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How Hillary Clinton Bought the Loyalty of 33 State Democratic Parties

By Margot Kidder
April 1, 2016



“It’s worse than wicked, my dear, it’s vulgar”

Punch Almanac, 1876

Collusion between the Clinton campaign and the DNC allowed Hillary Clinton to buy the loyalty of 33 state Democratic parties last summer. Montana was one of those states. It sold itself for \$64,100.

The Super Delegates now defying democracy with their insistent refusal to change their votes to Sanders in spite of a handful of overwhelming Clinton primary losses in their own states, were arguably part of that deal.

In August 2015, at the Democratic Party convention in Minneapolis, 33 democratic state parties made deals with the Hillary Clinton campaign and a joint fundraising entity called The Hillary Victory Fund. The deal allowed many of her core billionaire and inner circle individual donors to run the maximum amounts of money allowed through those state parties to the Hillary Victory Fund in New York and the DNC in Washington.

The idea was to increase how much one could personally donate to Hillary by taking advantage of the Supreme Court ruling 2014, *McCutcheon v FEC*, that knocked down a cap on aggregate limits as to how much a donor could give to a federal campaign in a year. It thus eliminated the ceiling on amounts spent by a single donor to a presidential candidate.

In other words, a single donor, by giving 10,000 dollars a year to each signatory state could legally give an extra \$330,000 a year for two years to the Hillary Victory Fund. For each donor, this raised their individual legal cap on the Presidential campaign to \$660,000 if given in both 2015 and 2016. And to one million, three hundred and 20 thousand dollars if an equal amount were also donated in their spouse's name.

From these large amounts of money being transferred from state coffers to the Hillary Victory Fund in Washington, the Clinton campaign got the first \$2,700, the DNC was to get the next \$33,400, and the remainder was to be split among the 33 signatory states. With this scheme, the Hillary Victory Fund raised over \$26 million for the Clinton Campaign by the end of 2015.

The money was either transferred to the Hillary for America or Forward Hillary PACs and spent directly on the Hillary Clinton Campaign, often paying the salaries and expenses within those groups, or it was moved into the DNC or another Clinton PAC. Some of it was spent towards managing the Hillary merchandise store, where you can buy Hillary T shirts and hats and buttons.

The fund is administered by treasurer Elizabeth Jones, the Clinton Campaign's chief operating officer. Ms. Jones has the exclusive right to decide when transfers of money to and from the Hillary Victory Fund would be made to the state parties.

One could reasonably infer that the tacit agreement between the signatories was that the state parties and the Hillary Clinton Campaign would act in unity and mutual support. And that the super-delegates of these various partner states would either pledge loyalty to Clinton, or, at the least, not endorse Senator Sanders. Not only did Hillary's multi-millionaire and billionaire supporters get to bypass individual campaign donation limits to state parties by using several state parties apparatus, but the Clinton campaign got the added bonus of buying that state's super-delegates with the promise of contributions to that Democratic organization's re-election fund.

If a presidential campaign from either party can convince various state parties to partner with it in such a way as to route around any existing rules on personal donor limits and at the same time promise money to that state's potential candidates, then the deal can be sold as a way of making large monetary promises to candidates and Super-delegates respectable.

The leadership of a very broke Montana Democratic Party decided in August of 2015 that this was a seductive deal they were willing to make. And by the end of that year scores of 10,000 donations came in from out of state.

Montana's list of out of state donors to the state campaign reads like a Who's Who of the Democratic financial elites. The names vary little from the list of high donors to the other 32 states that signed on to the Hillary Victory Fund.

What do billionaires like Esprit Founder Susie Buell of California, and Sri Lankan lobbyist Imaad Zuberi of California, and media mogul Fred Eychaner of Chicago, and Donald Sussman hedgefund manager from New York and Chicago real estate mogul J.B Pritzker, and gay activist Jon Stryker of NY, and NRA and Viacom lobbyist Jeffrey Forbes and entertainment mogul Haim Saban all have in common?

They all appear to be brilliant business people who have all given millions to Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign and to her various PACS. And they all gave the Montana State Democratic Party \$10,000 each in 2015. It is doubtful that many of them have any interest in Montana politics, or that they have even bothered to visit.

None of these are awful people; they are simply awfully rich. And they like their friend Hillary and want her to be the president. And if some of their millions will buy her way into the White House then so be it. None of this is illegal. But it makes a mockery of Ms. Clinton's pledge to further the cause of campaign finance reform.

And the Hillary Victory Fund's marriage of convenience with the Montana party negates Governor Steve Bullock's eloquent insistence that he will do anything necessary to overturn Citizen's United. And the coldness of the deal's intention of doing anything it can to further Hillary Clinton's chances for becoming President brings Senator Jon Tester's stated neutrality in the Democratic primary into a sharp and unflatteringly hypocritical focus.

One doubts that most of these one percenters adore fly fishing. Or care much about mountain climbing, or skiing, or collecting morel mushrooms along the edges of the Yellowstone river in the fall. We can safely assume that they will not be raising buffalo for meat in the near future, or buying an organic farm next to Senator Jon Tester's. In fact we can probably assume that most of them have never been to Montana.

And one doubts if many of them care or not if Governor Steve Bullock will get re-elected or will be replaced with a creationist businessman named Greg Gianforte whose family gave \$1.5 million to a creationist museum in Glendive, Montana that proudly displays a man riding a dinosaur as if it were a rodeo horse.

That outsiders could make their votes count for more than our own in our Presidential primary by supporting a system that is rigged in favour of the wishes of lobbyists and billionaires running their money through our state democratic party coffers is a concept that most Montanans would be repulsed by.

Yet it is inconceivable that not only did the state's chairperson, Nancy Keenan, approve the deal, but that both Governor Steve Bullock and Democratic senator Jon Tester approved it as well. It directly affects the funding of both of their campaigns, now and in 2018.

I have yet to hear back from any Montana democratic office holders that they have even heard of the Hillary Victory Fund. Monica Lindeen, the State Auditor, has never heard of it. A couple of county Chair persons have never heard of it. Jean Dahlman, a feisty independent thinker and a ranch woman who is on the executive committee of the state party has never heard of it. And when I wrote Jonathan Motl, the man in charge of the Office of Political Practices and a demon for making sure our state laws about contributions are enforced, he did not get back to me. So I am assuming he has never heard of it either. Who was in on this? No one seems willing to tell.

In Montana, a state where one third of voters identify as independents, and where it is imperative that Democratic candidates for public office win some votes from both Republicans and Independents in order to get elected, it seems peculiar that the Montana State Democratic Party would make a deal with the Hillary Clinton campaign months before the national primaries were underway, given that there is a very real and proud tradition of political independence in Montana. Being told who to vote for in a primary by your party's big wigs is not part of that tradition. Any collusion by a Montana national candidate with the Hillary Clinton campaign before a primary was held, and the votes counted, could potentially be politically suicidal.

The agreement with the Hillary Victory Fund and the DNC could solve some of the Montana State Democratic Party's financial problems while simultaneously funding several state and federal candidates. But the scheme would only make sense as a benefit to the parties involved if the money raised actually stayed in the states that received the initial checks. This did not happen.

The Alaska Democratic party, in its end of the year filing with the FEC, said it raised \$43,500 from the Hillary Victory Fund with 10,000.00 dollar donations from Clinton friends and billionaires, including hedge fund manager S Donald Sussman, and Hyatt Hotel heir JB Pritzker. (two of the several \$10,000 donors to the Montana State Democratic Party). But in the same report it said it transferred the same amount of money, \$43,500 back to the DNC – a technically legal move that effectively obliterates federal limits on donations to the national committee.

“It just becomes a way to funnel more to the DNC to support the Clinton Campaign”, said Paul S. Ryan, deputy executive director of the Campaign Legal Centre, which advocates for campaign finance reform. “It's effectively Hillary Clinton's team soliciting Hillary Clinton's supporters for much bigger checks than they can give to the campaign.”

The same thing happened with the Maine State Democratic Party with many of the same billionaire donors. Maine attracted many of Clinton's biggest donors. But the contributions didn't stay in Maine either, or in any of the other state democratic parties to which Hillary Victory Fund donations have been funneled. In October and November two transfers totaling 39,000 from the Hillary Victory Fund to the Maine Democratic party sat for less than 48 hours before the same amounts were transferred to the DNC in Washington.

The Montana State Democratic party received \$43,500 dollars from the Hillary Victory Fund on November 2, 2015. Yet on that same day it transferred \$43,500 back to the Democratic National Committee in Washington. And on December 1, 2015 it received another \$20,600 from the Hillary Victory fund. And on the same day the Montana State Democratic Party sent that exact same amount, \$20,600, back to the DNC in Washington as well, an entity that has not bothered to disguise its preference for a Hillary Clinton candidacy over that of a Bernie Sanders one.

By November 2015, 22 of the state parties linked to the Hillary Victory Fund have received \$938,500 from the fund and sent the same amount back to the DNC. There is no limit to amounts of money transferred between state and national parties and PACS or Funds.

(Obama had a similar fund in 2008, but not until he had already won enough delegates to be sure he would be the nominee.)

The Democratic spokespeople for the 17 states that refused to go along with the Clinton campaign's plan, even though many of them were as broke as the Montana State Democratic Party was (Nebraska springs to mind), were clear that it seemed less than democratic to be choosing sides in a primary that hadn't happened yet. That the very purpose of a primary was to let the people choose which candidate they wanted to represent them and to not let the party establishment load the dice in their own favour. They made it obvious that they were choosing democracy over kick-backs.

"A joint fundraising committee linking Hillary Clinton to the national Democratic Party and 33 state parties is routing money through those state parties and back into the coffers of the Clinton campaign and all its PACS and Funds" "It is a highly unusual arraignment if only because presidential candidates do not normally enter into fundraising agreements with their party's committees until after they actually win the nomination. And second, Clinton's fundraising committee is the first since the Supreme Court's 2014 *McCutcheon v FEC* decision eliminated aggregate contribution limits and congress increased party contribution limits in the 2014 omnibus budget bill" said Paul Blumenthal, a writer for The Huffington Post.

A loud article in the *NYT* in March proclaiming that elected officials in 22 states would not support Bernie Sanders conveniently left out that those 22 states had signed agreements with the Hillary Clinton campaign and the Hillary Victory Fund.

What it really does is seriously handicap the Democratic Primary Race. Every one of the states charging electoral interference by the Clinton campaign is a state that made a deal with the Hillary Victory Fund. Insinuations of conspiracies are unprovable in these cases. But the *perception* of fraud and corruption is glaring and damaging.

What the Clinton campaign appears to be in stunning denial about is that most of us “regular folks” (a revolting term used with growing frequency these days) are not burdened with an inability to confuse morality with legality. Corruption is corruption no matter how many laws there are allowing it. Very few brilliant business people give presidential candidates upwards of six million dollars without expecting something in return. There is a reason they are brilliant business people. Throwing away millions of dollars for nothing is not one of them.

Most state democratic parties don’t want Campaign Finance Reform. They feel they can’t afford it. Many local politicians become terrified of voicing support for alternative candidates out of fear of being cut off the Democratic Party gravy train.

The psychological damage of the Hillary Victory Fund, the inference by its very existence that every vote is not equal, has had a dampening effect on older Democrats. The perception that most Democrats support Hillary, and that she is the most reliable candidate to defeat a Trump or a Cruz in the fall is felt by every journalist, every newspaper opinion writer and every television current affairs show, and is absorbed by the consumers of that news. When you have lobbyists for the big media giants, such as Fyfeed Eychancer of Newsweb, or Viacom lawyer and lobbyist Steve Forbes, giving money to the Hillary Victory Fund through the state of Montana, the rot in the system is laid bare.

Here in Montana, a politically vibrant state with a heady mix of Republicans and Democrats and Independents and Libertarians, not one single Democratic official up for election will openly support Bernie Sanders in the Democratic primary. They all say exactly the same thing: “I’m not going to endorse anyone until after the primary.” Which has as much meaning as saying you are not going to vote until after the election.

This is the state that brought the entire American union movement to the West, back when Butte was a thriving mining town and corrupt copper barons ran the state. It’s a state in which miners fought and died for the right to have unions. It’s a state in which we had, until Citizen’s United, the first and only state law that expressly forbade corporate expenditures on elections.

You can’t win an election as a Democrat in Montana without the Native American vote. You have to win Butte, a mighty monument to the working man and Democratic to its very core. You have to win the artsy types and the students in Missoula, the writers in Livingston and the oilmen in Billings and the ranchers in the east. You can’t be all things to all men, so you have to be real. You have to be honest because word spreads fast in a small but tight population like Montana and if your word is no good, neither are you.

But most importantly, you can’t win an election in Montana if you don’t acknowledge and respect the pride Montanans have in their ability to think independently. Their courage to not follow the herd. Independence is a proud master.

Our state party leadership signed a deal with a woman who out here, on our turf, possibly wouldn’t last a week. They signed away our unobstructed right to choose which Democratic candidate we supported for President. Given that we have 15 pledged delegates and seven

superdelegates, we have lost our absolute right to have superdelegate endorsements proportional to the wishes of the primary voters

For what? Sixty four thousand and one hundred dollars? Which we had to give back? That's a pretty poor excuse for selling out our right to our own choice.

Look, we know the deck is stacked, that Hillary and the DNC get all the face cards and that you're dealing from the bottom of the deck. But just give us an ace from time to time, or maybe even a small straight. Don't rub our hopelessness in our faces as if we are too dumb to know. You will pay for your contempt. If not this year, then the next.

Beneficiaries

Recipient	Party Type**	Office Sought	Total
Clinton, Hillary	D C	Pres	\$4,440,000
DNC Services Corp	D P		\$2,263,436
Democratic Party of Wisconsin	D P		\$207,278
Democratic Party of Oklahoma	D P		\$140,000
Democratic Party of New Hampshire	D P		\$74,700
Democratic Party of Pennsylvania	D P		\$70,500
Democratic Party of Texas	D P		\$69,100
Democratic Executive Cmte of Florida	D P		\$66,200
Democratic Party of Nevada	D P		\$66,200
Democratic Party of Colorado	D P		\$66,000
Democratic Party of Ohio	D P		\$66,000
Democratic Cmte of Utah	D P		\$64,100
Democratic Party of Alaska	D P		\$64,100
Democratic Party of Mississippi	D P		\$64,100
Democratic Party of Montana	D P		\$64,100
Democratic Party of Oregon	D P		\$64,100
Democratic Party of South Carolina	D P		\$64,100
Democratic Party of Tennessee	D P		\$64,100
Democratic State Cmte of Massachusetts	D P		\$64,100
Georgia Federal Elections Cmte	D P		\$64,100
Idaho State Democratic Party	D P		\$64,100
Michigan Democratic State Central Cmte	D P		\$64,100
Minnesota Democratic Farmer Labor Party	D P		\$64,100
Missouri Democratic State Cmte	D P		\$64,100
Rhode Island Democratic State Cmte	D P		\$64,100
West Virginia State Democratic Exec Cmte	D P		\$64,100
Wyoming State Democratic Central Cmte	D P		\$64,100
Democratic Party of North Carolina	D P		\$64,000
Democratic State Central Cmte/Louisiana	D P		\$64,000
Indiana Democratic Congressional Victory Cmte	D P		\$64,000
Democratic Party of Arkansas	D P		\$63,000

Maine Democratic State Cmte D P \$59,800
Democratic Party of Virginia D P \$43,500