

Table 3-12 Political Party Contributions, Coordinated and Independent Expenditures for Congressional Candidates, 1976-2018
Adjusted for inflation, 2018 Mean Net Dollars

	Senate			House			Total
	Contributions	Expenditures		Contributions	Expenditures		
		Coordinated	Independent		Coordinated	Independent	
2018							
Democrats	341,800	10,405,500	29,638,888	510,607	6,853,756	84,606,289	132,356,840
Republicans	663,600	8,810,888	38,080,072	351,812	5,348,454	79,683,592	132,938,418
2016							
Democrats	636,538	8,693,275	63,216,340	422,486	3,780,096	84,096,034	160,844,767
Republicans	652,231	13,873,228	40,983,851	355,725	3,764,573	77,005,628	136,635,235
2014							
Democrats	286,590	8,045,019	63,487,342	690,687	4,459,449	73,172,811	150,141,897
Republicans	623,453	7,838,803	36,368,344	390,950	4,558,582	69,516,403	119,296,535
2012							
Democrats	707,077	5,850,022	57,784,876	640,212	5,850,022	68,559,600	139,391,808
Republicans	864,898	8,312,642	35,123,825	819,209	5,160,952	67,679,395	117,960,921
2010							
Democrats	901,346	20,163,091	47,786,147	337,462	7,768,558	75,710,479	152,667,083
Republicans	1,839,255	20,954,993	39,557,666	1,177,267	9,552,964	56,179,505	129,261,650
2008							
Democrats	651,493	4,458,658	85,172,759	1,197,940	1,929,296	95,218,056	188,628,201
Republicans	157,450	1,785,160	47,410,979	3,626,217	3,989,099	36,121,985	93,090,891
2006							
Democrats	743,356	7,219,332	53,095,519	3,026,635	3,001,717	79,892,448	146,979,009
Republicans	481,764	10,941,944	40,052,629	978,315	5,629,799	103,489,084	161,573,535
2004							
Democrats	1,438,831	13,498,394	28,860,627	1,071,578	3,829,571	42,587,016	91,286,018
Republicans	2,493,443	12,332,636	15,287,191	1,537,709	4,280,941	57,746,234	93,678,154
2002							
Democrats	689,326	2,910,718	576	1,244,544	3,811,359	349,319	9,005,843
Republicans	2,829,317	14,486,978	699,593	2,975,222	7,521,648	1,901,701	30,414,460
2000							
Democrats	520,031	7,509,447	376,106	1,425,696	4,848,913	2,962,277	17,642,469
Republicans	756,981	15,783,667	576,277	2,547,543	6,408,564	1,693,896	27,766,929
1998							
Democrats	465,978	14,403,910	2,249,409	2,375,984	7,080,878	45,535	26,621,694
Republicans	792,846	14,379,442	337,491	3,232,465	9,720,953	71,305	28,534,502
1996							
Democrats	1,020,647	13,782,713	2,324,631	2,221,316	10,862,033	51,076	30,262,415
Republicans	1,235,920	17,206,340	15,105,360	3,941,850	12,801,566	57,314	50,348,351
1994							
Democrats	1,082,061	22,373,107	-	2,543,636	14,326,095	-	40,324,899
Republicans	1,267,414	19,590,185	-	3,450,962	14,998,426	-	39,306,988
1992							
Democrats	1,234,868	21,326,874	-	2,209,586	10,530,526	-	35,301,853
Republicans	1,445,068	29,549,262	-	3,933,254	12,361,568	-	47,289,152
1990							
Democrats	990,080	10,009,701	-	1,811,995	6,535,274	-	19,347,051
Republicans	1,657,308	14,843,273	-	3,879,534	5,787,398	-	26,167,513
1988							
Democrats	1,065,086	13,992,930	-	2,672,288	6,136,843	-	23,867,147
Republicans	1,526,183	21,779,446	-	5,639,971	8,834,821	-	37,780,421
1986							
Democrats	1,422,402	15,250,365	-	2,219,898	4,206,988	-	23,099,654
Republicans	1,671,424	23,089,706	-	5,774,265	9,419,890	-	39,955,284
1984							
Democrats	1,066,944	9,540,933	-	3,095,146	4,288,521	-	17,991,543
Republicans	1,428,149	15,753,798	-	9,812,556	14,960,827	-	41,955,330
1982							
Democrats	1,507,519	5,894,371	-	2,738,201	1,806,724	-	11,946,815
Republicans	1,561,862	22,679,675	-	12,284,620	13,773,830	-	50,299,987
1980							
Democrats	1,464,173	3,452,453	-	3,126,614	781,193	-	8,824,433
Republicans	2,063,112	16,561,963	-	10,660,842	6,715,735	-	36,001,652
1978							
Democrats	1,797,352	882,795	-	4,861,532	280,731	-	7,822,411
Republicans	2,708,274	10,490,573	-	13,946,082	4,995,485	-	32,140,414
1976							

Democrats	2,068,852	19,237	-	6,468,009	2,207	-	8,558,305
Republicans	4,104,359	502,991	-	16,144,591	1,454,492	-	22,206,434

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.