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ELECTIONS

PAYBACKS: PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

From “Paybacks: How the White House and Congress Are Neglecting Our Health Care Because of Their Corporate Contributors,” August 2004

Payout: The pharmaceutical manufacturing industry has contributed **\$47 million** to federal campaigns and parties since 1999, 77% to Republicans. President George W. Bush has collected more than **\$418,000** from drug manufacturing companies, while his rival in the presidential race, Sen. John Kerry (D-MA), has collected **\$128,000**.¹

Policy Paybacks: Higher profits for pharmaceutical industry, already the most profitable in the world

Public Cost: Expensive, unsafe prescription drugs

POLICY PAYBACKS

- The controversial \$534 billion Medicare drug law approved by Congress and the White House in December 2003 offers inadequate benefits, is confusing to understand, is expensive, and is larded with giveaways to campaign contributors.
- The lead sponsor of the Medicare House legislation, Rep. Dennis Hastert (R-IL), ranks sixth in the House for lifetime contributions from pharmaceutical manufacturers; in the Senate, the lead sponsor, Sen. Bill Frist, ranks 15th.
- The 220 House Members who voted in favor of the Medicare bill approved by Congress in 2003 received more than twice as much campaign cash, on average, from pharmaceutical manufacturers—\$27,600—as those who voted against it—\$11,300, between 1999 and 2003, according to analysis by the Center for Responsive Politics. The 54 Senators who voted in favor of the bill collected an average of \$52,000 from pharmaceutical manufacturers between 1999 and 2003, while the 44 who voted against it collected \$30,320.
- Several Bush fundraisers are associated with companies that are marketing discount pharmaceutical cards under the new law. These include Bush Ranger (bundler of \$200,000 for the Bush-Cheney 2004 campaign) **Michael Hightower**, the chief lobbyist for **Blue Cross Blue Shield of Florida**; Bush Pioneer (bundler of \$100,000) **William McGuire**, the CEO of **UnitedHealth Group**; Bush pioneers **Todd S. Farha** and **David Hart** of **Wellcare**; Bush Pioneer **L. Ben Lytle**; Bush Pioneer **Samuel Skinner**; Bush Ranger **Tom Loeffler**, a lobbyist for **Pacificare**; and **Alan Lotvin**, who helped throw a

\$100,000 fundraiser for the Bush campaign a few weeks after the business won approval to offer the discount card.

- Under the Bush Administration, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has slowed down its reviews of misleading advertisements by the drug industry. Companies that have benefited include **Bristol-Myers Squibb**, the source of **\$4.1 million** to federal campaigns and parties since 1999, **85% to the GOP**; **Novartis**, the source of **\$1.7 million** over the same time period, **80% to Republicans**; and **Aventis**, the source of \$2.3 million, **78% to Republicans**.



- Before taking the position of FDA chief counsel in August 2001, **Daniel Troy** worked as an attorney in private practice, representing the tobacco and pharmaceutical industries. Under his leadership at the FDA, the agency has sided in court with the drug industry in several high profile legal disputes, arguing that the agency's stamp of approval on a drug pre-empts lawsuits filed for harm from drugs in state lawsuits. For example, the FDA filed a legal brief on behalf of the drug company **Pfizer**, a former client of Troy's, in a lawsuit filed by the widow of a man who killed himself six days after he started taking Zoloft.
- The 59 senators who voted against requiring private reviewers of new medical devices to be subject to tough conflict of interest rules that apply to government workers received an average of \$49,800 from the pharmaceutical lobby compared to the average of \$34,400 received by the 40 senators who voted in favor of the rules.

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*For full sourcing go to <http://www.publiccampaign.org/healthcarepaybacks>

¹ Center for Responsive Politics. Includes indiv. (\$200+), PAC, and soft money contributions, downloaded from the Federal Election Commission between April and June 2004.