

Table 3-12 Political Party Contributions, Coordinated and Independent Expenditures for Congressional Candidates, 1976-2016, Adjusted for Inflation, 2016 Mean Net Dollars

	Senate			House			Total
	Contributions	Expenditures		Contributions	Expenditures		
		Coordinated	Independent		Coordinated	Independent	
2016							
Democrats	608,400	8,308,995	60,421,908	403,810	3,612,999	80,378,630	153,734,743
Republicans	623,400	13,259,972	39,172,190	340,000	3,598,162	73,601,651	130,595,375
2014							
Democrats	273,921	7,689,395	60,680,930	660,156	4,262,322	69,938,260	143,504,985
Republicans	595,893	7,492,295	34,760,708	373,669	4,357,074	66,443,482	114,023,120
2012							
Democrats	675,821	5,591,426	55,230,538	611,912	5,591,426	65,528,973	133,230,096
Republicans	826,666	7,945,188	33,571,202	782,996	4,932,816	64,687,677	112,746,545
2010							
Democrats	861,503	19,271,796	45,673,796	322,545	7,425,154	72,363,753	145,918,547
Republicans	1,757,952	20,028,693	37,809,048	1,125,227	9,130,683	53,696,131	123,547,734
2008							
Democrats	622,694	4,261,566	81,407,760	1,144,986	1,844,013	91,009,012	180,290,031
Republicans	150,490	1,706,249	45,315,212	3,465,923	3,812,764	34,525,239	88,975,876
2006							
Democrats	710,497	6,900,207	50,748,471	2,892,845	2,869,029	76,360,862	140,481,910
Republicans	460,468	10,458,263	38,282,132	935,069	5,380,938	98,914,425	154,431,296
2004							
Democrats	1,375,229	12,901,708	27,584,865	1,024,210	3,660,287	40,704,488	87,250,787
Republicans	2,383,222	11,787,481	14,611,432	1,469,736	4,091,705	55,193,604	89,537,180
2002							
Democrats	658,855	2,782,052	551	1,189,530	3,642,881	333,878	8,607,746
Republicans	2,704,249	13,846,592	668,668	2,843,704	7,189,160	1,817,637	29,070,011
2000							
Democrats	497,043	7,177,497	359,481	1,362,674	4,634,570	2,831,331	16,862,596
Republicans	723,519	15,085,962	550,804	2,434,931	6,125,278	1,619,019	26,539,513
1998							
Democrats	445,379	13,767,196	2,149,975	2,270,955	6,767,873	43,522	25,444,902
Republicans	757,799	13,743,809	322,572	3,089,576	9,291,245	68,153	27,273,156
1996							
Democrats	975,530	13,173,458	2,221,873	2,123,124	10,381,884	48,818	28,924,688
Republicans	1,181,287	16,445,746	14,437,639	3,767,604	12,235,682	54,781	48,122,739
1994							
Democrats	1,034,229	21,384,120	-	2,431,196	13,692,820	-	38,542,366
Republicans	1,211,389	18,724,216	-	3,298,415	14,335,432	-	37,569,452
1992							
Democrats	1,180,282	20,384,135	-	2,111,913	10,065,031	-	33,741,361
Republicans	1,381,190	28,243,059	-	3,759,387	11,815,134	-	45,198,770
1990							
Democrats	946,314	9,567,230	-	1,731,897	6,246,387	-	18,491,829
Republicans	1,584,048	14,187,137	-	3,708,042	5,531,570	-	25,010,797
1988							
Democrats	1,018,005	13,374,383	-	2,554,161	5,865,568	-	22,812,118
Republicans	1,458,719	20,816,702	-	5,390,661	8,444,284	-	36,110,366
1986							
Democrats	1,359,526	14,576,234	-	2,121,769	4,021,022	-	22,078,551
Republicans	1,597,540	22,069,042	-	5,519,018	9,003,490	-	38,189,090
1984							
Democrats	1,019,780	9,119,183	-	2,958,328	4,098,950	-	17,196,241
Republicans	1,365,018	15,057,413	-	9,378,799	14,299,495	-	40,100,725
1982							
Democrats	1,440,880	5,633,815	-	2,617,161	1,726,859	-	11,418,715
Republicans	1,492,821	21,677,136	-	11,741,588	13,164,968	-	48,076,513
1980							
Democrats	1,399,451	3,299,840	-	2,988,405	746,661	-	8,434,356
Republicans	1,971,914	15,829,854	-	10,189,587	6,418,871	-	34,410,226
1978							
Democrats	1,717,902	843,772	-	4,646,631	268,322	-	7,476,627
Republicans	2,588,556	10,026,845	-	13,329,606	4,774,663	-	30,719,670
1976							
Democrats	1,977,400	18,386	-	6,182,095	2,109	-	8,179,991
Republicans	3,922,929	480,756	-	15,430,932	1,390,197	-	21,224,814

Notes: The table includes three different kinds of party support for candidates: direct contributions, coordinated expenditures and independent spending. Direct contributions: House candidates may receive a maximum of \$20,000 in primary and general election combined from national and state party committees. In 2012, Senate candidates could receive \$43,100 from national party committees and another \$10,000 from state parties. The National Party to Senate candidate amount is indexed for inflation.

Coordinated expenditures: For most House candidates, party committees may spend an inflation adjusted amount that in 2012 came to \$45,600. The limit is doubled (to \$91,200 in 2012) for states with only one congressional district. For Senate candidates, the limit goes up with a state's population as well as inflation. In the smallest states, this was \$91,200 in 2012. In the largest states (California) it was \$2.6 million. The median states (Kentucky and Louisiana) had party coordinated spending limits of \$305,000 and \$315,400 respectively.

Independent spending by the parties cannot be limited since the Supreme Court's decision in Colorado Republican Federal Campaign Committee v. Federal Election Commission 518 U.S. 604 (1996). Despite this ruling, the parties did not do a great deal of independent spending between 1996 and 2002 because such spending has to be funded entirely with money raised under federal contribution limits. The parties preferred to use "soft" money (no contribution limits) to help pay for communications that were designed to get around these restraints. After the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 prohibited national party soft money, the parties shifted more money into independent expenditures. Unfortunately, it is not possible to know how much soft money was spent to help congressional candidates in the elections through 2002. In 2012, party independent spending in House contests spread out to over 74 districts, with a maximum of \$5.0 million spent in one district. Senate independent spending focused on seventeen races, with \$14.4 million spent in Virginia.

Source: Campaign Finance Institute analysis of Federal Election Commission data.