

## **Blankenship, Palin among W.Va. GOP US House donors**

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Massey Energy Chief Executive Don Blankenship and former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin are among the contributors to West Virginia's congressional candidates, the latest Federal Election Commission financial reports show.

Blankenship contributed \$4,800 to Elliott "Spike" Maynard, the Democrat-turned-Republican running in the 3rd U.S. House District, during the three-month reporting period that ended June 30. David McKinley, the GOP's 1st District nominee, received \$2,400 from Blankenship.

Maynard and McKinley also each attracted \$3,500 from SarahPAC, Palin's political action committee that provided at least \$87,500 to candidates during the quarter.

But such support did not help either GOP nominee keep pace with his Democratic opponent.

McKinley had to loan his campaign \$320,000 to match the \$512,000 raised by Democrat Mike Oliverio from individuals and PACs during the three months. Since launching his campaign, McKinley has devoted \$570,000 in personal funds to his effort. He and Oliverio had similar balances of around \$300,000 as of June 30.

Rep, Nick Rahall, the 3rd District's Democratic incumbent, meanwhile has nearly 14 times the cash on hand as GOP challenger Spike Maynard. Seeking an 18th term, Rahall sported a \$1.58 million balance - more than all the state's other congressional candidates combined - to Maynard's \$114,500. Rahall also outraised Maynard during the filing period, \$174,600 to \$133,700.

But Republican Rep. Shelley Moore Capito has an even more massive edge over her Democratic foe. The 2nd District incumbent ended June 30 with \$572,000 while Virginia Lynch Graf, a former nun new to politics, had just under \$2,700.

Capito does not count Blankenship or Palin among her donors, but her campaign did send \$2,000 each to McKinley and Maynard, her report shows.

The 1st District race pits McKinley, a former state lawmaker and GOP chair, against Oliverio, a state senator who defeated incumbent Rep. Alan Mollohan in the May primary.

A life insurance agent, Oliverio received at least \$53,000 from financial sector individuals and PACs during the quarter. Another \$33,000 came from real estate interests. He also attracted more than \$48,000 from contributors involved in coal, oil, natural gas and other energy-related pursuits.

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Oliverio received more than \$32,400 from members of the Morgantown-area Laurita family or their employees. The family's businesses include MEPCO, a coal company that is building the area's Longview power plant.

Another \$7,100 arrived from fellow legislators, including House Speaker Rick Thompson, D-Wayne. A Morgantown resident, around 44 percent of Oliverio's individual donations came from that city. Nearly 88 percent of all such contributions were in-state.

West Virginians provided nearly as much of McKinley's contribution, while he counted on Wheeling resident for nearly a third of his individual contributions. McKinley hails from that city.

But for more than half of these donors, who provided nearly two-thirds of his \$135,900 total, the campaign included no information about their employers or occupations in its report.

Blankenship is among those contributors. With Massey under fire in the wake of April's disaster at its Upper Big Branch coal mine that killed 29 men, the Oliverio campaign has called on McKinley to return contributions from Blankenship and Massey employees.

Oliverio also cites Blankenship's previous political spending, including the more than \$3 million that helped get a state Supreme Court justice elected in 2004 but then prompted his removal a Massey-related case by the U.S. Supreme Court in a 2009 conflict-of-interest ruling.

McKinley has also hired Greg Thomas, who helped oversee that 2004 spending and other Blankenship-funded political campaigns. Thomas received \$16,600.

McKinley spent \$407,177 to Oliverio's \$273,370 during the reporting period. About three-fourths of Oliverio's money went for advertising with Abar Hutton Media, a Beltway firm. McKinley devoted nearly all his spending to an array of Washington, D.C., area firms: Strategic Media Services, Rising Tide Media Group, Public Opinion Strategies and Political Ink Inc.

Upper Big Branch, located in the 3rd District, is likely to play a role in the Rahall-Maynard contest. Around \$21,000 of Maynard's money during the quarter came from Massey employees, Blankenship's family and former political operatives including Thomas. All told, around one-third of Maynard's individual contributions came from the energy sector. That amount includes \$15,200 from 19 executives or employees of International Coal Group.

About a quarter of Rahall's funds during the three months came from the transportation sector. He sits on the House's committee assigned to that topic. These donors included businesses that build roads and labor unions for pilots and railroad workers.

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Other labor unions provided around 15 percent of his total. But while an Arch Coal executive and CONSOL's PAC contributed money, the energy sector accounted for less than 5 percent of Rahall's funds.

And with two-thirds of his funds provided by PACs, less than 20 percent of his \$48,350 in individual contributions came from West Virginians.

PACs account for a similar portion of Capito's haul last quarter. A member of the House Financial Services Committee, she received around one-fifth of her funds from that sector. Another 10 percent came from manufacturing. Republican leadership PACs contributed about 8 percent of her total.

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