

BACKGROUND

AFTER HER LAST CAMPAIGN, THE FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION FOUND THAT JONI ERNST'S CAMPAIGN HAD KNOWINGLY AND ILLEGALLY ACCEPTED \$132,000 IN PROHIBITED AND EXCESSIVE CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS

12/1/14: After Ernst Was Elected To U.S. Senate, FEC Sent Her Campaign A Letter Noting Their Receipt Of Excessive And Potentially Prohibited Contributions. “On December 1, 2014, a Request for Additional Information (RFAI) was sent to the Committee referencing the 2014 October Quarterly Report. Among other items, the RFAI noted the Committee's receipt of excessive and potentially prohibited contributions and requested that the Committee take corrective action (Image 14330067217).” [Reports Analysis Division Referral to Office of General Counsel, Federal Election Commission, [9/17/15](#)]

- **11/4/14: Ernst Was Elected To U.S. Senate.** ‘Joni Ernst has been elected as the next U.S. Senator from Iowa. The Republican, a state Senator from Red Oak, defeated Democrat U.S. Representative Bruce Braley in one of the nation’s closest watched elections.’ [WHOTV, [11/4/14](#)]

Iowa Starting Line: FEC Found Ernst’s Campaign Had “Knowingly” Accepted Illegal Contributions. “Sen. Joni Ernst’s 2014 campaign paid the largest civil penalty ever levied by the Federal Election Commission against an Iowa politician, according to previously unreported commission records. In 2017, the FEC found Ernst’s first campaign for Senate broke the law by ‘knowingly accepting excessive and prohibited contributions, and by failing to timely refund excessive and prohibited contributions.’ The FEC fined Ernst’s committee, ‘Joni for Iowa,’ \$14,500 for campaign finance violations. According to FEC records, it received the payment from her committee in October 2017.” [Iowa Starting Line, [10/12/19](#)]

- **FEC Found Ernst’s Campaign Had “Knowingly Accept[ed] Excessive And Prohibited Contributions.”** “This matter was initiated pursuant to information ascertained by the Federal Election Commission (the ‘Commission’) in the normal course of carrying out its supervisory responsibilities. [...] The Commission found reason to believe that Joni for Iowa and Cabell Mobbs in his official capacity as treasurer (‘Respondent’ or the ‘Committee’) violated 52 U.S.C. [...] 2. Respondent violated 52 U.S.C. §§ 30116(f) and 30118 by knowingly accepting excessive and prohibited contributions, and by failing to timely refund excessive and prohibited contributions.” [Conciliation Agreement, In the matter of Joni for Iowa and Cabell Hobbs in his official capacity as Treasurer, MUR 7200, Federal Election Commission, filed [8/11/17](#)]
- **Iowa Starting Line: “Illegal Donations.”** “According to the report, the illegal donations came from 26 individuals, one partnership, one multi-candidate political action committee, one non-multi-candidate political action committee and three corporate entities.” [Iowa Starting Line, [10/12/19](#)]
- **Iowa Starting Line: “Illegal Contributions.”** “In addition to the illegal contributions and failure to properly refund them in a timely manner, the FEC also found Ernst’s campaign did not accurately disclose debts on its original 2014 July Quarterly Report.” [Iowa Starting Line, [10/12/19](#)]
- **Iowa Starting Line: “Broke The Law.”** “In 2017, the FEC found Ernst’s first campaign for Senate broke the law by “knowingly accepting excessive and prohibited contributions, and by failing to timely refund excessive and prohibited contributions.” [Iowa Starting Line, [10/12/19](#)]

2014 October Quarterly Report: Ernst’s Campaign Disclosed Excessive Contributions Totaling Over \$132,000. “On October 15, 2014, the Committee filed the 2014 October Quarterly Report covering the period from July 1, 2014 to September 30, 2014 (Image 14020882161). This report disclosed excessive contributions totaling \$132,293.25 from sixty-four (64) individuals, seven (7) multicandidate political action committees, and one (1) non-multicandidate political action committee as well as excessive contributions totaling \$19,000.00 from thirteen (13) corporate entities.” [Reports Analysis Division Referral to Office of General Counsel, Federal Election Commission, [9/17/15](#)]

- **2014 October Quarterly Report: Ernst’s Campaign Disclosed Excessive Contributions Totaling \$19,000 From 13 Corporate Entities.** “On October 15, 2014, the Committee filed the 2014 October Quarterly Report covering the period from July 1, 2014 to September 30, 2014 (Image 14020882161). This report disclosed excessive contributions totaling \$132,293.25 from sixty-four (64) individuals, seven (7) multicandidate political action committees, and one (1) non-multicandidate political action committee as well as excessive contributions totaling \$19,000.00 from thirteen (13) corporate entities.” [Reports Analysis Division Referral to Office of General Counsel, Federal Election Commission, [9/17/15](#)]

- **Jan. 2015: Ernst's Campaign Filed Amended 2014 October Quarterly Report Disclosing Data Entry Corrections And Timely Redesignations And Reattributions Totaling Over \$109,000.** "On January 5, 2015, the Committee filed an Amended 2014 October Quarterly Report (Image 15020012456). The report disclosed data entry corrections and timely redesignations and reattributions totaling \$109,233.25 for forty-eight (48) individuals and seven (7) multicandidate political action committees." [Reports Analysis Division Referral to Office of General Counsel, Federal Election Commission, [9/17/15](#)]
- **Jan. 2015: Amended Report Clarified The Permissibility Of Contributions From 10 Entities Initially Questioned As Part Of 13 Corporate Entities.** "On January 5, 2015, the Committee filed an Amended 2014 October Quarterly Report (Image 15020012456). The report disclosed data entry corrections and timely redesignations and reattributions totaling \$109,233.25 for forty-eight (48) individuals and seven (7) multicandidate political action committees. The report also clarified the permissibility of contributions totaling \$17,250.00 for ten (10) entities. In addition, the report disclosed contributions designated for the 2014 Primary Election that were received after the date of the Primary Election and which appeared to exceed the Committee's net debts for the 2014 Primary Election by \$46,909.82." [Reports Analysis Division Referral to Office of General Counsel, Federal Election Commission, [9/17/15](#)]

2014 30-Day Post General Report: Ernst's Campaign Accepted \$24,115 In Excessive Contributions From 22 Individuals And One PAC And Failed To Refund, Redesignate, Or Reattribute Them In A Timely Manner. "During the 2014 30 Day Post-General Reporting period, the Committee received excessive contributions totaling \$24,115.00 from twenty-two (22) individuals and one (1) multicandidate political action committee that were not redesignated, reattributed, or refunded within the permissible timeframe (Attachment 2)." [Reports Analysis Division Referral to Office of General Counsel, Federal Election Commission, [9/17/15](#)]

The Reports Analysis Division (RAD) Of The FEC Found That Ernst's Campaign Failed To Refund, Reattribute, Or Redesignate \$37,190 In Excessive And Prohibited Contributions In A Timely Manner – Including Prohibited Contributions From 3 Corporate Entities. "Joni for Iowa ('the Committee') received excessive and prohibited contributions totaling \$37,190.00 for the 2014 General Election from 26 (26) individuals, one (1) partnership, one (1) multicandidate political action committee, one (1) non-multicandidate political action committee, and three (3) corporate entities. The committee did not timely refund, reattribute, or redesignate these excessive and prohibited contributions." [Reports Analysis Division Referral to Office of General Counsel, Federal Election Commission, [9/17/15](#)]

- **2014 October Quarterly Report: Ernst's Campaign Received \$11,325 In Excessive Contributions From Four Individuals, One Partnership, And One PAC, And Failed To Refund, Redesignate, Or Reattribute Them In A Timely Manner.** "During the 2014 October Quarterly reporting period, the Committee received excessive contributions totaling \$11,325 from four (4) individuals, one (1) partnership, and one (1) non-multicandidate political action committee that were not redesigned, reattributed, or refunded within the permissible timeframe as well as prohibited contributions totaling \$1,750 from three (3) corporate entities that were not refunded within the permissible time frame (Attachment 2)." [Reports Analysis Division Referral to Office of General Counsel, Federal Election Commission, [9/17/15](#)]
- **2014 October Quarterly Report: Ernst's Campaign Accepted \$1,750 In Prohibited Corporate Contributions And Failed To Refund, Redesignate, Or Reattribute Them In A Timely Manner.** "During the 2014 October Quarterly reporting period, the Committee received excessive contributions totaling \$11,325 from four (4) individuals, one (1) partnership, and one (1) non-multicandidate political action committee that were not redesigned, reattributed, or refunded within the permissible timeframe as well as prohibited contributions totaling \$1,750 from three (3) corporate entities that were not refunded within the permissible time frame (Attachment 2)." [Reports Analysis Division Referral to Office of General Counsel, Federal Election Commission, [9/17/15](#)]
- **2014 30-Day Post General Report: Ernst's Campaign Accepted \$24,115 In Excessive Contributions From 22 Individuals And One PAC And Failed To Refund, Redesignate, Or Reattribute Them In A Timely Manner.** "During the 2014 30 Day Post-General Reporting period, the Committee received excessive contributions totaling \$24,115.00 from twenty-two (22) individuals and one (1) multicandidate political action committee that were not redesignated, reattributed, or refunded within the permissible timeframe (Attachment 2)." [Reports Analysis Division Referral to Office of General Counsel, Federal Election Commission, [9/17/15](#)]

INCLUDING ILLEGAL CONTRIBUTIONS FROM CORPORATIONS

Iowa Starting Line: FEC Found Ernst's Campaign Took "Illegal Contributions And Fail[ed] To Property Refund Them In A Timely Manner." "In addition to the illegal contributions and failure to properly refund them in a timely manner, the FEC also found Ernst's campaign did not accurately disclose debts on its original 2014 July Quarterly Report. An

amended filing for the July report was filed on October 15, which included the debts, but was well after when such debts were supposed to be disclosed.” [Iowa Starting Line, [10/12/19](#)]

2014 October Quarterly Report: Ernst’s Campaign Accepted \$1,750 In Prohibited Corporate Contributions And Failed To Refund, Redesignate, Or Reattribute Them In A Timely Manner. “During the 2014 October Quarterly reporting period, the Committee received excessive contributions totaling \$11,325 from four (4) individuals, one (1) partnership, and one (1) non-multicandidate political action committee that were not redesignated, reattributed, or refunded within the permissible timeframe as well as prohibited contributions totaling \$1,750 from three (3) corporate entities that were not refunded within the permissible time frame (Attachment 2).” [Reports Analysis Division Referral to Office of General Counsel, Federal Election Commission, [9/17/15](#)]

- **Under Federal Election Law, Campaigns Were Prohibited From Accepting Contributions From Corporations.** “Campaigns are prohibited from accepting contributions from certain types of organizations and individuals. These prohibited sources are: Corporations, including nonprofit corporations (although funds from a corporate separate segregated fund are permissible) Labor organizations (although funds from a separate segregated fund are permissible) Federal government contractors Foreign nationals Contributions in the name of another” [FEC, [Who Can And Can't Contribute](#)]
- **FEC: Prohibited Contributions Must Be Refunded Within 30 Days Of Receipt Of Contribution.** “Prohibited contributions Questionable source If a committee treasurer deposits a contribution that appears to come from a prohibited source, he or she has 30 days from the date of the contribution’s receipt to: Confirm the legality of the contribution; or Refund the contribution. As evidence of legality, the treasurer should obtain a written statement from the contributor explaining why the contribution is legal. Alternatively, the treasurer may obtain an oral explanation by telephone and keep a written record of the conversation.” [FEC, Handling A Questionable Contribution, Accessed [10/30/19](#); Conciliation Agreement, In the matter of Joni for Iowa and Cabell Hobbs in his official capacity as Treasurer, MUR 7200, Federal Election Commission, filed [8/11/17](#)]

Ernst’s Campaign Took \$1,000 From Superior Steel & Concrete Construction, A Prohibited Source, And Took 71 Days To Refund The Contribution.

Contributor Name	Date	Contribution Amount	Election	Excessive/Prohibited Amount Received During Reporting Period ¹ & Not Refunded Within Timeframe	Excessive/Prohibited Amount Refunded Outside of Timeframe	Refunded # Days Since Receipt
Superior Steel & Concrete Construction ²	9/25/2014	\$1,000.00	G, 2014			
Superior Steel and Concrete Construction	12/5/2014	-\$1,000.00	G, 2014	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	71

⁴ The Committee indicated in its Amended 2014 October Quarterly Report submission, received on 1/5/15, that this entity is a prohibited source.

⁵ The Committee indicated in its Amended 2014 October Quarterly Report submission, received on 1/5/15, that this entity is a prohibited source.

[Reports Analysis Division Referral to Office of General Counsel, Federal Election Commission, [9/17/15](#)]

Ernst’s Campaign Accepted \$500 From Fast Fox Courier Service, A Prohibited Source, And Took 101 Days To Refund The Contribution.

Contributor Name	Date	Contribution Amount	Election	Excessive/Prohibited Amount Received During Reporting Period ¹ & Not Refunded Within Timeframe	Excessive/Prohibited Amount Refunded Outside of Timeframe	Refunded # Days Since Receipt
Fast Fox Courier Service ³	8/22/2014	\$500.00	G, 2014			
Fast Fox Courier Service	12/1/2014	-\$500.00	G, 2014	\$500.00	\$500.00	101

¹ This includes only the excessive amount for contributions disclosed on the above report.

² The Committee confirmed in its Amended 2014 October Quarterly Report submission, received on 1/5/15, that this entity is treated as a partnership.

³ The Committee indicated in its Amended 2014 October Quarterly Report submission, received on 1/5/15, that this entity is a prohibited source.

[Reports Analysis Division Referral to Office of General Counsel, Federal Election Commission, [9/17/15](#)]

Ernst’s Campaign accepted \$250 From Forbs Export Services LLC, A Prohibited Source, And Took 70 Days To Refund The Contribution.

Contributor Name	Date	Contribution Amount	Election	Excessive/Prohibited Amount Received During Reporting Period ¹ & Not Refunded Within Timeframe	Excessive/Prohibited Amount Refunded Outside of Timeframe	Refunded # Days Since Receipt

Forbs Export Services LLC ⁴	9/22/2014	\$250.00	G, 2014			
Forbs Export Services LLC	12/1/2014	-\$250.00	G, 2014	\$250.00	\$250.00	70

⁴ The Committee indicated in its Amended 2014 October Quarterly Report submission, received on 1/5/15, that this entity is a prohibited source.
⁵ The Committee indicated in its Amended 2014 October Quarterly Report submission, received on 1/5/15, that this entity is a prohibited source.

[Reports Analysis Division Referral to Office of General Counsel, Federal Election Commission, [9/17/15](#)]

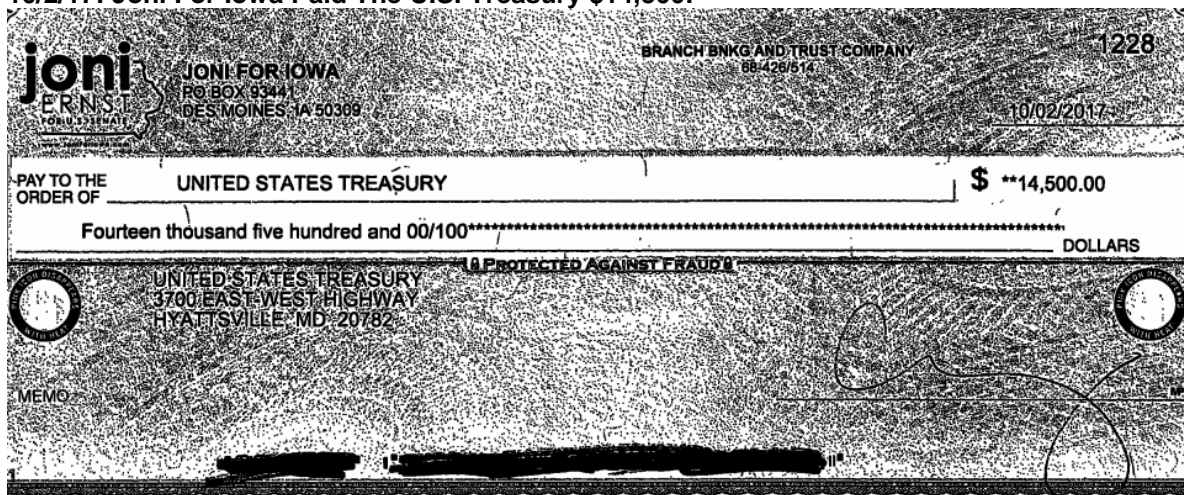
AND WAS FORCED TO PAY THE LARGEST PENALTY EVER FOR AN IOWA POLITICIAN

8/11/17: Ernst's Campaign Was Ordered To Pay \$14,500 By The FEC For Failing To Accurately Disclose Its Debts And Knowingly Accepting Excessive And Prohibited Contributions And Failing To Timely Refund Them. "1. Respondent violated 52 U.S.C § 30104(b)(8) by failing to accurately disclose debts on its original 2014 July Quarterly Report. 2. Respondent violated 52 U.S.C. §30116(f) and 30118 by knowingly accepting excessive and prohibited contributions, and by failing to timely refund excessive and prohibited contributions. VI. 1. Respondent will pay a civil penalty to the Commission in the amount of Fourteen Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$14,500) pursuant to 52 U.S.C. § 30109(a)(5)(A)." [Conciliation Agreement, In the matter of Joni for Iowa and Cabell Hobbs in his official capacity as Treasurer, MUR 7200, Federal Election Commission, filed [8/11/17](#)]

Ernst Was Ordered To Pay Largest Civil Penalty In Iowa History. According to FEC, among all declared candidates seeking federal office in Iowa, the civil penalty of \$14,500 levied on Joni For Iowa was the highest amount enforced and paid by a committee. [Independent Review of FEC, [Enforcement Query System](#)]

Iowa Starting Line: Ernst's Campaign Paid "The Largest Civil Penalty Ever Levied By The Federal Election Commission Against And Iowa Politician." "Sen. Joni Ernst's 2014 campaign paid the largest civil penalty ever levied by the Federal Election Commission against an Iowa politician, according to previously unreported commission records. In 2017, the FEC found Ernst's first campaign for Senate broke the law by 'knowingly accepting excessive and prohibited contributions, and by failing to timely refund excessive and prohibited contributions.' The FEC fined Ernst's committee, 'Joni for Iowa,' \$14,500 for campaign finance violations. According to FEC records, it received the payment from her committee in October 2017." [Iowa Starting Line, [10/12/19](#)]

10/2/17: Joni For Iowa Paid The U.S. Treasury \$14,500.



[Civil Penalty Payment Record, Federal Election Commission, [10/4/17](#)]

NOW THE ASSOCIATED PRESS HAS REPORTED THAT ERNST BROKE ANTI-CORRUPTION LAWS BY ILLEGALLY COORDINATING WITH A DARK MONEY GROUP CREATED BY HER TOP POLITICAL AIDES TO BOOST HER RE-ELECTION

Associated Press: Political Nonprofits (AKA, "Dark Money" Groups) Must Take Steps To Keep Their Activities Separate From Candidates They Support, Cannot Make Political Work Their Primary Purpose. "Political nonprofits are often referred to as "dark money" groups because they can raise unlimited sums and are not required to reveal their donors. But they must take steps to keep their activities separate from the candidates they support. Additionally, while such tax-exempt groups can do political work, they can't make it their primary purpose." [Associated Press, [12/6/19](#)]

Associated Press: Dark Money Groups Were “Supposed To Be Run Independently,” But The “Degree Of Overlap” Between Ernst And Iowa Values Potentially Violated The Law. “An outside group founded by top political aides to Sen. Joni Ernst has worked closely with the Iowa Republican to raise money and boost her reelection prospects, a degree of overlap that potentially violates the law, documents obtained by The Associated Press show. Iowa Values, a political nonprofit that is supposed to be run independently, was co-founded in 2017 by Ernst’s longtime consultant, Jon Kohan. It shares a fundraiser, Claire Holloway Avella, with the Ernst campaign. And a condo owned by a former aide — who was recently hired to lead the group — was used as Iowa Values’ address at a time when he worked for her. Political nonprofits are often referred to as ‘dark money’ groups because they can raise unlimited sums and are not required to reveal their donors. But they must take steps to keep their activities separate from the candidates they support.” [Associated Press, [12/6/19](#)]

Overlap In Personnel:

Iowa Values Was Founded By Three Long-Time Political Aides To Ernst, While They Were On Her Campaign Payroll. “Iowa Values, a political nonprofit that is supposed to be run independently, was co-founded in 2017 by Ernst’s longtime consultant, Jon Kohan. It shares a fundraiser, Claire Holloway Avella, with the Ernst campaign. And a condo owned by a former aide — who was recently hired to lead the group — was used as Iowa Values’ address at a time when he worked for her.” [Associated Press, [12/6/19](#)]

- **Iowa Values Was “Founded By Top Political Aides” To Ernst.** “An outside group founded by top political aides to Sen. Joni Ernst has worked closely with the Iowa Republican to raise money and boost her reelection prospects, a degree of overlap that potentially violates the law, documents obtained by The Associated Press show.” [Associated Press, [12/6/19](#)]
- **Fundraiser Claire Holloway Avella Was “Deeply Involved In Both Operations” And Iowa Values Lists Her Office Address As Its Business Address On Its Registration In DC.** “Holloway Avella raised about \$520,000 for Iowa Values in [2017](#) and [2018](#), tax records show. The group lists her Arlington, Virginia, office as one of its business addresses and paid her about \$60,000. Ernst paid her an additional \$363,000 those years, record show... After Ernst launched her reelection campaign, Holloway Avella was deeply involved with both operations. Holloway Avella’s website lets prospective donors request to host a fundraiser for the senator. And invitations for several recent Ernst events list her as an organizer, including two held in September at Bistro Bis, a French eatery a few blocks from the U.S. Capitol. Around the same time, Holloway Avella was seeking donations for Iowa Values from prominent Ernst supporter.” [Associated Press, [12/6/19](#)]
- **Jon Kohan, Ernst’s Top Political Consultant, Was Paid By Ernst’s Campaign While Serving As The Executive Director Of Iowa Values For Two Years.** “Kohan, a former Ernst deputy chief of staff who is now a general consultant to her campaign, was paid \$120,000 to serve as executive director of Iowa Values for two years, according to the group’s tax filings. He left the group earlier this year. Jamestown Associates, where he is a named partner, also collected an additional \$101,000 from Ernst’s campaign in the years he served as executive director.” [Associated Press, [12/6/19](#)]
- **Derek Flowers, Ernst’s First Campaign Manager In Her Run For Senate, Is the Current Executive Director Of Iowa Values And Was Paid By Ernst’s Campaign While His Condo Was Being Used As An Office By Iowa Values.** “The group listed a Waukee, Iowa, condo owned by Flowers as another business address in 2017, records show. Flowers was campaign manager during Ernst’s 2014 Senate primary. A company called Midland Strategies, which has been paid \$145,000 by Ernst since 2013, also listed Flowers’ condo as a business address. Flowers succeeded Kohan as the group’s executive director this year.” [Associated Press, [12/6/19](#)]

Documents Obtained By The Associated Press Showed “Ernst And Her Campaign Worked In Close Concert” With A Dark Money Group Aimed At Boosting Her Reelection Prospects And Securing An Ernst Win In 2020. “An outside group founded by top political aides to Sen. Joni Ernst has worked closely with the Iowa Republican to raise money and boost her reelection prospects, a degree of overlap that potentially violates the law, documents obtained by The Associated Press show. [...] The documents reviewed by the AP, including emails and a strategy memo, not only make clear that the group’s aim is securing an Ernst win in 2020, but they also show Ernst and her campaign worked in close concert with Iowa Values.” [Associated Press, [12/6/19](#)]

- **Associated Press: Iowa Values “Worked Closely” With Ernst.** “An outside group founded by top political aides to Sen. Joni Ernst has worked closely with the Iowa Republican to raise money and boost her reelection prospects, a degree of overlap that potentially violates the law, documents obtained by The Associated Press show. Iowa Values, a political nonprofit that is supposed to be run independently, was co-founded in 2017 by Ernst’s longtime consultant, Jon Kohan.” [Associated Press, [12/6/19](#)]

- **July 2019: Holloway Avella, A Fundraiser Working For Both Ernst's Campaign And Iowa Values Solicited \$50,000 From Donor Pledging It Would Be Used By Iowa Values To Help Ernst's Reelection.** "In July, Holloway Avella requested 'an investment of \$50,000' from a donor after Ernst made an introduction. She made clear in an email, which was obtained by the AP, how much a contribution of that size could help. 'As a follow up to our introduction by Senator Ernst, I am reaching out to you on behalf of Iowa Values,' she wrote. 'As you may have seen, an outside group on the left ... recently launched a six-figure ad buy in media markets across the state attacking Senator Ernst on her vote to repeal Obamacare,' she continued. 'The purpose of our group, Iowa Values, is to push back against these type of negative attacks.'" [Associated Press, [12/6/19](#)]
- **Ernst Personally Made The Introduction Between Iowa Values' Fundraiser And Prospective Donor.** "In July, Holloway Avella requested 'an investment of \$50,000' from a donor after Ernst made an introduction. She made clear in an email, which was obtained by the AP, how much a contribution of that size could help. 'As a follow up to our introduction by Senator Ernst, I am reaching out to you on behalf of Iowa Values,' she wrote." [Associated Press, [12/6/19](#)]
- **Associated Press: Holloway Avella Was "Deeply Involved" In Both Ernst's Campaign And Iowa Values Fundraising Efforts In Summer 2019.** "After Ernst launched her reelection campaign, Holloway Avella was deeply involved with both operations. Holloway Avella's website lets prospective donors request to host a fundraiser for the senator. And invitations for several recent Ernst events list her as an organizer, including two held in September at Bistro Bis, a French eatery a few blocks from the U.S. Capitol. Around the same time, Holloway Avella was seeking donations for Iowa Values from prominent Ernst supporters, like dieting entrepreneur Jenny Craig and San Francisco philanthropist Diane 'Dede' Wilsey. Craig previously gave \$30,000 to Ernst; Wilsey donated \$46,000." [Associated Press, [12/6/19](#)]
- **Jon Kohan, Ernst's Former Deputy Chief Of Staff And Current Ernst Campaign Consultant Was Paid \$120,000 To Serve As Executive Director Of Iowa Values For Two Years.** "Kohan, a former Ernst deputy chief of staff who is now a general consultant to her campaign, was paid \$120,000 to serve as executive director of Iowa Values for two years, according to the group's tax filings. He left the group earlier this year. Jamestown Associates, where he is a named partner, also collected an additional \$101,000 from Ernst's campaign in the years he served as executive director." [Associated Press, [12/6/19](#)]
- **Holloway Avella Raised \$520,000 For Iowa Values In 2017 And 2018.** "Holloway Avella raised about \$520,000 for Iowa Values in 2017 and 2018, tax records show. The group lists her Arlington, Virginia, office as one of its business addresses and paid her about \$60,000. Ernst paid her an additional \$363,000 those years, record show." [Associated Press, [12/6/19](#)]
- **Midland Strategies, A Group That Ernst's Campaign Paid \$145,000 Since 2013, Also Listed Flowers' Condo As A Business Address.** "A company called Midland Strategies, which has been paid \$145,000 by Ernst since 2013, also listed Flowers' condo as a business address. Flowers succeeded Kohan as the group's executive director this year." [Associated Press, [12/6/19](#)]
- **2019: Flowers Was The Executive Director Of Iowa Values.** "In a statement, Iowa Values executive director Derek Flowers said the organization has 'systems and controls in place to make certain that it complies with all laws' and is 'careful to follow all requirements that limit how much of its activities can be focused on supporting candidates.' [...] Flowers succeeded Kohan as the group's executive director this year." [Associated Press, [12/6/19](#)]

Strategy Memo:

Emails And A Strategy Memo Obtained By The Associated Press "Made Clear That The Group's Aim Is Securing An Ernst Win In 2020." "An outside group founded by top political aides to Sen. Joni Ernst has worked closely with the Iowa Republican to raise money and boost her reelection prospects, a degree of overlap that potentially violates the law, documents obtained by The Associated Press show. [...] The documents reviewed by the AP, including emails and a strategy memo, not only make clear that the group's aim is securing an Ernst win in 2020, but they also show Ernst and her campaign worked in close concert with Iowa Values." [Associated Press, [12/6/19](#)]

- **Associated Press: Iowa Values Strategy Memo Said They Would Build A "Firewall" That Could Be The Difference "Between Winning And Losing In 2020 For Senator Ernst."** "Separately, a strategy memo states the group will use door-knocking, as well as TV, radio and digital advertising, to build a "firewall" that could be the difference "between winning and losing in 2020 for Senator Ernst." The group is targeting about 120,000 Iowans who "lean Republican on the issues" but abandon the party at times over "the tone of the GOP." [Associated Press, [12/6/19](#)]

- **Strategy Memo Also Said Iowa Values Would Target Iowans Who “Lean Republican On The Issues” But Abandon The Party At Times Over “The Tone Of The GOP.”** “Separately, a strategy memo states the group will use door-knocking, as well as TV, radio and digital advertising, to build a “firewall” that could be the difference “between winning and losing in 2020 for Senator Ernst.” The group is targeting about 120,000 Iowans who “lean Republican on the issues” but abandon the party at times over ‘the tone of the GOP.’” [Associated Press, [12/6/19](#)]
- **Iowa Values Own Strategy Memo Specifically Said It Wanted To Do “Critical Work With Segments Of The Electorate” In 2019 So That “Senator Ernst Has The Best Possible Jumping Off Point In 2020.”** “Iowa Values will pick up the task of GOTV in 2020 in addition to the continued focus on ‘Disengagers’. Ultimately, we will build a complete campaign that would include smart television and radio buys. We believe that there is critical work with segments of the electorate that must begin now in 2019 so that Senator Ernst has the best possible jumping off point in 2020.” [Iowa Values Strategy Memo, [via AP](#)]
- **Iowa Values Said The “Basis” Of Its Mission Was To “Shore Up” The Voters From “Senator Ernst’s Winning Coalition In 2014.”** “Senator Ernst won Iowa in 2014 by 94,205 votes in what was a good year for Republicans. These 126,407 voters are primarily from Senator Ernst’s winning coalition in 2014 and the most vulnerable to being peeled off in 2020. The basis of our mission is to shore up those voters through sustained direct communications.” [Iowa Values Strategy Memo, [via AP](#)]
- **Iowa Values Said It Would “[P]ick Up The Task Of GOTV [Get Out The Vote] In 2020.”** “In 2020 Iowa Values will continue to monitor the electorate as it changes throughout the election cycle. This will allow us to make sure we are putting resources in front of the most critical voters even as the electorate changes and to measure the effectiveness of our own programs. Iowa Values will pick up the task of GOTV in 2020 in addition to the continued focus on ‘Disengagers’” [Iowa Values Strategy Memo, [via AP](#)]

Experts:

Cedar Rapids Gazette Fact Check: Iowa Democratic Party Claim That “Experts Accuse [Ernst] Of Breaking The Law,” Was Rated “A.” “We will look at these claims from the minute-and-a-half ad: ‘Ernst voted for a tax bill that benefited wealthy corporations and added trillions to the debt;’ ‘Sen. Ernst also voted to repeal the Affordable Care Act and gut protections for the 1.3 million Iowans with a preexisting condition;’ and ‘experts accuse her of breaking the law.’ [...] The Iowa Democratic Party accurately stated the Iowa senator’s votes in favor of the tax bill that benefited wealthy corporations, including John Deere, but also among other taxpayers. The ad accurately portrays how Ernst’s support of repealing the Affordable Care Act would impact those with preexisting conditions, including thousands of Iowans. The ad also accurately stated ‘experts accuse her of breaking the law,’ although no official ruling has been made on whether election campaign violations occurred. Overall, Fact Checker gives these specific claims contained in the ad an A.” [Cedar Rapids Gazette, Fact Check, [4/13/20](#)]

Associated Press: “Experts Say The Documents Offer Proof The Effort Violates The Spirit Of Campaign Finance And Tax Law, If Not The Letter Of It.” “Taken together, some legal experts say the documents offer proof that the effort violates the spirit of campaign finance and tax law, if not the letter of it. ‘It seems like pretty strong evidence’ that the \$50,000 request was for an ‘illegal donation’ while it’s ‘clear that the goal of Iowa Values is to reelect Joni Ernst, which may violate its tax-exempt status,’ said Brendan Fischer, an attorney with the nonpartisan Campaign Legal Center in Washington.” [Associated Press, [12/6/19](#)]

Larry Noble, Former General Counsel To The FEC: “The Bottom Line Is That This Is Really Questionable.” “Larry Noble, a former general counsel to the FEC who served under both Republican and Democratic administrations. Noble said he would need more details before assessing whether Ernst’s campaign broke the law. But, he added: ‘The bottom line is that this is really questionable.’” [Associated Press, [12/6/19](#)]

Brendan Fischer, Campaign Legal Center Attorney, Said That Iowa Values’ \$50,000 Donation Request Was “Pretty Strong Evidence” For An Illegal Donation. “‘It seems like pretty strong evidence’ that the \$50,000 request was for an ‘illegal donation’ while it’s ‘clear that the goal of Iowa Values is to reelect Joni Ernst, which may violate its tax-exempt status,’ said Brendan Fischer, an attorney with the nonpartisan Campaign Legal Center in Washington.” [Associated Press, [12/6/19](#)]

- **Iowa Values Fundraiser Claire Holloway Avella Requested An “Investment Of \$50,000” From A Donor To Iowa Values After Ernst Made An Introduction.** “In July, Holloway Avella requested ‘an investment of \$50,000’ from a donor after Ernst made an introduction. She made clear in an email, which was obtained by the AP, how much a contribution of that size could help. ‘As a follow up to our introduction by Senator Ernst, I am reaching out to you on behalf of Iowa Values,’ she wrote. ‘As you may have seen, an outside group on the left ... recently launched a six-figure ad buy in media markets across the state attacking Senator Ernst on her vote to repeal Obamacare,’ she

continued. 'The purpose of our group, Iowa Values, is to push back against these type of negative attacks.'" [Associated Press, [12/6/19](#)]

Complaints:

Nonpartisan Election Watchdog Campaign Legal Center Filed Complaint Against Ernst Arguing That Ernst And Her Political Team That Founded Iowa Values "Violated Campaign Finance Law In Its Effort To Improve The Republican's Chance Of Reelection Next Year. "An election watchdog filed a complaint Thursday alleging than an outside group founded by top political aides to Iowa Sen. Joni Ernst violated campaign finance law in its effort improve the Republican's chance of reelection next year. The complaint, filed with the Federal Election Commission by the nonpartisan Campaign Legal Center, comes after The Associated Press reported earlier this month that Ernst's work with the political nonprofit Iowa Values to raise money and build an electoral "firewall" potentially violated campaign finance and tax law." [Associated Press, [12/19/19](#)]

- **Campaign Legal Center Is Led By Trevor Potter, Former Republican Chair Of The FEC, General Counsel To McCain's 2000 And 2008 Presidential Campaigns.** "Trevor Potter is the founder and President of Campaign Legal Center. He is a former Chairman of the Federal Election Commission, and was General Counsel to John McCain's 2000 and 2008 presidential campaigns, and an adviser to the drafters of the McCain-Feingold law." [Campaign Legal Center, [Trevor Potter](#)]
- **Campaign Legal Center Argued That Internal Iowa Values Documents "Show The Group's Major Purpose Is Political Activity" Which "Violates The Conditions Of Its Tax-Exempt Status."** "The complaint requests that the FEC launch an investigation. It also argues that internal Iowa Values documents revealed by the AP show the group's major purpose is political activity. That likely violates the conditions of its tax-exempt status while breaking campaign finance laws that obligate the group to register as a political committee with the FEC and disclose its anonymous donors, the watchdog said. 'There is little evidence of Iowa Values engaging in any activities in 2019 other than those aimed at influencing Ernst's reelection,' the Campaign Legal Center wrote in the complaint." [Associated Press, [12/19/19](#)]
- **Campaign Legal Center Also Argued That Ernst And Her Political Operation Were "Breaking Campaign Finance Laws That Obligate The Group To Register As A Political Committee With The FEC And Disclose Its Anonymous Donations."** "The complaint requests that the FEC launch an investigation. It also argues that internal Iowa Values documents revealed by the AP show the group's major purpose is political activity. That likely violates the conditions of its tax-exempt status while breaking campaign finance laws that obligate the group to register as a political committee with the FEC and disclose its anonymous donors, the watchdog said. 'There is little evidence of Iowa Values engaging in any activities in 2019 other than those aimed at influencing Ernst's reelection,' the Campaign Legal Center wrote in the complaint." [Associated Press, [12/19/19](#)]

Nonprofit Election Watchdog Campaign For Accountability Filed Complaint Against Ernst Over Her And Her Campaign's Ties To Iowa Values. "A second watchdog group announced today it filed a complaint with the Federal Election Commission in response to reporting about Sen. Joni Ernst's ties to an Iowa-based "dark money" organization. The nonprofit Campaign for Accountability (CfA) asked the FEC in a letter to investigate the campaign's ties to Iowa Values, a 501 (c)(4) allegedly working with Ernst to help reelect her to the Senate." [Iowa Starting Line, [12/16/19](#)]

Campaign For Accountability Argued That Ernst And Her Team Illegally Coordinated With Iowa Values And That Ernst Appeared To Have Directed Her Campaign Aides To Run A Shadow Campaign Operation. "Campaign finance laws forbid political nonprofits like Iowa Values from directly coordinating with politicians or making advocacy for a candidate a central part of their operations. 'Federal campaign finance laws explicitly outlaw attempts by elected officials to circumvent disclosure laws by raising money for outside dark money groups,' said Daniel Stevens, executive director of the Campaign for Accountability, in a statement. 'Sen. Ernst appears to have directed her campaign aides to run a shadow campaign operation through a nonprofit that doesn't have to disclose its donors.'" [Iowa Starting Line, [12/16/19](#)]

CfA Complaint: "Only One Rational Conclusion: That These Consultants With Close Ties To Sen. Ernst...Were Acting As Agents Of Sen. Ernst When They Started Iowa Values."

21. The facts lead to only one rational conclusion: that these consultants with close ties to Sen. Ernst, who were all working for paid consultants of Sen. Ernst's campaign, were acting as

³⁸ See 2017 Iowa Values 990; FEC.gov, Search for Disbursements to Jamestown Associates from Joni for Iowa and Jobs Opportunity and New Ideas PAC. https://www.fec.gov/data/disbursements/?data_type=processed&committee_id=C00546788&committee_id=C00566851&recipient_name=jamestown (last accessed Dec. 10, 2019).

³⁹ See Exhibit A.

⁴⁰ FEC.gov, Search of Disbursements to Holloway Consulting from Joni for Iowa, Ernst Victory, Ernst Victory Fund, Ernst Victory Iowa, Jobs Opportunity and New Ideas PAC. https://www.fec.gov/data/disbursements/?data_type=processed&committee_id=C00546788&committee_id=C00566851&committee_id=C00566284&committee_id=C00571927&committee_id=C00610428&recipient_name=hollowayconsulting&min_date=01%2F01%2F2014&max_date=07%2F09%2F2019 (last accessed Dec. 10, 2019).

agents of Sen. Ernst when they started Iowa Values in order to support her campaign.

Accordingly, the available evidence suggests that Sen. Ernst, through her agents, established Iowa Values.

[Campaign For Accountability, [12/12/19](#)]

CfA Complaint: "Ernst And Her Agents Have Illegally Established A Dark Money Entity That Is Raising And Spending Funds Outside Of Federal Limits To Support Her Re-Election Campaign In Plain Violation" Of Campaign Finance Laws.

25. Accordingly, based on the available evidence, it appears likely that Sen. Ernst and her agents have illegally established a dark money entity that is raising and spending funds outside of the federal limits to support her re-election campaign in plain violation of 52 U.S.C. § 30125(e)(1).

[Campaign For Accountability, [12/12/19](#)]

NEWS CLIPS

12/6/19: KCCI. "[Anchor]: In her campaign for election, Iowa Senator Republican Joni Ernst and her aides are being accused of being associated with dark money groups. That's what some people call a political nonprofit since they can raise unlimited amounts of cash without having to report who their donors are. A report from the Associated Press says the nonprofit Iowa Values was created by Ernst's longtime consultant. The AP says documents that it has reviewed, including memos and emails, make it clear the groups aim is to help Senator Ernst win in 2020. We contact the Senators office this afternoon. A Senior advisor told us her campaign is separate from any outside organization, and quote 'for the AP to suggest otherwise is the definition of fake news.'" [KCCI, [12/6/19](#)] (VIDEO)

12/6/19: KCAU. "[Anchor]: Fundraising efforts by Iowa Senator Joni Ernst are being called into question tonight. A report by the Associated Press ties Ernst to an outside group founded by one of her political aides. The association may have overstepped campaign finance laws. Iowa Values is a nonpolitical political profit group founded in 2017. The report by the Associate Press reviewed emails and strategy memos from Iowa Values which stated the groups aim was to ensure Ernst's reelection in 2020. Political nonprofits are... referred to dark money groups because they are not required to reveal their donors. However, they cannot make political work their primary purpose. It's worth mentioning that Ernst is not the first politician to push fundraising boundaries. KCAU news reached out to the Senator this afternoon. In a statement, advisor Brook Ramlet told us, 'our campaign always has and always will act in the full compliance with and in the spirit of the law. For the AP to suggest otherwise is the definition of fake news.'" [KCAU, [12/6/19](#)] (VIDEO)

12/6/19: KWWL. [Anchor]: Political scene tonight - Document obtained by the Associated Press are revealing tonight that an outside group -- an outside organization, outside of Iowa has been working closely with U.S. Senator Joni Ernst to raise money for Ernst and try and boost her re-election prospects. [Anchor 2]: Emails show an Ernst campaign funder [fundraiser] asked a donor for \$50,000 for that outside group following an introduction by the Senator. Now some attorneys say request could cross the legal line because she was working on the Ernst's behalf. Now Ernst's attorneys say that they followed the law. [KWWL, [12/6/19](#)] (VIDEO)

12/6/19: KGAN. "[Anchor]: Developing right now, Senator Joni Ernst is under the microscope accused of having ties to Dark Money. The Associate Press reports top aides to Ernst created a nonprofit group -- it's called Iowa Values. It's purpose, raise money and boost her re-election campaign. The group is facing backlash, why? They can raise unlimited

money and they are not required to reveal their donors. Campaign finance laws bar candidates and their staff from soliciting more than \$2,800 in contributions from a donor. Now, according to the AP Claire Holloway Avella asked a donor for a \$50,000 -- for Iowa Values. She is Ernst's staffer. A lawyer for Ernst says they followed the law." [KGAN, [12/6/19](#)] (VIDEO)

12/6/19: KGAN. "[Anchor]: New at noon. New documents are showing dark money ties to Iowa Senator Joni Ernst. The Associate Press obtained documents that say her campaign reelection staff worked with a nonprofit, Iowa Values. These nonprofit groups can raise unlimited money and they're not required to reveal their donors. A campaign finance law says that a candidate and their staff cannot spend contributions from a donor totaling more than \$2,800. Now the Associated Press found an Ernst staffer -- Claire Holloway Avella -- asked her donor for \$50,000 for that group. Ernst's attorneys say they followed the law, but some attorney's for Holloway Avella say she crossed the legal line because she was working on the senator's behalf." [KGAN, [12/6/19](#)] (VIDEO) Note: the anchor incorrectly stated that Holloway's attorneys said she crossed the legal line.

12/8/19: KWWL. "[Anchor]: And Iowa Senator Joni Ernst is responding to concerns about how she's raising money and boosting her re-election prospects. Email's obtained by the Associated Press show an Ernst campaign funder [fundraiser] ask a donor for \$50,000 for an outside group. This following an introduction by the Senator. Some attorneys say the request could cross the legal line because she was working on the Senators behalf. The Senators attorneys saying, they followed the law." [KWWL, [12/8/19](#)] (VIDEO)

HEADLINES

HEADLINE: "'Dark Money' Ties Raise Questions For GOP Sen. Ernst Of Iowa." [Associated Press, [12/6/19](#)]

HEADLINE: "Joni Ernst's Shady Reelection Efforts Scrutinized." [Daily KOS, [12/6/19](#)]

HEADLINE: "Watchdog Group Calls For FEC Investigation Of Joni Ernst's 'Dark Money' Ties." [Iowa Starting Line, [12/9/19](#)]

HEADLINE: "'It's A Pattern Of Flouting The Law': Not Ernst's 1st Brush With 'Dark Money'" [Iowa Starting Line, [12/6/19](#)]

HEADLINE: "Did Joni Ernst Break Election Law In Coordination Case?" [Iowa Starting Line, [12/15/19](#)]

HEADLINE: "Second Watchdog Group Files FEC Complaint Against Ernst." [Iowa Starting Line, [12/16/19](#)]