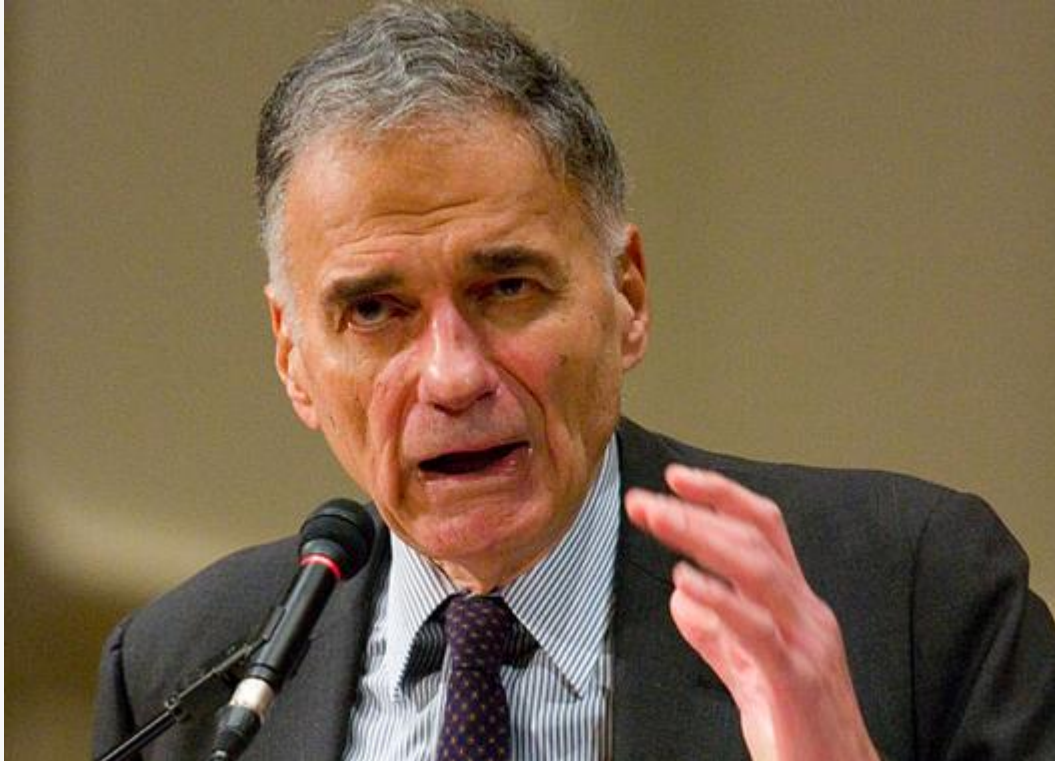


Mandatory Student University Fees Are Funneled to Left-Wing Lobbyist 'Public Interest Research Groups' (PIRG)

written by GEG | March 4, 2019



Ralph Nader inspired Public Interest Research Groups (PIRGs) on college campuses to promote left-wing policies concerning the environment, housing, and public utility prices, using lawyers to coerce government agencies. It was Nader's idea to fund the PIRGs with mandatory student university fees. PIRGs lobby state lawmakers and provide new recruits while US-PIRG is the federal lobbying arm of the Public Interest Network.

Summary: Since the 1970s, left-wing activists—beginning with failed presidential candidate Ralph Nader—have struggled to build a lasting base of support for Democrats at the polls. But one of them, former activist Doug Phelps, took it further, establishing a permanent empire of professional, paid canvassers designed to secure money and votes for the radical Left's agenda. CRC's Hayden Ludwig and Michael Watson expose, for the first time, this vast empire of canvassers known as the Public Interest Network, and the mysterious puppet master atop the pyramid.

Living the PIRG Life

The oldest and perhaps best-known part of the Public Interest Network are the Public Interest Research Groups, or "PIRGs." The PIRGs grew out of the student activism of the 1960s and early 1970s around a group of

left-wing “consumer activists” known as “Nader’s Raiders” after their leader and intellectual progenitor, community organizer and four-time presidential candidate [Ralph Nader](#).

Like the now-defunct ACORN (the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now), which was created around the same time in the early 1970s by activist Wade Rathke, the PIRGs followed Nader’s vision of a radical “[new populism](#).”

This new populism largely took the form of community organizing, the strategy envisioned in the 1960s by veteran Chicago political activist Saul Alinsky and honed by icons of the New Left like [Heather Booth](#), Harry C. Boyte, and Nader himself.

From the start, Nader intended the PIRGs to be centered on college campuses across the United States and Canada, beginning in Oregon and Minnesota. While they were always intended to be run by lawyers able to coerce government agencies into advancing left-wing policies concerning the environment, housing, and public utility prices, it was Nader’s idea to fund the various PIRGs with student university fees. Because they were aided by mandatory fees enforced by sympathetic university administrators and approved by liberal-controlled student governments, many of the early state PIRGs became the best-funded student groups on their campuses.

As David Seidemann, an environmental science professor at Brooklyn College, [wrote](#) in 2016: “administrators at public universities across the country have granted [the PIRGs] unique campus privileges and funneled millions of dollars—in part, from mandatory student fees.” As a result, the New York chapter of PIRG (NYPIRG) now “raises more money than all other campus student groups and surreptitiously diverts those funds to its statewide lobbying operations”—as much as \$1 million forcibly raised from the pockets of college students each year.

In the case of the Oregon State PIRG (OSPIRG), Mark Hemingway [wrote](#) for *National Review* in

2008, students vote on those fees every two years during student government elections, “in which only 5 to 10 percent of [the University of Oregon’s] 17,000 students typically vote. So OSPIRG needed only about 800 votes to get a big fat check.” According to Hemingway, the student fees are then siphoned from the PIRG’s 501(c)(3) clearinghouse to its 501(c)(4) lobbying arm through absurdly high consulting fees, rent on unused office space, and other supposed “services.”

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