



[AIPAC's 2024 Dark Money Campaign Reaches Astronomical Levels at \\$100 Million](#)

Campaign money has long been a reliable indicator when making predictions on who will win an election. Multiple factors lead to political victory, including a candidate's policies, personality, and viewpoints. However, numerous studies have shown that candidates who spend the most money on their campaigns typically win their respective races. Campaign spending allows candidates to hire more staffers, run more ads, and generally get their name out to the public. Given the importance of money in politics, it is no surprise that running for office often necessitates raising money to attack and combat one's electoral opponent, and this leads candidates to trying to find donors who will support them. One of the most powerful lobbying groups is the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), which has large donors who are willing to support pro-Israel candidates in both primaries and general elections, and at the same time attempt to smear ones that justifiably criticize the actions and policies of the Israeli government. Against the backdrop of Israel's destructive War on Gaza, donors are particularly fervent and it was revealed that AIPAC spending is ramping up this year. This electoral cycle in 2024, AIPAC is expected to spend \$100 million across its political entities, aiming its funds at current Members of Congress up for re-election and candidates seeking office who have been critical towards Israel. The United Democracy Project (UDP), a super PAC linked with AIPAC, is monitoring between 15 and 20 U.S. House races and polling in those respective districts – showing just how far-reaching they plan to go to influence electoral outcomes.

Previous AIPAC efforts to unseat Members of Congress unfavorable towards Israel have often worked. This was evident in their 2022 midterm attempts, where AIPAC saw their backed candidates win six out of the eight primary races where they intervened – a success rate of 75%. According to OpenSecrets, AIPAC had spent around \$13.4 million in campaign contributions, and approximately \$2.7 million in lobbying efforts in the form of individual donations from members. Their 2024 plan calls for \$100 million in contributions, dwarfing the 2022 amount and aimed at increased levels of influence on electoral outcomes. Back in 2022, U.S. Representative Andy Levin (D-MI) was ousted from his seat after AIPAC spent \$4 million against him. AIPAC had targeted several progressive Democrats in the last cycle over their criticism of Israeli policies and actions. Levin advised Dave Min – a California Democrat running for an open U.S. House seat who has been targeted by AIPAC for his alleged private comments about Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu – suggesting that Min reach out to progressive Jewish groups and organizations. However, Levin was not overly optimistic, stating that most candidates could not survive being swamped by outside spending, and he is “afraid that they can be quite successful in wiping them out.” J Street, a progressive advocacy group that defended candidates against AIPAC attacks in the 2022 primaries, said that it will focus its \$10 million program on the general elections and not the primaries, due to its inability to match AIPAC dollar-for-dollar.

The War on Gaza has created divisions within the Democratic Party, and has led to invigorated fundraising by candidates with differing stances on the issue. U.S. Representative Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), a critic of Israel's military offensive in Gaza, raised \$3.7 million during the last 3 months of 2023. Meanwhile, UDP finished 2023 with around \$41 million, nearly double the entire spending program for the 2022 midterm electoral cycle. AIPAC contributed to U.S. Representative Rich McCormick's (R-GA) campaign, which proposed a resolution to censure Tlaib for allegedly using “anti-Semitic rhetoric while speaking out against U.S. aid to Israel” – a harmful and inaccurate tactic often deployed against those who criticize Israel which is aimed at dangerously trying to equate fair denunciation of

Israel with bigoted anti-Semitism. AIPAC also contributed to the campaigns of eleven out of the twelve Republican co-sponsors of the censure resolution.

All that has transpired in Gaza since last October has mobilized many donors to contribute more towards AIPAC and other pro-Israel groups. AIPAC has, thus far, given at least \$19 million to 2024 U.S. House and Senate campaigns, according to Politico analysis of campaign finance filings. Some of their funds have also gone towards running negative ads on deemed opponents, without mentioning their actual stance on Israel. AIPAC has reportedly spent over \$4.6 million on smear ads and mailers against Min alone, mentioning nothing of Min's position on Israel and instead bringing up a previous DUI arrest. As previous cycles show, AIPAC can serve as a negatively impactful group which puts elected officials and candidates seeking office who believe Israel's actions have been morally and lawfully unjust at risk politically. Members of "The Squad," a group of progressive U.S. House Democrats that have openly called for a ceasefire in Gaza, are among those who are being most prominently targeted by AIPAC. According to experts, U.S. Representatives Cori Bush (D-MO) and Jamaal Bowman (D-NY) are members of "The Squad" that are especially at risk due to their lower campaign funds compared to their opponents' larger AIPAC-endorsed ones. AIPAC's massive campaign contributions and attack tactics demonstrate the effect they can have on election outcomes, which serves as a detriment to the prospects of a fully fair and equitable electoral process. While many of those that bear the brunt of AIPAC's efforts cannot keep up financially, campaign strategists point out that they can still lean on their organizing strength and try to ensure that as many of their constituents as possible understand how toxic AIPAC has become.