



November 2015

Union Political Spending in the 2015 Pennsylvania Elections

Nathan A. Benefield

Taxpayer-Collected Campaign Contributions

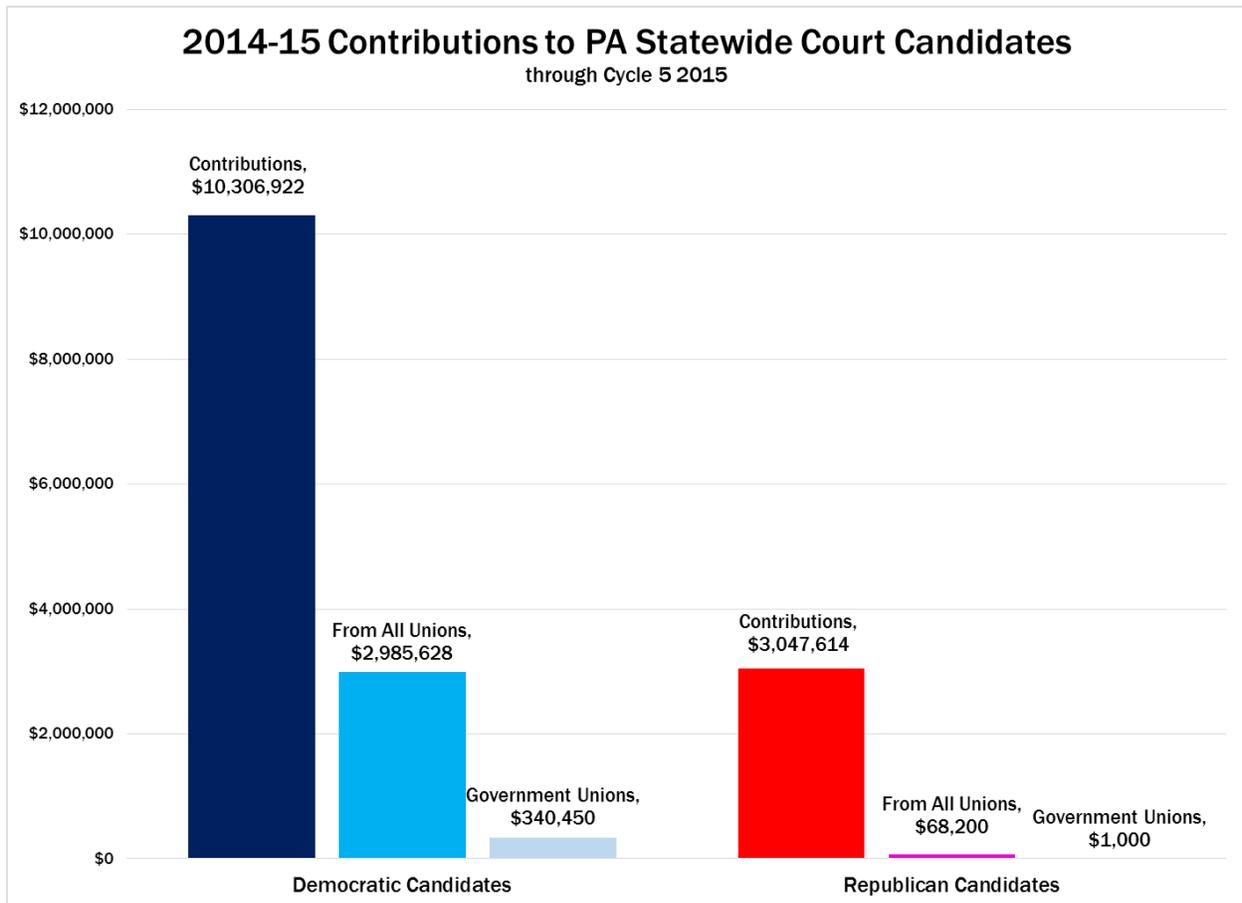
Government unions have the unique benefit of having their campaign contributions collected at taxpayer expense using public resources. These funds, collected for unions' Political Action Committees, are deducted from workers' paychecks and can be given directly to candidates for office.

According to the most recent numbers, the PACs of ten government unions donated more than \$3 million to Pennsylvania candidates in 2015.

Total Pennsylvania Government Union PAC Spending for 2015 Election Cycle	
Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA) PACE	\$692,583
Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT)	\$399,831
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Council 13	\$476,802
AFSCME People	\$489,678
PA Service Employees International Union (SEIU)*	\$467,634
United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) 1776	\$168,891
PA American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)	\$46,049
American Federation of Teachers Pennsylvania (AFT-PA)	\$13,500
AFT (National)	\$218,500
Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers (PFT Pol Action Fund)	\$30,976
Total	\$3,004,444
*Includes political expenditures from PSSU Local, SEIU 668 COPE Fund	
Source: https://www.campaignfinanceonline.state.pa.us	

Influence in Judicial Races

Campaign contributions from unions—both private and government—dominated the 2015 judicial races. Union contributions to the five Democratic candidates (\$2.99 million of their \$10.3 million total contributions) nearly equaled **all contributions** to Republican candidates.



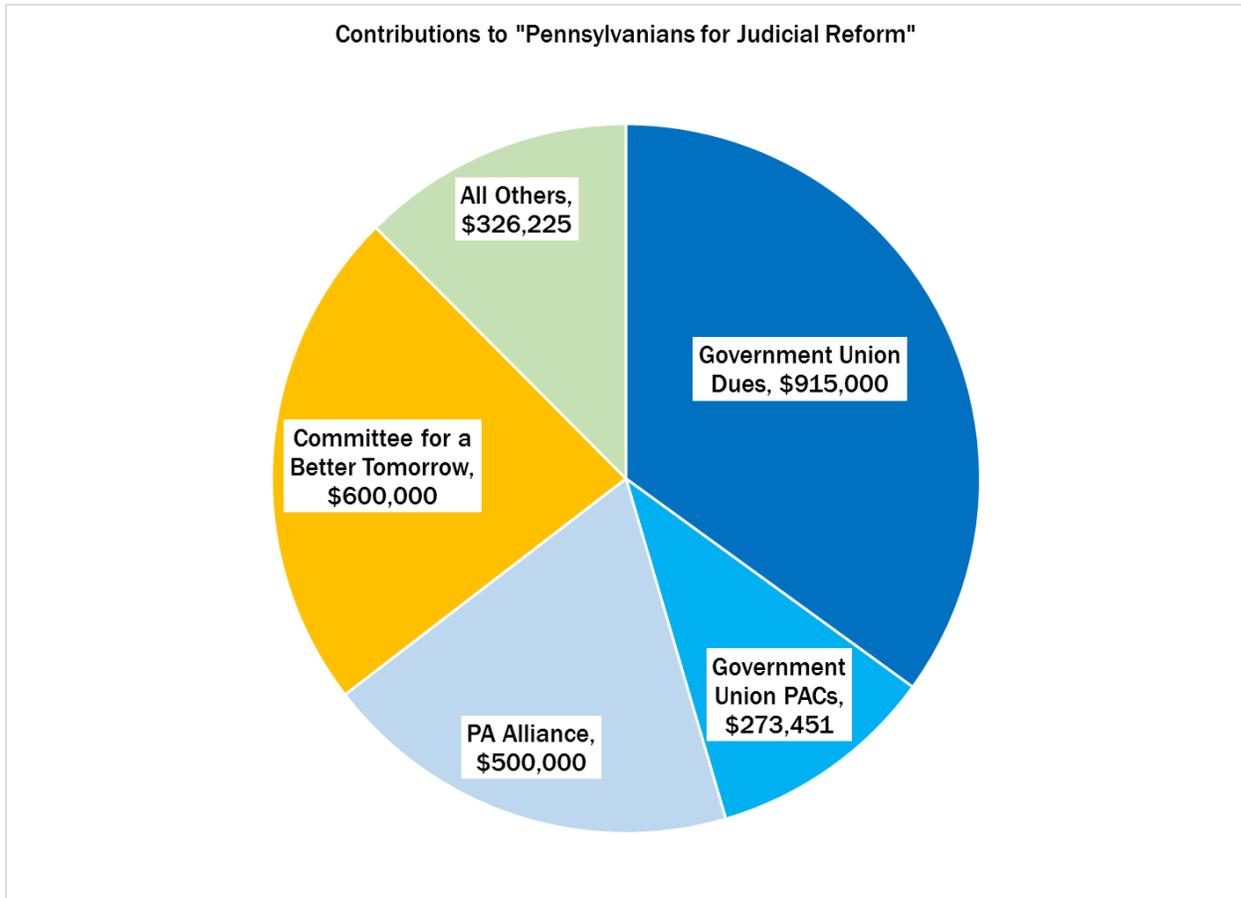
Super PACs

Taxpayers don't subsidize the collection of just government unions' PAC money; they also subsidize the collection of union dues, which can then be directed toward a variety of political activities on behalf of candidates.

While union dues cannot be given directly to candidates, [they can be used for independent expenditures and to fund Super PACs](#). Super PACs can collect an unlimited amount of union dues and spend an unlimited amount of money to support or oppose a candidate.

Pennsylvanians for Judicial Reform—a new Super PAC [registered in August](#)—spent about \$2.5 million on attack ads in the Pennsylvania Supreme Court race. Nearly half (45 percent) of this money came from government unions—with the lion's share coming directly from union dues.

The rest of Pennsylvanians for Judicial Reform's budget came primarily from the political action committee of Philadelphia's trial lawyers (the "Committee for a Better Tomorrow") and the unknown entity "PA Alliance." [Public Source investigated PA Alliance](#) and found it has union ties (and is linked with Pennsylvanians for Accountability, another union-funded attack group).



Summary

The problem isn't that unions give a lot, or even that they dominate political spending. The problem is that government union dues and campaign contributions are collected at taxpayer expense using public resources.

Not only does this give government unions an unfair political advantage but it also undercuts members' voices, as members are forced to fund unions' political activities. Unlike every other political group, government unions never have to ask for contributions; they just take them from workers' paychecks.

Paycheck protection is critical to protect government workers and taxpayers and to promote accountable government.