

Congressional Candidates Regularly Stray Far From Home in Search for Campaign Cash

By [Lauren Hepler](#) on September 29, 2010 12:24 PM

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At only 33 years old, [John Waltz](#) is a veteran of two wars -- serving in the Navy for operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Upon returning home to Kentucky and suffering seizures, strokes and post-traumatic stress disorder at least in part attributable to an unapproved anthrax vaccine he took overseas, Waltz contacted his congressman, incumbent Rep. [Geoff Davis](#) (R-Ky.).

Angered by what Waltz calls a “[brush off](#)” from his hometown [4th Congressional District](#) representative, he decided to escalate matters – and began running against Davis as a Democrat.

Still, Waltz isn’t doing it alone, or even drawing the bulk of his support from local sources. He ranks second overall in reportable out-of-state campaign contributions to House candidates for the 2010 election cycle, raising more than 90 percent of funds from people who don’t live in Kentucky, according to research by the [Center for Responsive Politics](#).

“It’s not an option to fund [the campaign] entirely from within the district,” said Tyler Norkus, finance director for the Waltz campaign. “This is not a white-collar district. People are giving all that they can, but in a lot of cases that’s \$35.”

In a congressional election cycle marked by continued economic strife and high unemployment, out-of-state campaign contributions are padding war chests for both incumbents and challengers across the country, according to a Center for Responsive Politics analysis of campaign finance filings.

However, while in-state funds may be dwindling in some areas, many candidates still rely almost entirely on campaign contributions from constituents, begging the question of whether out-of-state donations are political necessities or merely avenues for outside influence by wealthy special interests from major population centers.

Here is a chart showing the top 10 U.S. Senate Candidates receiving the most reportable out-of-state campaign contributions during the 2010 election cycle.

Candidate	Party	% in-state	% out-of-state
Leahy, Patrick	D	12.8	87.2
Crapo, Mike	R	17.3	82.7



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[Many House Incumbents Heavily Relying on PAC Cash for 2010 Re-election Bids](#) was the previous entry in this blog.

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Bender, Jim	R	19.8	80.2
Reid, Harry	D	23.1	76.9
Binnie, William	R	25.2	74.8
Angle, Sharron	R	25.8	74.2
Paul, Rand	R	31.1	68.9
McCain, John	R	31.5	68.5
Thune, John	R	31.5	68.5
Grassley, Chuck	R	32.1	67.9

Here is a chart showing the top 10 U.S. House Candidates receiving the most reportable out-of-state campaign contributions during the 2010 election cycle.

Candidate	Party	% in-state	% out-of-state
Kucinich, Dennis	D	1.9	98.1
Waltz, John	D	9.2	90.8
Conyers, John	D	9.7	90.3
Swett, Katrina	D	10.8	89.2
Robinson, Art	R	11.0	89.0
Oberstar, James	D	11.6	88.4
Rahall, Nick	D	14.1	85.9
McCormick, Terri	R	15.0	85.0
Pingree, Chellie	D	15.1	84.9
Pomeroy, Earl	D	18.3	81.7

Whether a candidate is running for House or Senate, coupled with his or her party affiliation, helps predict whether a candidate is more likely to receive out-of-state funding.

On the Senate side, eight out of the top 10 recipients of out-of-state funding are Republicans. The opposite holds true in House races, as eight of the top 10 recipients of out-of-state funds are Democrats.

Regardless of party, donors from [large metropolitan areas](#) are making a majority of campaign contributions in the 2010 election cycle, with Washington, D.C., New York City, Chicago and Los Angeles at the top of the list.

The [zip codes](#) of this cycle's top donors follow a similar pattern: Neighborhoods in New York City and metropolitan Washington make up the entire top 10 list.

In [Nevada](#), for example, both incumbent Senate Majority Leader [Harry Reid](#) (D-Nev.) and his opponent, Republican [Sharron Angle](#), rank within the top 10 among all U.S. Senate candidates for greatest percentage of out-of-state campaign funding during the 2010 election cycle.

Reid comes in at No. 4 on the list of out-of-state funding recipients, raising a total \$19 million this cycle, with 77 percent of donations more than \$200 coming from out-of-state sources. In addition to the Nevada cities of Las Vegas and Reno, most major Reid contributors [are located](#) in Washington, New York and Los Angeles. Angle ranks No. 6 in out-of-state funding, with 74 percent of contributions more than \$200 coming from outside of Nevada. Besides Reno and Las Vegas, top Angle donors [are located](#) in Chicago, Houston and Washington. Angle has raised more than \$3.5 million this election cycle.

When campaigns detail the contributions that they receive to the Federal Election Commission, they are only required to provide itemized accounting of donors who contribute more than \$200.

Both the Reid and Angle campaign staffs declined comment.

CHALLENGERS DRAWING ON SUPPORT FROM BOTH NEAR AND FAR

In [North Carolina](#), another Democratic challenger, [Elaine Marshall](#), has raised 93 percent of funds in-state for her Senate campaign against incumbent Sen. [Richard Burr](#) (R-N.C.).

Marshall is No. 2 among Senate candidates raising contributions of more than \$200 from



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in-state sources, constituting the vast majority of her \$1.1 million raised.

"We think focusing on North Carolina is important," Marshall spokesperson Sam Swartz said. "When you raise money in state, it is also about connecting to voters and building the coalition of supporters that will be active in the campaign."

Swartz also noted a distinction between local campaign funding and money from out-of-state special interests.

"North Carolina voters see Wall Street bankers getting bailed out while their families struggle," Swartz said. "They know Washington's not working for them, and they know that corporate lobbyists and special interest money is part of the problem."

Here is a chart showing the top five U.S. Senate candidates receiving the most reportable in-state campaign contributions during the 2010 election cycle.

Candidate	Party	% in-state	% out-of-state
Wall, Terrence R	R	96.0	4.0
Marshall, Elaine	D	93.7	6.3
Johnson, Ronald Harold	R	89.0	11.0
Huffman, Jim	R	86.8	13.2
Rossi, Dino	R	83.1	16.9

Here is a chart showing the top five U.S. House candidates receiving the most reportable in-state campaign contributions during the 2010 election cycle.

Candidate	Party	% in-state	% out-of-state
Canseco, Francisco	R	99.8	0.2
Prendergast, Mike	R	99.2	0.8
Keating, William R.	D	99.1	0.9
Southerland, Steve	R	98.9	1.1
Van Haften, Trent	D	98.6	1.4

In addition to Marshall and Waltz, several other relative newcomers to federal politics rank very highly on lists for both top in-state and top out-of-state fund-raising.

Democrat Katrina Swett, wife of former U.S. Rep. [Richard Swett](#) (D-N.H.) and daughter of the late Rep. [Tom Lantos](#) (D-Calif.) [lost a U.S. House primary](#) in New Hampshire after raising 89 percent of donations more than \$200 from out-of-state sources.

On the other hand, Wisconsin businessman and political neophyte Terrence Wall ranks No. 1 this cycle for in-state contributions among U.S. Senate candidates. Wall raised 96 percent of funds for [his Senate bid](#) in-state before dropping out of the race.

VERMONT: SPECIAL INTEREST HAVEN OR BASTION OF SMALL CONTRIBUTORS?

Another challenger, [Len Britton](#), a Republican from [Vermont](#) running for Senate against incumbent Sen. [Patrick Leahy](#) (D-Vt.), voiced concerns about out-of-state contributions in his race. For the 2010 election cycle, Leahy has received 87 percent of donations of more than \$200 from out-of-state sources, which Britton said signals a disconnect with the state he represents.



"Mr. Leahy is more in touch with K Street than Vermont," Britton said, referencing campaign contributions to Leahy from Washington. "It's very frustrating."

Leahy has raised more than \$4.4 million this election cycle. His [top five zip codes](#) in terms of political donations more than \$200 are Beverly Hills, Calif., three separate zip codes in Washington, D.C., and a zip code in New York City.

Leahy Campaign Manager Carolyn Dwyer noted, however, that FEC filings listing only donations of more than \$200 "short-change" candidates who raise smaller sums from in-state contributors and hold office in smaller, sparsely populated states.

"Sen. Leahy enjoys a national base of support for his leadership in the Senate,"

Dwyer said. "More importantly, Sen. Leahy enjoys the support of thousands of Vermonters. The average contribution from these individuals is less than \$100."

Current campaign finance laws do not require candidates for federal office to itemize donations less than \$200. However, the Leahy campaign does choose to disclose -- and itemize -- all individual donations it receiving, including those less than \$200, a list of which is available upon request from the FEC.

From January 1, 2005, through August 4, 2010, 12 percent of the money Leahy collected, including these small-dollar donors, came from Vermont residents. The median amount contributed to the Leahy campaign from Vermonters on a per donation basis during this period was \$38.75, according to a Center for Responsive Politics review.

Still, Britton contends that the \$1.9 million Leahy has generated from out-of-state sources is excessive.

"You don't need more than \$500,000 to win an election in Vermont," Britton said. "We have 150,000 voters."

"We've got a small population," he continued, "but all the more reason to keep special interests out."

PROMINENT POLITICIANS DRAWING ON NATIONAL NOTORIETY

Besides Leahy, several other established politicians also rank highly in out-of state contributions.

Sen. [John McCain](#) (R-Ariz.) has received 69 percent of donations more than \$200 from outside Arizona, with Washington, New York and Los Angeles appearing alongside Arizona cities Phoenix and Tuscon on the list of the senator's top cities from which campaign contributions originate.

Rep. [Dennis Kucinich](#) (D-Ohio) ranks No. 1 among House candidates for out-of-state funding this cycle, with 98 percent of donations of more than \$200 coming from outside Ohio. A national figure in his own right after twice running for president this decade, Kucinich receives a majority of itemized contributions from the Los Angeles area.

While the Kucinich campaign did not return calls for comment, a spokesperson for Kucinich's Republican challenger, Mike Corrigan, said Kucinich's campaign contributions could affect how he represents constituents' interests.

"Nearly all of Kucinich's contributions come from people who do not live, work or raise a family in the district," said Bess Vretos, Corrigan's campaign manager. "The district [Kucinich] represents is not northeastern Ohio but a place called Hollywood."



In [Idaho](#), Democratic Senate challenger [Tom Sullivan](#) is facing another established politician, incumbent Republican Sen. [Mike Crapo](#). Crapo is No. 2 among Senate candidates receiving out-of-state funding, collecting 82 percent of contributions more than \$200 from outside of Idaho, which Sullivan said is cause for concern.

"One of the fundamental problems with the American political system is that money buys elections," Sullivan said. "I think the people should have a voice."

Crapo has raised more than \$4 million during the 2010 election cycle, but the [top zip codes](#) for his campaign contributions are Boise and Sun Valley, Idaho, followed by Washington and Los Angeles.

"We have more than 2,700 in-state donors," said Jake Ball, campaign manager for Crapo's re-election campaign. "We have constituents giving anywhere from \$2 to maxing out [at \$4,800, the highest allowable contribution to a candidate this cycle]."

When broken into [metropolitan areas](#), Washington, D.C., and New York City are two of the top three geographic areas contributing to Crapo's campaign, which Ball attributed to Crapo's established role in Congress.

"Now that [Crapo] has established himself as someone who is a consistent conservative, people outside of Idaho are starting to realize what supporters in-state have known for a long time," Ball said.

Still, Ball stressed that Crapo remains true to his personal political objectives regardless of where campaign funding is coming from.

"He is who he is," Ball said. "I don't think any amount of money is going to change that."

CAN DRAWING ON THE PAST HELP IN 2010?

Norkus, Waltz's finance manager, said that in his race, out-of-state funding facilitates a campaign centered on local issues.

"The [out-of-state funds] allow us to run a district-focused campaign," Norkus said, "but we also appeal to people looking for diversity of experience within the Democratic Party."

To help formulate the campaign's fund-raising strategy, Norkus said the Waltz campaign uses resources such as [OpenSecrets.org](#) to look for national donation patterns during past campaigns for progressive candidates similar to Waltz.

Federal statute prohibits using information disclosed through campaign finance filings for solicitation purposes (including commercial solicitation, charitable solicitation and the solicitation of political donations). Norkus said the Waltz campaign is in compliance with this law, as it is seeking more general information.

"The purpose is to see where people are clustered or what kind of patterns there are to different campaigns' strategies, not to identify unique individuals," Norkus explained. "OpenSecrets can show what kind of places past candidates were able to appeal to [so the Waltz campaign] can get an idea of what we should be doing."

In addition, Waltz has [received](#) more than \$90,000 from [Act Blue](#), a political action committee that funnels earmarked contributions made by individuals on the Act Blue website to specific Democratic candidates.

"It's very unique to have someone running who has personally experienced how the system has failed," Norkus said. "I think people respond to that."

The Davis campaign, which has raised nearly \$1.2 million this cycle through June 30, strongly disputed the Waltz campaign's assertion that Davis wasn't responsive to his concerns.

"Congressman Davis' office did extensive work for Mr. Waltz," Davis spokesperson Brooke Hougerson contends. "We have an extensive record that will be made available to the public if he signs a privacy release to make the records public so the truth can be told."

The Waltz campaign, for its part, has raised \$250,000 through June 30 -- with plenty of time before Election Day to continue tapping cash resources in all 50 states.

Center for Responsive Politics Researcher Dan Auble contributed to this report.

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