

OpenSecrets.org

Website review by [Erin Brereton](#), Common Sense Media



Common Sense says



Visuals, snappy text explain political spending details.

<https://www.opensecrets.org>

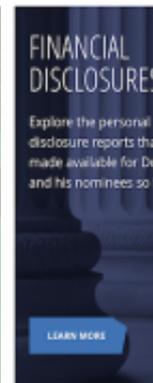
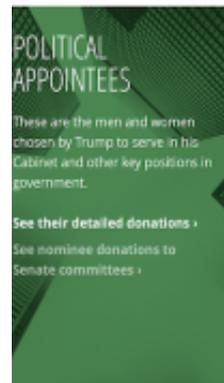
What is Dark Money?

Dark Money refers to political spending meant to influence the decision where the donor is not disclosed and the source of the money is unknown upon the circumstances. Dark Money can refer to funds spent by a political action committee or a super PAC. Here's how:

- Political nonprofits are under no legal obligation to disclose their donors. If they choose not to, they are considered Dark Money groups.
- Super PACs can also be considered Dark Money groups in certain cases. While these organizations are legally required to disclose their donors, they can accept unlimited contributions from political non-profits and individuals who may not have disclosed their donors, in these cases they are considered Dark Money groups.

Dark Money groups account for staggering gaps in understanding how much money is being spent during political elections. These gaps are with every election cycle. Political organizations working to influence the election outside party or official campaign structures spent more than \$1.5 billion in 2012, only reported about \$5 million of that to the Federal Election Commission. In comparison, that \$5 million alone is more than ten times more than was reported at this point in 2011, before the last presidential election cycle.

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A LOT OR A LITTLE?

The parents' guide to what's in this website.

A+ ●●●●○
Educational value

🗨️ ●●●○○
Positive messages

💣 ○○○○○
Violence & scariness

💋 ○○○○○
Sexy stuff

#! ○○○○○
Language

💰 ○○○○○
Consumerism



Drinking, drugs & smoking

WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

Parents need to know that OpenSecrets.org is an informative that site offers a nonpartisan look at political spending. Users can discover everything from funding of previous political campaigns to a politician's finances and tax returns. For the most part, the content is kid-friendly, but users can post seemingly unmoderated comments that appear live instantly, so there's a chance kids could come across argumentative conversations or inappropriate language.

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USER REVIEWS

PARENTS SAY

KIDS SAY

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

OPENSECRETS.ORG is a non-partisan news site run by the nonprofit Center for Responsive Politics. It uses information gathered from sources like the FCC and the Federal Election Commission to provide an overview of how U.S. political campaigns are

funded -- where the money comes from, how it's accounted for, and what it's spent on. Users can also learn about lobbying and other topics and look up donor information, view a glossary of terms, create their own tools using the site's data, or read politically related news.

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IS IT ANY GOOD?

This site is a treasure trove of political spending information, ranging from congressional election amounts to political contributions by state. Using a number of visual components and text that's written in an easy-to-understand, almost conversational tone, the non-partisan site breaks down how funding works, describes what candidates use money on, and includes donor information, too -- users can search by name to find out what individuals have given.

Including more interactive game- or quiz-type elements might help kids dig deeper into the site material. But the text length and page design makes each topic approachable, even when it involves a lot of written material. In light of the recent election, kids may have some questions about the way the U.S. political system works. OpenSecrets.org can be a good resource to help them learn about part of its structure.

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TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT ...

- Families can talk about how political decisions affect kids' lives. Were there any issues in the recent campaign your kids were concerned about?
-
- Ask your child what factors play into whether or not a candidate is someone you want to support. Is there information that's on this site that may affect your child's view of some candidates?
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- Discuss some of the reasons political campaign spending is so high, and its desired effect, and use the conversation as a springboard to talk about whether or not commercials and other ads make your child want to buy the products they promote.
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WEBSITE DETAILS

Subjects: [Language & Reading](#): reading, using supporting evidence

[Math](#): arithmetic, money

[Social Studies](#): government, power structures

Skills: [Thinking & Reasoning](#): analyzing evidence, investigation

Genre: [Educational](#)

Pricing structure: Free

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