

NEWS

Colorado GOP Leader Claims Phil Anschutz Funds Advance Colorado, a Conservative Activist Group

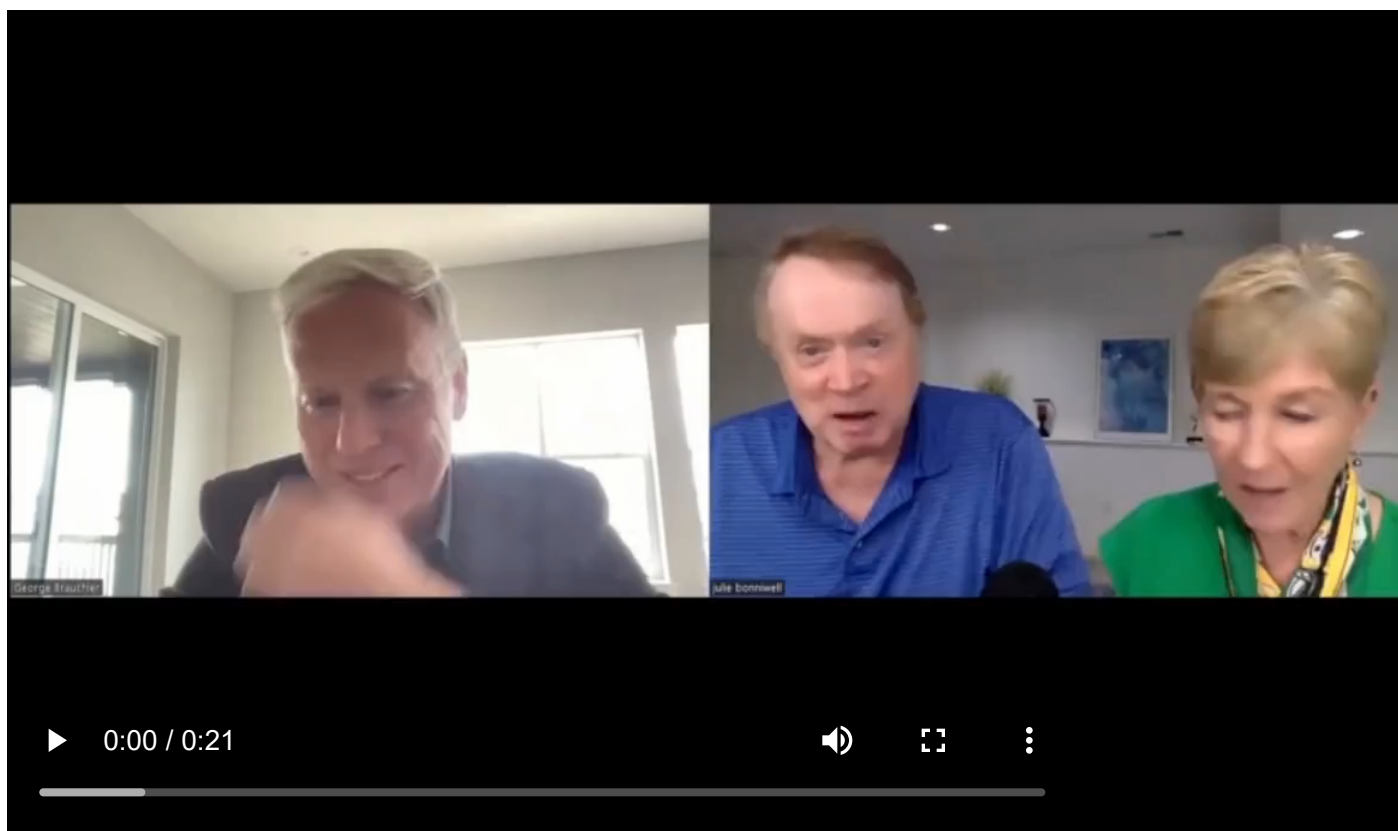
by
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August 10, 2023 (August 10, 2023)

According to longtime conservative activist Chuck Bonniwell, Colorado's most prominent conservative dark money group, Advance Colorado, is funded by billionaire Phil Anschutz.

Bonniwell, who is a member of the state GOP Central Committee, made the claim while interviewing former Arapahoe District Attorney George Brauchler for the podcast he hosts along with his wife, Julie Hayden.

Bonniwell was describing the well-known rift within the Colorado Republican Party between the so-called establishment, backed by business interests and wealthy donors like Anschutz, and the grassroots activists. While the split dates back to the 2010 Tea Party movement, these days the grassroots faction largely consists of die-hard MAGA Trumpers.



Bonniwell: *I'm fascinated because all we do here on the grassroots side — and George is with the Anschutz people, Advance Colorado, all funded by Phil Anschutz, all funded —*

Brauchler: *Wait a minute, here I go out of my way to say, 'You're no Stalinist,' and all of a sudden, you're like, 'Brauchler's on the couch with Phil!'*

Bonniwell: *I think being an Anschutzist is not the same as being a Stalinist.*

Brauchler did not deny Bonniwell's claim, instead laughing it off and returning to the topic at hand, debating the proposed amendment to the party bylaws that would have counted any Central Committee member's failure to vote as a yes. Bonniwell wrote the amendment, which failed by a wide margin at last weekend's meeting.

Brauchler, who has led Advance Colorado as its president ever since his term as Arapahoe County area District Attorney ended in January 2021, did not respond to an email request for comment. Neither did Michael Fields, who leads the Advance Colorado Institute, its 501c3 arm, and is also Advance Colorado's lobbyist.

Bonniwell likewise did not respond to an emailed request to elaborate on his claim about Anschutz's funding of Advance Colorado.

Previously known as Unite for Colorado, the group spent over \$17 million in support Republican candidates and campaigns in 2020 alone. Its tax filing lists Kristi Pollard as its principal officer. Pollard is a nonprofit management consultant and is married to Tim Pollard, co-founder of The 76 Group, Colorado's most prominent Republican consulting firm.

As a 501c4, or so-called "dark money" group, Advance Colorado is not required to disclose its donors. What little we do know comes from 501c3 foundations reporting their grants to the IRS. Advance Colorado received \$250,000 in 2021 from the Bradley Impact Fund, a donor-advised fund aligned with the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation. That same year it received double that amount, \$500,000, from the Colorado Opportunity Foundation, a 501c3 launched in 2020, that funds a number of conservative advocacy groups. Its principal director? That would be Advance Colorado's Michael Fields.



[← Back to main page for COLORADO OPPORTUNITY FOUNDATION](#)



Form 990, Schedule I

Note: To capture the full content of this document, please select landscape mode (11" x 8.5") when printing.

**Schedule I
(Form 990)**

Department of the
Treasury
Internal Revenue Service

Name of the organization
COLORADO OPPORTUNITY FOUNDATION

**Grants and Other Assistance to Organizations,
Governments and Individuals in the United States**

Complete if the organization answered "Yes," on Form 990, Part IV, line 21 or 22.
▶ Attach to Form 990.

▶ Go to www.irs.gov/Form990 for the latest information.

OMB No. 1545-0047

2021

Open to Public
Inspection

Employer identification number
84-4409670

Part I General Information on Grants and Assistance

1 Does the organization maintain records to substantiate the amount of the grants or assistance, the grantees' eligibility for the grants or assistance, and the selection criteria used to award the grants or assistance?

☒ **Yes** ☐ **No**

2 Describe in Part IV the organization's procedures for monitoring the use of grant funds in the United States.

Part II Grants and Other Assistance to Domestic Organizations and Domestic Governments. Complete if the organization answered "Yes" on Form 990, Part IV, line 21, for any recipient that received more than \$5,000. Part II can be duplicated if additional space is needed.

(a) Name and address of organization or government	(b) EIN	(c) IRC section (if applicable)	(d) Amount of cash grant	(e) Amount of non-cash assistance	(f) Method of valuation (book, FMV, appraisal, other)	(g) Description of noncash assistance	(h) Purpose of grant or assistance
(1) COMMON SENSE INSTITUTE 6295 GREENWOOD PLAZA BLVD SUITE 100 GREENWOOD VILLAGE, CO 801114978	27-4253618	501(C)(3)	285,000	0			GENERAL PURPOSE RESEARCH GRANT
(2) PUBLIC TRUST INSTITUTE 98 WADSWORTH BLVD 127-3071 LAKEWOOD, CO 80226	84-3379897	501(C)(3)	350,000	0			GENERAL PURPOSE GRANT
(3) THE WESTERN WAY ORGANIZATION 1800 GLENARM PLACE SUITE 950 DENVER, CO 80202	81-4204053	501(C)(3)	160,000	0			GENERAL PURPOSE GRANT
(4) INDEPENDENCE INSTITUTE 727 E 16TH AVE DENVER, CO 80203	84-0990300	501(C)(3)	825,000	0			GENERAL PURPOSE GRANT
(5) ADVANCE COLORADO 26604 EAST CANYON AVENUE AURORA, CO 80016	85-4192457	501(C)(3)	500,000	0			GENERAL PURPOSE GRANT

2 Enter total number of section 501(c)(3) and government organizations listed in the line 1 table **5**
3 Enter total number of other organizations listed in the line 1 table **0**

For Paperwork Reduction Act Notice, see the Instructions for Form 990.

Cat. No. 50055P

Schedule I (Form 990) 2021

Other conservative groups receiving money from COF include the Common Sense Institute (\$285,000), Public Trust Institute (\$350,000) and the Independence Institute, which got \$850,000, nearly a third of its total income that year. Where did Colorado Opportunity Fund get its money? In 2021, it received nearly half its two million dollar revenue from a \$900,000 grant from The Fidelity

Investments Charitable Gift Fund, which is the nation's largest public charity and the first commercial provider of donor-advised fund. Bradley Impact Fund also reported giving Fields' Colorado Opportunity Fund \$125,000 that year.

Attempts to reach Anschutz at various corporate entities were unsuccessful. Anschutz is the wealthiest person in Colorado. Originally making his fortune in oil and gas, he owns numerous companies, including Anschutz Entertainment Group and Clarity Media, which owns the Colorado Springs Gazette, Denver Gazette, and Colorado Politics. This article will be updated with any responses received.

Bonniwell and Brauchler's entire debate is available [here](#), with the exchange about Advance Colorado beginning at 22:55.

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