

## Secretary of State Project



The **Secretary of State Project**, also known as the **SoS Project**, was an independent 527 political organization founded in July 2006 for the purpose of advancing "election protection" measures. Members believed that the only way in which to accomplish such a goal was to devote all efforts and resources toward helping get Democrats elected to the offices of Secretary of State in selected swing, or battleground, states, specifically those whose margin of victory in the 2004 presidential election contest was 120,000 votes or less.

The SoS Project has not been active since 2010. It spent just over \$50,000 in 2012 and its website was taken down.

### History

The Secretary of State Project originated due to the culmination of frustration, anger, bitterness and overall resentment Democrats felt towards Republicans in the wake of President George W. Bush's re-election in 2004. Still plagued with memories of Katherine Harris and Florida from the 2000 presidential contest, Democrats placed the blame for Senator John Kerry's loss squarely on the head of former Ohio Secretary of State Kenneth Blackwell, who ruled that provisional ballots in the state would not be counted if they were submitted in the wrong precinct, a decision upheld by the United States Court of Appeals. Bush's victory in the state – a relatively slim 118,000+ votes – gave him the necessary electoral votes (twenty) to cross the victory threshold of two hundred and seventy.

Democratic founders of the SoS Project saw conspiracy in Blackwell's decision, insisting that those individuals who were elected on the principle of upholding and enforcing election laws were, in fact, political operatives. But rather than push for reform so that the offices of the Secretaries of State reflected a level of neutrality, perhaps making it so holders of those positions were elected on a nonpartisan basis, they instead sought to implement an aggressive agenda exactly the same in nearly every respect that they had just accused Republicans of performing. Through the strategic process of placing specific candidates, ones that met a certain liberal or progressive criteria set down by the organization, in positions of power that oversaw and administered state elections, the Democratic Party would be "better positioned than in the previous elections to advance traditional Democratic interests," particularly when it came to the administration of election laws.<sup>[1]</sup>

### Founders

#### Becky Bond

“ Any serious commitment to wresting control of the country from the Republican Party must include removing their political operatives from deciding who can vote and whose votes will count.”<sup>[2]</sup>

Bond's affiliations with Democratic political groups included: **U.S. Public Interest Research Group (USPIRG)**, an 'apolitical' campus organization that used its revenues to underwrite a host of leftist and environmentalist causes, including campaigns pushing for the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol and playing a critical role in the passage of the Clean Air Act in 1990; **New Organizing Interest (NOI)**, founded in 2005 by the executive director of MoveOn.org Eli Pariser as a grassroots program that trained young, technology-enabled political organizers to work for progressive campaigns and organizations.<sup>[3]</sup>

#### Michael Kieschnick

In addition to the SoS Project, Kieschnick served as president of **Working Assets**, also known as **Credo Mobile**, which provided more than 300,000 customers across the United States with long-distance and wireless telephone services and credit cards. The company also donated nearly \$60 million since its founding in 1985 to progressive organizations such as ACORN, the ACLU, Color of Change, Democracy Now!, Greenpeace International, NARAL Pro-Choice America Foundation, People for the American Way, the Planned Parenthood Federation of America and Project Vote.<sup>[4]</sup>

#### James Rucker

For two years beginning in 2003, Rucker served as Director of Grassroots Mobilization for **MoveOn Political Action** and **MoveOn Civic Action**. He ran the **Color of Change**, online activist organization that aimed to strengthen the voice of blacks in the United States. The organization raised media awareness for the cause in support of the Jena Six and led the charge for a boycott of Glenn Beck's highly rated

#### Secretary of State Project



##### Basic facts

**Type:** 527 group/Political action committee

**Affiliation:** Democratic

**Founder(s):** Becky Bond, Michael Kieschnick and James Rucker

**Year founded:** 2006

Fox News Channel program after the conservative personality called President Obama a racist. He co-founded the political group with former green jobs czar and self-proclaimed Communist Anthony "Van" Jones.

## Democracy Alliance

The SoS Project stemmed largely from the Democracy Alliance, a self-described 'liberal organization' founded in 2005 "whose long-term objective is to raise \$200 million to develop a funding clearinghouse for progressive groups."<sup>[5]</sup> Rob Stein, former chief of staff to Commerce Secretary Ron Brown under the Clinton administration, conceived of, and later directed, the Democracy Alliance on the belief that liberals could just as easily replicate the conservative movement in their building effective institutions for developing new ideas and promoting public policies.

Among its founding members and donators were billionaire George Soros, Peter B. Lewis, Susie Tompkins Buell, trial lawyer Guy Saperstein, trial lawyer Fred Baron, movie director Rob Reiner, Norman Lear, Drummond Pike, Rob McKay, Rutt Bridges, Patricia Stryker, Rob Glaser, Rob Johnson, Anne Bartley, Jonathan Heller, Charles Rodgers, Gail Furman, Davidi Gilo, Rachel Pritzker Hunter and the Service Employees International Union.

Financially well off individuals who were approached about donating to the Democracy Alliance-endorsed think tanks and political advocacy groups were required to make an initial pledge of \$200,000 per year for five years. Recipients of these donations were sworn to secrecy not to disclose from whom these donations came from, or how much. Progressive political organizations that were known to have received financial assistance from the Democracy Alliance include ACORN, Media Matters for America, EMILY's List, and the Center for American Progress, among others.<sup>[6]</sup>

Soros and Peter Lewis, at a panel discussion held during the Democratic National Committee's 2008 convention in Denver, Colorado, declared that the Democracy Alliance had approved the Secretary of State Project as a grantee of the political organization.<sup>[7]</sup>



George Soros, who donated nearly \$10,000 to the Secretary of State Project, declared that the Democracy Alliance had approved the 527 political organization as a grantee at the 2008 Democratic National Convention

## Donations

A number of Democracy Alliance Partners contributed to the SoS Project, including Gail Furman **(\$20,000)**, Daniel Berger **(\$10,000)**, George Soros **(\$10,000)**, Susie T. Buell **(\$5,000)**, Drummond Pike **(\$5,000)** and Ashindi Maxton **(\$300)**.

As a 527 political organization, the Secretary of State Project "can accept unlimited financial contributions and doesn't have to disclose them publicly until well after the election."<sup>[7]</sup> Click on the tables below to view donations made to the organization for the 2006 and 2008 election cycles.

### 2008 Election cycle

Amount	<a href="#">[show]</a>	Donor	Organization	City, State	Date
--------	------------------------	-------	--------------	-------------	------

### 2006 Election cycle

Amount	<a href="#">[show]</a>	Donor	Organization	City, State	Date
--------	------------------------	-------	--------------	-------------	------

## Contributions

Open the table below to view candidate contributions made by the Secretary of State Project in 2006 and 2008:

State	<a href="#">[show]</a>	Election Year	Candidate	Contribution	Margin of Victory
-------	------------------------	---------------	-----------	--------------	-------------------

## See also

- America Coming Together
- George Soros

## External links

- Democracy Alliance (<http://www.democracyalliance.org/>)

## Footnotes

1. *Politico*, "Secretaries of state give Dem firewall" 2 Nov. 2008 (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1008/15105.html>)
2. *Note: This text is quoted verbatim from the original source. Any inconsistencies are attributed to the original source.*
3. Discover the Networks - Secretary of State Project (SOSP) (<http://www.discoverthenetworks.org/groupprofile.asp?grpid=7487>)
4. Working Assets - 2009 Donation Recipients (<http://www.workingassets.com/Recipients.aspx>)
5. Discover the Networks - Democracy Alliance (DA) (<http://www.discoverthenetworks.org/groupProfile.asp?grpid=7151>)
6. *Capital Research Center*, "Billionaires for Big Government: What's Next for George Soros's Democracy Alliance?" Jan. 2010 (<http://www.capitalresearchcenter.org/2010/01/20/billionaires-for-big-government-what-s-next-for-george-soross-democracy-alliance/>)
7. *OpenSecrets.org*, "Secretaries of State Project: Donor Search" 2008 ([http://www.opensecrets.org/527s/527cmtdetail\\_donors.php?cycle=2008&ein=680633218](http://www.opensecrets.org/527s/527cmtdetail_donors.php?cycle=2008&ein=680633218))
8. Open Secrets - Secretary of State Project: Donor Search 2008 ([http://www.opensecrets.org/527s/527cmtdetail\\_donors.php?ein=680633218&cycle=2006](http://www.opensecrets.org/527s/527cmtdetail_donors.php?ein=680633218&cycle=2006))
9. Open Secrets - Secretary of State Project: Donor Search 2006 ([http://www.opensecrets.org/527s/527cmtdetail\\_donors.php?ein=680633218&cycle=2006](http://www.opensecrets.org/527s/527cmtdetail_donors.php?ein=680633218&cycle=2006))
10. *Center for Public Integrity: Paper Trail Blog*, "Election '08: Scoring Secretary of State Seats for Dems" 8 Sept. 2008 (<http://www.publicintegrity.org/blog/entry/694/>)
11. SoS Project - Donations via ActBlue (<http://www.actblue.com/page/colorofchange>)

Categories: National influencers | Organizations | 527 | Progressive influencers | Secretary of State