

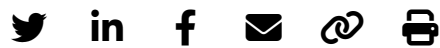


POLITICS

Pfizer gives \$1 million to Republican Party of Kentucky to expand its headquarters

Corporations have put \$1.65 million into party's building fund

BY: TOM LOFTUS - JANUARY 9, 2023 11:19 AM



📷 Republican Party of Kentucky headquarters in Frankfort. (Photo for Kentucky Lantern by Tom Loftus)

FRANKFORT, Ky. – In what may be the largest political contribution ever given to a political party in Kentucky, the drug maker Pfizer Inc. gave \$1 million last month to the building fund of the Republican Party of Kentucky.

A report filed by Republican Party of Kentucky Building Fund last

week with the Kentucky Registry of Election Finance listed the \$1 million from Pfizer along with five other big corporation contributions in the final quarter of 2022 totalling \$1.65 million.

That is an extraordinarily large haul for the fund which had raised only \$6,000 during the first three quarters of 2022.

The other large corporate donors to the fund in late 2022 were:

- Metropolitan Life Insurance Co., New York, \$300,000;
- Altria Client Services LLC, of Richmond, VA., \$100,000;
- Comcast Corp., of Philadelphia; \$100,000;
- AT&T, of St. Louis; \$100,000;
- Delta Air Lines, of Atlanta, \$50,000.

State and federal campaign finance laws set limits on how much a person or political action committee can give to the executive committee of either political party. (A person can give no more than \$15,000 per year.) And corporation contributions to a party's executive committee are prohibited.

But part of a campaign finance bill passed by the General Assembly in 2017 allowed each party to establish a building fund that can accept contributions of unlimited amounts. It also allowed the building funds to accept contributions from corporations.

The Kentucky Democratic Party's building fund has not yet filed a report on its contributions and expenses for the last quarter of 2022.

The election registry website says that money in a party building fund "may be used for expenditures related to the purchase, construction, maintenance, renovation, and repair of the state executive committee's main headquarters facility."

In response to questions from Kentucky Lantern, Sean Southard, spokesman for the Republican Party of Kentucky, released a statement Monday that said in part "the Republican Party purchased the lot next door to our Frankfort headquarters and is planning an expansion project. Our current headquarters was acquired in 1974. With the growth of the Republican Party in Kentucky, we have a need for additional space."

The \$1.65 million added to the GOP building fund would be plenty to pay for a major expansion and upgrade for the party

headquarters. The Franklin County Property Valuation Administrator's website currently lists the taxable value of the current headquarters property at \$485,000. The Franklin PVA lists the taxable value of the adjacent vacant lot owned by the Republican Party at \$150,000.

A sign identifies the party headquarters as the Mitch McConnell Building, in honor of U.S. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky.

In response to a question about the huge size of the corporate contributions, Southard's statement said, "As we raise funds into the building fund account, we are following both federal and state law. The funds raised into this account can only be used for certain expenditures related to the building and are not eligible to be spent on candidate or issue advocacy."

Pfizer has long had a lobbying presence in Kentucky and for years it has retained the lobbying firm headed by John McCarthy to represent its interests in Frankfort.

McCarthy, a former chairman of the Republican Party of Kentucky who is still a member of its executive committee, referred questions about the contribution to the Pfizer media relations department in New York which did not immediately respond to an email and phone call from Kentucky Lantern.

Pfizer is a multinational pharmaceutical and biotech company based in New York; its brands include Viagra, Zoloft and Lipitor and more recently the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine and the antiviral Paxlovid.

Fueled by sales of its COVID-19 vaccine, [Pfizer's revenue doubled to \\$81.3 billion from 2020 to 2021](#). The company [ranks 43rd on the Fortune 500 list](#).

For the first three quarters of 2022, [Pfizer reported \\$76 billion in revenues](#).

Pfizer is no stranger to political spending. In 2022, the company spent \$11.6 million lobbying the federal government, putting it in the top dozen lobbying spenders, [according to Open Secrets](#).

Its affiliates and PAC contribute generously to federal candidates of both parties.

Pfizer announced in November that it will triple or even quadruple the price of its COVID-19 vaccine once it goes on the commercial market next year, [according to Kaiser Health News](#).

Comcast, Altria Client Services (formerly Phillip Morris), AT&T and Delta Air Lines, also are registered to lobby the Kentucky General Assembly. Metropolitan Life Insurance does not retain a lobbyist in Frankfort, according to records of the Legislative Ethics Commission.

This article has been updated with new information.



📷 Republican Party of Kentucky headquarters at the corner of Capitol Avenue and 3rd Street in Frankfort. (Photo for Kentucky Lantern by Tom Loftus)



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Tom Loftus is a native of Cincinnati and a graduate of The Ohio State University. His long career in Kentucky journalism includes four years as Frankfort bureau chief for The Kentucky Post and 32 years as Frankfort bureau chief for The Courier Journal. He is a member of the Kentucky Journalism Hall of Fame and a freelance reporter for the Kentucky Lantern.

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