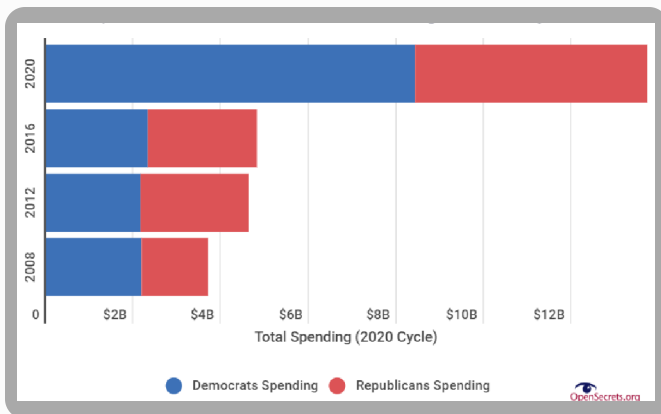




Civics is all around us. There is a lot to know about the government and how “We the People” interact with the government and each other. Let’s help each other expand our civic literacy.

In 1896, during the height of the presidential campaign, [Ohio Senator Mark Hannah declared](#), “**There are two things important in politics. The first is money, and I can’t remember the second.**”

In the more than a century since he uttered those words, there has been nothing that is likely more true than the fact that money matters when it comes to getting someone elected. In the 2020 race between Republican Donald Trump and Democrat Joe Biden, total spending on the presidential and congressional races was **14.4 billion dollars**. This was more than double the record-setting 6.5 billion spent in 2016. The **2024 race** is likely to be even more expensive.



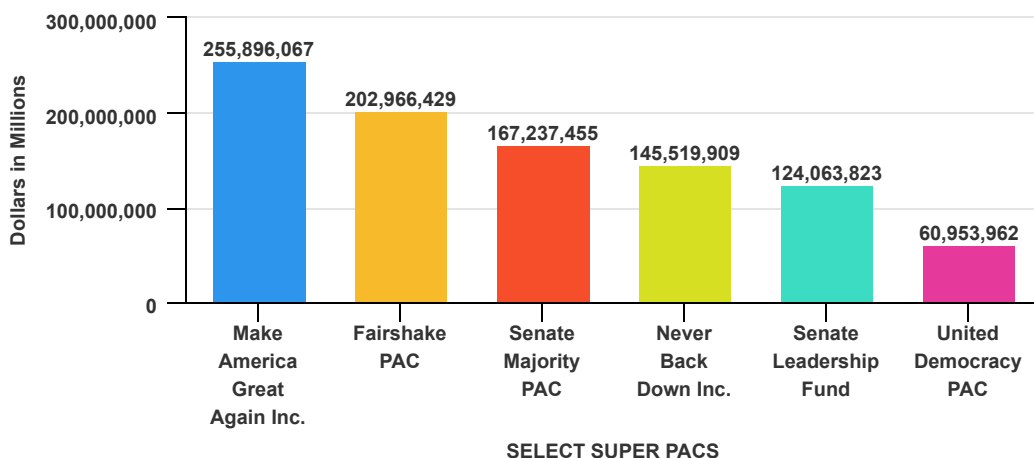
Federal law establishes limits on campaign contributions. For example, individuals may only donate \$3,300.00 to an individual candidate per election. There are also limits for groups. A candidate’s political action committee (PAC)

plays an extremely important role in raising campaign funds. This is an independent political organization that promotes the cause of a particular interest group, usually through raising money and campaigning to elect candidates who support the group's views. Typically, PACs may donate up to \$45,000 to a campaign.

While there are limits on how much PACs directly associated with a candidate may donate, ‘super PACs’ have no limit. These groups, often representing unions, corporations, or other organizations, are not directly connected to a candidate. Because of this, they may donate and spend an unlimited amount of money. The 2010 [Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission](#) Supreme Court decision ruled that political donations are a form of speech and protected under the First Amendment.. Campaign limits for ‘super PACs’ are therefore unconstitutional. In 2014, the Supreme Court reinforced the idea of political donations as First Amendment-protected speech with their decision in [McCutcheon v. FEC](#). This ruling struck down a law that placed total contribution caps an individual could contribute to all candidates, PACs, and parties combined.

In addition to the impact of Citizens United, candidates who do not accept **federal funding** for their campaigns do not have any limits on how much money **they can spend**. The costs of outreach to voters, ad campaigns, get-out-the-vote drives, and campaign travel add up to billions of dollars. This helps explain why we can expect the 2024 election to be the most **expensive ever**.

Super PAC Spending As of 9/17/2024



https://www.opensecrets.org/outside-spending/super_pacs

To Think and To Do:

Evidence shows that it can cost billions of dollars to run for President of the United States. How might this fact impact the efforts of third-party candidates who are not Democrats or Republicans to succeed in running for office?

Learn MORE about campaign spending

- [Influencing the Government](#), from Civics360
- [Public Funding of Campaigns](#), from Federal Election Commission
- [Digital Spending by Campaigns](#), from Bully Pulpit Interactive



Take Part in the 2024 Mock Election!
If you are in Florida, join us with [KidsVotingFlorida!](#)

Somewhere else?

Check out [DoubleClick Democracy](#)



Lou Frey Institute