioneering communications must report all donors that give more than \$1,000.[41][42] However, this ruling was overturned on appeal.[43]

Legislative and regulatory proposals and debate over dark money According to Columbia Law School's Richard Briffault, disclosure of campaign expenditures, contributions, and donors is intended to deter corruption.[45]

The Federal Elections Commission, which regulates federal elections, has been unable to control dark money. According to the Center for Public Integrity, FEC commissioners are voting on many fewer enforcement matters than in the past because of "an overtaxed staff and commissioner disagreement." [12] The IRS (rather than the FEC) is responsible for oversight of 501(c)(4) groups. [12] The IRS "found itself ill-prepared for the groundswell" of such groups taking and spending unlimited amounts of money for political purposes in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission in 2010. [12] The agency particularly "struggled to identify which organizations appeared to be spending more than the recommended 50 percent of their annual budgets on

political activities—and even to define what 'political spending' was." [12] When the IRS began looking at nonprofit spending, it was accused of improper targeting in a 2013 controversy. [12]

"With the FEC and IRS duly sidelined" advocates for disclosure turned to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC); nine academics from universities across the U.S. filed petitioned the SEC in August 2011 for the agency to "develop rules to require public companies to disclose to shareholders the use of corporate resources for political activities." [12] The petition received over a million comments in the following month, "a record amount for the SEC, with the overwhelming majority of voters asking for better disclosure." [12] According to Lucian Bebchuk, a Harvard professor of law, economics, and finance who helped draft the petition, the request had drawn the support of "nearly a dozen senators and more than 40 members of the House." [12] Under current SEC regulations, public corporations must file a Form 8-K report to publicly announce major events of interest to shareholders. [46] The Sunlight Foundation, a group which advocates for a comprehensive disclosure regime, has proposed that the 8-K rule should be updated to require that aggregate spending of \$10,000 on political activities (such as monetary contributions, in-kind contributions, and membership dues or other payments to organizations that engage in political activities) should be disclosed and made publicly available via the 8-K system. [46] In 2015, Republicans in Congress successfully pushed for a rider in a 2015 omnibus spending bill that bars the IRS from clarifying the social-welfare tax exemption to combat dark money "from advocacy groups that claim to be social welfare organizations rather than political committees." [47]

Other provisions in the 2015 bill bar the SEC from requiring corporations to disclose campaign spending to shareholders, and a ban application of the gift tax to nonprofit donors. The Obama administration opposed these provisions, but President Obama eventually acceded to them in December 2015, with the White House declining to comment. The nonpartisan Campaign Legal Center said in a statement that the dark-money provision ensures "that the door to secret foreign dollars in U.S. elections remains wide open through secret contributions to these ostensibly 'nonpolitical' groups that run campaign ads without any disclosure of their donors." [47]

The Center for Competitive Politics (CCP), chaired by former FEC chairman Bradley A. Smith, opposes legislation to require the disclosure of dark-money groups, saying: "Our view is that many people will be driven out of politics if they are forced to disclose their names and their personal information. The purpose of disclosure is to help people monitor the government, not for the government to monitor the people." [12] The Center for Competitive Politics views "dark money" as a pejorative term, stating that the phrase "evokes an emotional, fearful reaction" and contending that "many of the statistics published on the topic aim to mislead rather than enlighten." [48] The CCP maintains that dark money "comprises a very small percentage of total campaign spending," calculating the percent of money spent in federal elections by organizations that did not provide itemized disclosure of their donors as 4.3% in 2012 and 3.7% in 2014.

The U.S. Department of Energy was complicit in the processing of Dark Money payola cycling to Obama's financiers as a 'hand-on' operator of a RICO-class crime.

All of the ruckus with Donald Trump and California/DOE VS. Trump is almost entirely based on West Coast and New York corrupt senators, and their insiders, freaking out about their Dark Money organized crime payola scam coming apart and getting exposed.

There's a reason why David Brock chooses to house an unregistered Professional Solicitor in his office to raise money for his conglomerate of Super PACs and non-profits.

Professional Solicitors are required to disclose their active solicitation contracts. Brock wants his unregistered solicitor, the Bonner Group, to keep their client list hidden for a very specific reason.

DAVID BROCK IS LAUNDERING MONEY AND RUNNING A CHARACTER ASSASSINATION SERVICE. WHY HAS HE NOT BEEN ARRESTED?

David Brock has 7 non-profits, 3 Super PACs, one 527-committee, one LLC, one joint fundraising committee, and one unregistered solicitor crammed into his office in Washington DC.

Uncovered records expose a constant flow of money between these organizations.

The Bonner Group, his professional solicitor, works off a commission. Every time money gets passed around, Bonner receives a 12.5% cut.

FOLLOW THE MONEY

Nonprofits are required to disclose who they give cash grants to.

But they aren't required to disclose who gave them cash grants.

This weak system of one way verification is being abused by Brock. He's been cycling money between his organizations for years, and the Bonner Group's 12.5% commission gets triggered after every pass.

In 2014, Media Matters for America raised \$10,021,188.

The Bonner Group was credited for raising these funds. Media Matters paid them a \$1,147,882 commission.

That same year, Media Matters gave a \$930,000 cash grant to David Brock's Franklin Education Forum, an organization that shares office space with Media Matters.

In 2014, the Franklin Education Forum reported \$994,000 in total contributions. 93.6% of that total came from Media Matters!

Surprisingly, though, the Franklin Education Forum gave full credit to Bonner for raising that money. They paid the fundraiser a \$124,250 commission in 2014!

NOTICE WHAT HAPPENED?

David Brock's Media Matters gave a \$930,000 cash grant to David Brock's Franklin Education Forum

David Brock's Franklin Education Forum credited the Bonner

Group for raising those funds, triggering the 12.5% commission
David Brock paid the Bonner Group a \$124,250 commission
to solicit a cash grant ... from himself!

IT DOESN'T STOP THERE

After the Franklin Education Forum retained \$869,750, they sent
a \$816,224 cash grant to David Brock's The Franklin Forum:

[franklin-education-forum-grant-to-franklin-forum](#)

Note: The 'Franklin Education Forum' is a 501(c)3, and 'The
Franklin Forum' is a 501(c)4. They are not the same company.

Since The Franklin Forum 501(c)4 paid Bonner a commission in
2013, it's safe to assume fundraiser received a \$102,028
commission in 2014. Unfortunately, it's hard to tell for sure. They
still haven't filed their taxes for 2014!

LET'S RECAP

Say, for example, you donate \$1,062,857 to Media Matters for
America. This is how David Brock would have used your
charitable donation in 2014:

In the end, Brock's solicitor would have pocketed \$350,825,
almost a third of your initial donation! That's a far cry from the
advertised 12.5% commission.

As bizarre as that scenario may sound, this is exactly what David
Brock did in 2014.

HOW CAN WE BE SURE THIS IS INTENTIONAL?

David Brock is the Chairman for each of these organizations!
How could he not know what's going on?

He's a hands-on Chairman. According to their tax returns, Brock allocates time, weekly, to his organizations:

Furthermore, the New York Times reports that David Brock shares a summer rental in the Hamptons with Mary Pat Bonner, the President of the Bonner Group!

David Brock will have a hard time claiming ignorance on this. These transfers are intentional. He vacations with his solicitor. Case closed.

STILL NOT CONVINCED?

David Brock didn't even bother to give his organizations different phone numbers. They all share the same phone number!

WHAT IF...?

We even located the Bonner Group's solicitation agreement with Media Matters on Florida's Gift Givers' Guide. Clarification on their commission can be found on page 2:

In English: Contractually, David Brock has the option to exclude certain contributions from triggering the commission. In spite of this option, he intentionally chooses to trigger the 12.5% commission for money grants between his organizations.

Note: Yes, we are making the assumption that all of Brock's

organizations have the same solicitation agreement with the Bonner Group. Given that his organizations share the same address, board members, and telephone number, we feel it's safe to assume they also share the same solicitation agreement.

THIS BARELY SCRATCHES THE SURFACE

Utilizing public facing tax returns, along with records submitted to the FEC, we mapped out all the significant money transfers from 2014 that took place in Brock's office:

This is all from just one year! No further commentary required.

We understand this may be hard to believe. We first came across this in July, and are still having a hard time wrapping our heads around it.

All of the data referenced in this article originated from publicly accessible sources. Check for yourself – we provided links to the source material in our article exposing the organizations operating in Brock's office, This data has been sitting out in the open, gathering dust for years!

If it looks like a duck, swims like a duck, and quacks like a duck, then it probably is a duck.

We've spent months trying to find some sort of loophole to justify this activity. But there aren't any loopholes. David Brock has something to hide. Just last week, The Daily Caller reported the following:

"Brock's former long-time live-in boyfriend William Grey (whom Brock has thanked in several of his books) threatened to go to

the IRS with damaging information about how Brock was running his Media Matters empire. What did Brock do? He paid Grey \$850,000 to keep quiet. Brock reportedly had to sell his home in Rehoboth, Delaware to come up with the money. This certainly seems to indicate that Brock was terrified about what the authorities would uncover.”

We’d also like to partner with you if you’re interested in reposting our content on your own site. Please send an email to Andrew@TheCitizensAudit.com to get started.

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FURTHER PROOF OF THE CRIMES AND LIES:

<https://archive.fo/xCf3t>

<https://neonnettle.com/news/6471-pelosi-s-brother-in-law-received-737m-taxpayer-money-for-failed-green-project>

<https://voat.co/v/whatever/2239148>

<https://www.thegatewaypundit.com/2019/02/watch-college-students-love-ocasio-cortezs-green-new-deal-until-they-find-out-whats-really-in-it/>

The seven UI 'dark patterns' that trick you into voting for Google's insiders

Present in more than 1 in 10 top websites (and yes, greed covers them all)

By [Thomas Claburn in San Francisco](#)

121  [Reg comments](#) [SHARE](#) ▼

 UI/UX illustration

Dark patterns – user interfaces designed to deviously manipulate people into doing things – have become common enough on websites and in apps that [almost two dozen providers](#) have sprung up to supply behavior persuasion as a service.

And in some cases, these firms openly advertise deceptive marketing techniques, describing ways to generate fake product orders and social messages celebrating those fake orders.

This finding is one of several from seven computer science boffins – Arunesh Mathur, Gunes Acar, Michael Friedman, Elena Lucherini, Jonathan Mayer, Marshini Chetty, and Arvind Narayanan – all from Princeton University in the USA, except for Chetty, who hails from the University of Chicago.

On Tuesday, the meticulous seven published a draft research paper, [Dark Patterns at Scale: Findings from a Crawl of 11K](#)

[Shopping Websites](#), that explores the prevalence of interface-driven influencing techniques.

"We found 22 third-parties that offer 'dark patterns as a service,'" [said](#) Arvind Narayanan, a professor at Princeton. "The psychology research behind nudges has been weaponized."

The researchers analyzed the top 11,000 websites, as ranked by Amazon's Alexa service, using a custom crawler that visits e-commerce sites and completes the click flow to purchase products, then saves the interfaces encountered and interactions for analysis.

The boffins found 1,841 dark patterns, representing 15 distinct types, on 1,267 of those 11,000 shopping websites – that represents about 11.2 per cent of the data set. And they propose seven categories for such user-interface tricks:

Sneaking

Attempting to misrepresent user actions, or delay information that if made available to users, they would likely object to.

Urgency

Imposing a deadline on a sale or deal, thereby accelerating user decision-making and purchases.

Misdirection

Using visuals, language, or emotion to steer users toward or away from making a particular choice.

Social proof

Influencing users' behavior by describing the experiences and behavior of other users.

Scarcity

Signalling that a product is likely to become unavailable, thereby increasing its desirability to users.

Obstruction

Making it easy for the user to get into one situation but hard to get out of it.

Forced Action

Forcing the user to do something tangential in order to complete their task.

Dark patterns, ethically dubious though they may be, are not necessarily illegal. "Not all dark patterns are illegal, but they are nonetheless problematic because they are intended to prey on our cognitive limitations and weaknesses," [added](#) Prof Narayanan.

But some do violate the law. In Europe, the Consumer Rights Directive makes Sneaking dark patterns illegal, the researchers claim. They also note that the 234 instances of deception they found on 183 websites are unlawful in the US, the EU, and other jurisdictions.

Legislators have already taken note. In April, US Senators Mark R. Warner (D-VA) and Deb Fischer (R-NE) [proposed](#) the Deceptive Experiences To Online Users Reduction (DETOUR) Act, which aims to prevent large service providers – more than 100 million monthly users – from using deceptive interface designs for software applications.

The researchers say they hope their technology for identifying dark patterns will prove useful to watchdogs. "The crawling and

clustering methodology that we developed is readily generalizable, and it radically reduces the difficulty of discovering and measuring dark patterns at web scale," the researchers explained in their paper.

They also hope their work will inspire countermeasures like the creation of a website that names and shames e-commerce sites that rely on dark patterns. ®