

# Food and Agriculture Biotechnology Industry Spends More Than Half a Billion Dollars to Influence Congress

*Campaign Cash and Lobbying Largesse Overwhelm Public Distaste for Genetically Modified Foods Like Genetically Engineered Salmon*

food&waterwatch

Issue Brief • November 2010

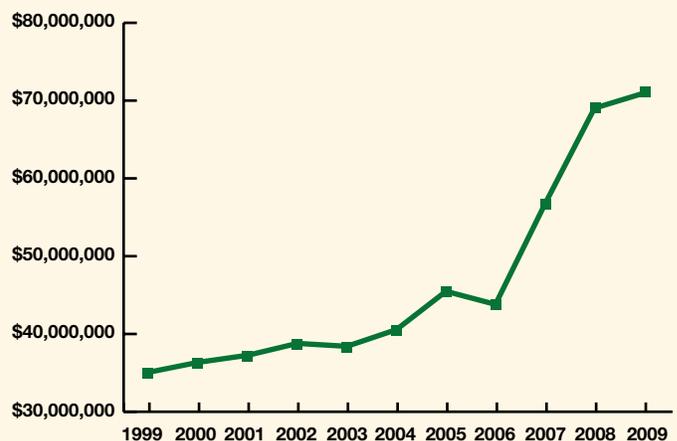
Since 1999, the 50 largest agricultural and food patent-holding companies and two of the largest biotechnology and agrochemical trade associations have spent more than \$572 million in campaign contributions and lobbying expenditures, according to a new analysis by Food & Water Watch. The companies and trade associations have hired a bevy of well-connected lobbying shops — including at least 13 former members of Congress and over 300 former congressional and White House staffers — to promote genetically modified food and agricultural products.

The food and agriculture biotechnology industry has been flexing its financial political muscle to ease the regulatory oversight of genetically modified foods. Lobbying efforts for some of these firms and groups have included approval of cloned food and genetically engineered food, animals and livestock. Companies are also fighting to eliminate or prevent labeling on genetically modified foods in the United States and preventing other countries from regulating genetically modified foods. These efforts have dovetailed with lobbying to tighten intellectual property law protections over patented seeds and animals in attempts to further benefit the biotech industry. Although this report does not survey the efforts of every company on these specific issues, it more generally reflects industry objectives.

The American public remains dubious of the benefits of genetically modified agriculture. A 2010 Food & Water

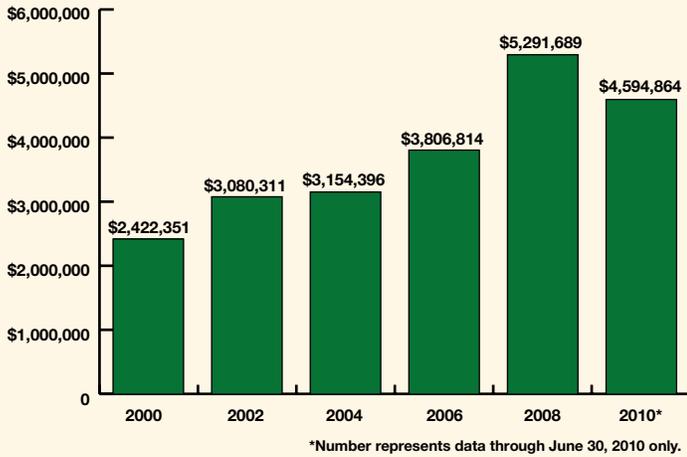
Watch poll conducted by Lake Research Partners found that 78 percent of Americans believe that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) should not approve genetically engineered salmon.<sup>1</sup> A CBS News/New York Times poll from 2008 found that 87 percent believe that food that contains genetically modified ingredients should be labeled.<sup>2</sup> Yet the Biotechnology Industry Organization, the special interest lobby for the industry, spent over \$4 million just in the

## Biotech Lobbying Expenditures



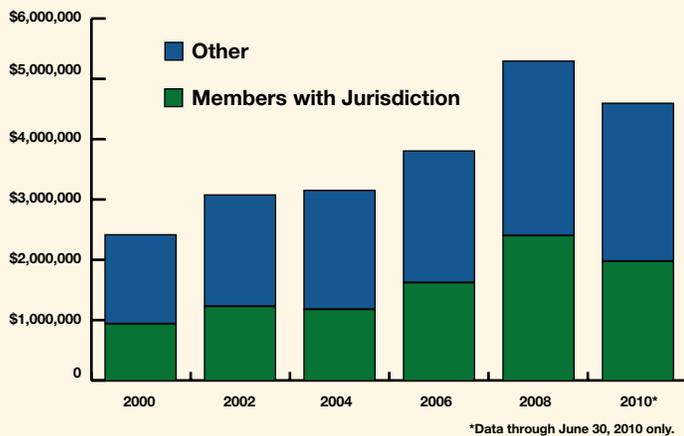
Source: FWW analysis of Center for Responsive Politics data, available at [www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org)

## Total Biotech PAC Contributions



Source: FWW analysis of Center for Responsive Politics data, available at [www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org)

## PAC Contributions to Members with Relevant Jurisdiction



Source: FWW analysis of Center for Responsive Politics data, available at [www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org)

first half of 2010 lobbying for FDA approval of genetically engineered animals<sup>3</sup> and against suspending production of cloned livestock in Europe,<sup>4</sup> as well as other biotechnology policy priorities.

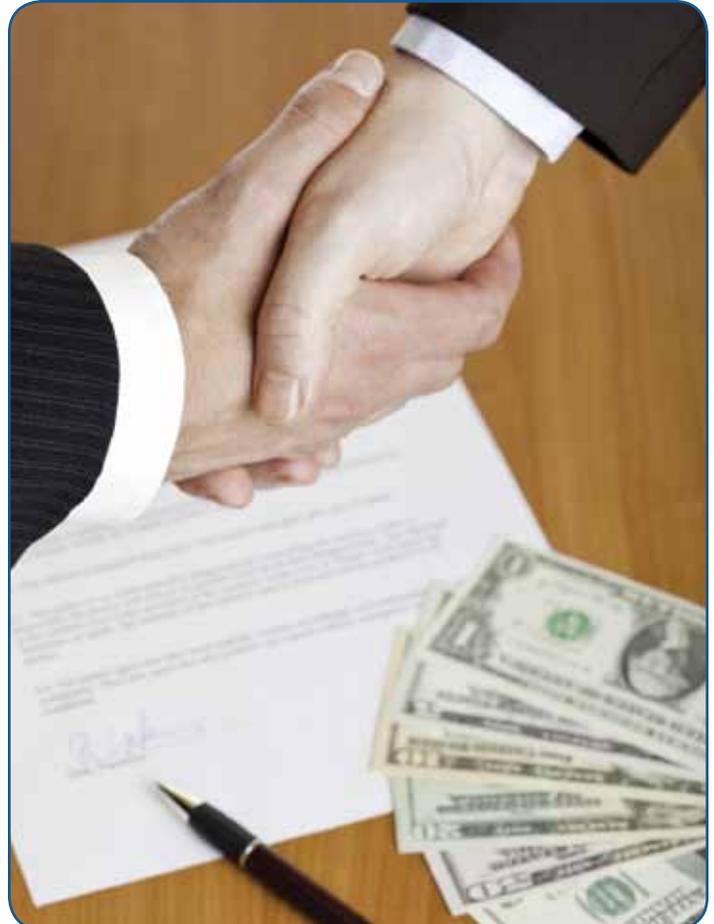
Food & Water Watch analyzed the political action committee campaign contributions, the lobbying expenditures and the employee campaign contributions of the 50 firms who held the largest number of utility patents for food and agriculture products, including their subsidiaries. We also analyzed contributions and expenditures made by the Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO) and Croplife America, both promoters of genetically engineered crops and foods.<sup>5</sup> Not all of the companies have political action committees (PACs) that donate to political candidates or lobby. This analysis focuses only on the companies that do lobby, and on those that have

company PACs. The data, downloaded from the Center for Responsive Politics, covers the 11 ½-year period between January 1, 1999 and June 30, 2010. Food & Water Watch found that the PAC contributions and lobbying expenditures by these food and agriculture biotechnology interests have doubled over the past decade.

## Key findings include:

**Top food and agricultural biotechnology firms spent more than \$547 million lobbying Congress since 1999 and lobby expenditures more than doubled between 1999 and 2009.** These companies and organizations spent more than half a billion dollars — \$547.5 million — lobbying Congress between 1999 and 2009, the most recent full year of available data. The firms employed more than 100 lobbying firms in 2010 alone, as well as their own in-house lobbyists. Lobbying expenditures rose 102.8 percent from \$35.0 million in 1999 to \$71.0 million in 2009.

**Food and agricultural biotechnology PACs made more than \$22 million in campaign contributions since 1999.** These biotechnology interests donated \$22.4 million to congressional candidates between 1999 and July 2010, averaging about \$2 million a year.



**Food and agricultural biotechnology PAC donations more than doubled between the 2000 and 2008 election cycle and are on track to break the record in 2010.** These biotechnology PAC contributions doubled from \$2.4 million in 2000 to \$5.3 million in 2008. In the first three-quarters of the 2010 campaign cycle, from January 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010, these PACs donated \$4.6 million — if the fourth quarter merely extended the same level of spending, donations would exceed \$7.5 million. Given the high expenditures in the current cycle, these biotechnology interests could spend even more.

**More than \$9 million in PAC contributions — 42 percent of all donations — went to members of committees that oversee the biotechnology industry.** A significant share of the PAC donations were targeted at members of Congress that sit on committees with oversight of the biotechnology industry. The \$9,388,217 in contributions to these committees could facilitate access to key lawmakers and decision-making legislative staff with responsibility for the oversight of food safety, environmental protection and crop cultivation. These committees of jurisdiction include the Senate Committees on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry; Commerce, Science and Transportation; and Energy and Natural Resources; and the House Committees on Agriculture and Energy and Commerce.

**Lobbyists worked to prevent consumer labeling of genetically modified foods, promote genetically engineered livestock and animals, and prevent foreign governments from banning or limiting genetically modified crops and foods.**

The non-profit organizations BIO and CropLife America have worked on these issues for many years. In 2004, BIO spent money lobbying on a bill, H.R. 4561, that sought to promote biotechnology *outside* the United States, and a House resolution, H. Res. 252, that sought to use the World Trade Organization to force the European Union to accept U.S. biotech crops.<sup>6</sup> BIO also lobbies the executive branch and regulatory agencies, most recently regarding the acceptance of genetically engineered animals, animal cloning and the labeling of genetically modified food.<sup>7</sup>

**At least a baker's dozen of former members of Congress represent food and agriculture biotechnology interests as lobbyists.** Of the companies surveyed, seven spent over \$8.5 million to hire the firms of at least 13 former senators and representatives to represent these biotechnology interests to their former colleagues in the Congress. Many of these former legislators-turned-lobbyists have formidable legislative pedigrees. For example, Former House Agriculture Committee Ranking Member Charles Stenholm (D-TX) is currently a registered lobbyist for Syngenta, a seller of genetically modified plants in the United States and abroad.<sup>8</sup>

Client	Firm	Former Elected Official	Fees*	Years as Lobbyist
BIO	Holland & Knight	Rep. Jim Davis (D-FL) Rep. Gerry Sikorski (D-MN)	\$420,000	2009-2010
BIO	Clark & Weinstock	Rep. Vic Fazio (D-CA) Rep. Vin Weber (R-MN)	\$680,000	2002-2004
Eli Lilly	Capitol Hill Consulting Group	Rep. Bill Brewster (D-OK)	\$360,000	2006-2010
Monsanto	The Nickles Group	Sen. Don Nickles (R-OK)	\$643,500	2007-2010
Novartis	Capitol Hill Consulting Group	Rep. Bill Brewster (D-OK)	\$760,000	2003-2010
Novartis	Parry, Romani et al	Sen. Steven D Symms (R-ID)	\$1,080,000	2002-2010
Roche Holdings/ Genentech/ Hoffman-LaRoche	Normandy Group	Rep. Henry Bonilla (R-TX)	\$670,000	2007-2010
Sanofi-Aventis	Arent, Fox et al	Sen. Dale Bumpers (D-AR)	\$580,000	2003-2009
Sanofi-Aventis	Parry, Romani et al	Sen. Dennis Deconcini (D-AZ) Sen. Steven D Symms (R-ID)	\$1,360,000	1999-2009 2005-2009
Sanofi-Aventis	Twenty-First Century Group	Rep. Jack Fields (R-TX)	\$590,000	2004-2010
Sanofi-Aventis	Hogan & Hartson	Rep. John Edward Porter (R-IL)	\$750,000	2007-2009
Syngenta Corp.	Olsson, Frank & Weeda	Rep. Charles Stenholm (D-TX)	\$700,000	2006-2010
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$8,593,500</b>	

\*Fees paid to firm while former elected official was registered as a lobbyist for the client.

Source: FWW analysis of Center for Responsive Politics data, available at [www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org)



Former members of Congress have special access to their former colleagues, shared experiences, and often collegial or personal relationships. For example, until 2006, former members of the House of Representatives had privileges at the members' gymnasium and even on the floor of the House, even if they were registered lobbyists.<sup>9</sup> (They no longer retain that access if they are registered lobbyists.) Former senators can use the Senate Dining Room and senators-only elevators, and registered lobbyists have only been prevented from accessing the Senate floor since 2006.<sup>10</sup>

The biotechnology industry is a classic example of the revolving door. For example, in 2005, the biotech trade association BIO hired former U.S. Representative James C. Greenwood as its CEO. Rep. Greenwood served in Congress from 1993 until January 2005 as a Republican from Pennsylvania.<sup>11</sup> While there, he was a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, which has direct oversight over many of BIO's priorities.<sup>12</sup> In addition to his own considerable clout with current members and staffers, Greenwood hired two other former members of Congress who also sat on the Commerce Committee, Jim Davis (D-FL) and Gerry Sikorski (D-MN), to represent BIO as registered lobbyists.<sup>13</sup> Their firm, Holland and Knight, has collected over \$400,000 in the past 18 months to lobby on behalf of BIO.

***Food and agriculture biotechnology firms employ more than 300 former congressional and White House staff members as lobbyists.*** These biotechnology interests employ former congressional and White House staffers to lobby Congress and federal agencies. The revolving door between congressional staff and corporate lobbyists allows staff to cash in on their legislative expertise as lobbyists for the industry. Among some of the most connected lobbyists are:

**John Bradley (Brad) Holsclaw:** Brad Holsclaw spent 11 years as the senior legislative advisor on Sen. Bob Dole's (R-KS) Republican leadership floor staff.<sup>14</sup> He then formed what became Tongour Simpson Holsclaw with former Sen. Alan Simpson (R-WY) and Simpson's former Chief Counsel, Mike Tongour.<sup>15</sup> Now known as TCH, the group brags of its connection, quoting a post on InfluenceOnline that claims that Mr. Holsclaw is "a jogging buddy" of then-Senate Finance Chairman Chuck Grassley.<sup>16</sup> Mr. Holsclaw has represented Monsanto, BIO and Aventis.

**Tony Podesta:** Among the most powerful Democratic power brokers in Washington, Tony Podesta became the co-chairman of PodestaMatoon in 1998, which is now the Podesta Group. According to the Houston Chronicle, his connections include, "a web of personal contacts stretching back 42 years

## Political Expenditures of Largest Food and Agricultural Biotechnology Patent Holders, January 1999 - June 2010

Company	Total	Lobbying Expenditures	PAC Contributions	Employee Contributions
Abbott Laboratories	\$51,044,726	\$48,359,000	\$2,685,726	--
Applera	\$1,720,000	\$1,720,000	--	--
AstraZeneca/Zeneca Plant Science	\$29,264,000	\$27,260,000	\$1,877,405	\$126,595
Aventis	\$1,349,262	\$800,000	\$517,265	\$31,997
BASF Corp	\$10,496,318	\$9,270,931	\$1,183,499	\$41,888
Bayer Corp	\$3,564,915	\$1,852,000	\$1,577,000	\$135,915
Becton, Dickinson, and Co.	\$9,973,417	\$9,705,766	\$244,750	\$22,901
BIO	\$60,203,556	\$59,601,796	\$601,760	--
Chiron Corp	\$6,562,758	\$6,562,758	--	--
CropLife America	\$21,343,017	\$20,608,109	\$725,841	\$9,067
DeKalb Genetics	\$1,975			\$1,975
Dow Agrosciences	\$8,741,350	\$8,455,000	\$284,700	\$1,650
Dupont Co	\$26,918,930	\$25,653,698	\$1,021,305	\$243,927
Eli Lilly and Co	\$73,763,153	\$69,989,110	\$3,565,950	\$208,093
Genencor International	\$2,034,000	\$2,034,000	--	--
Hoffman-La Roche/ Roche Holdings/ Genentech	\$68,827,790	\$66,768,591	\$2,059,199	--
Life Technologies Inc./ Invitrogen	\$4,193,250	\$3,920,000	\$273,250	--
Merck & Co.	\$64,211,893	\$60,766,294	\$2,662,199	\$783,400
Monsanto	\$53,196,569	\$51,866,730	\$705,605	\$624,234
Novartis	\$47,827,443	\$46,101,379	\$1,485,885	\$240,179
Novo-Nordisk	\$6,977,341	\$6,730,000	\$234,536	\$12,805
PerkinElmer Inc.	\$1,800,000	\$1,800,000	--	--
Syngenta	\$10,539,640	\$9,885,000	\$644,550	\$10,090
Unilever	\$7,740,000	\$7,740,000	--	--

Source: FWW analysis of Center for Responsive Politics data, available at [www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org)

and six Democratic presidential candidates. His brother John was Bill Clinton's White House chief of staff and an adviser on President Barack Obama's transition team."<sup>17</sup> Now, he wields his influence representing biotech giants Syngenta and Novartis.

### **Republican candidates received more than 60 percent of food and agriculture biotechnology PAC contributions.**

Between 1999 and 2010, the GOP scooped up \$13.8 mil-

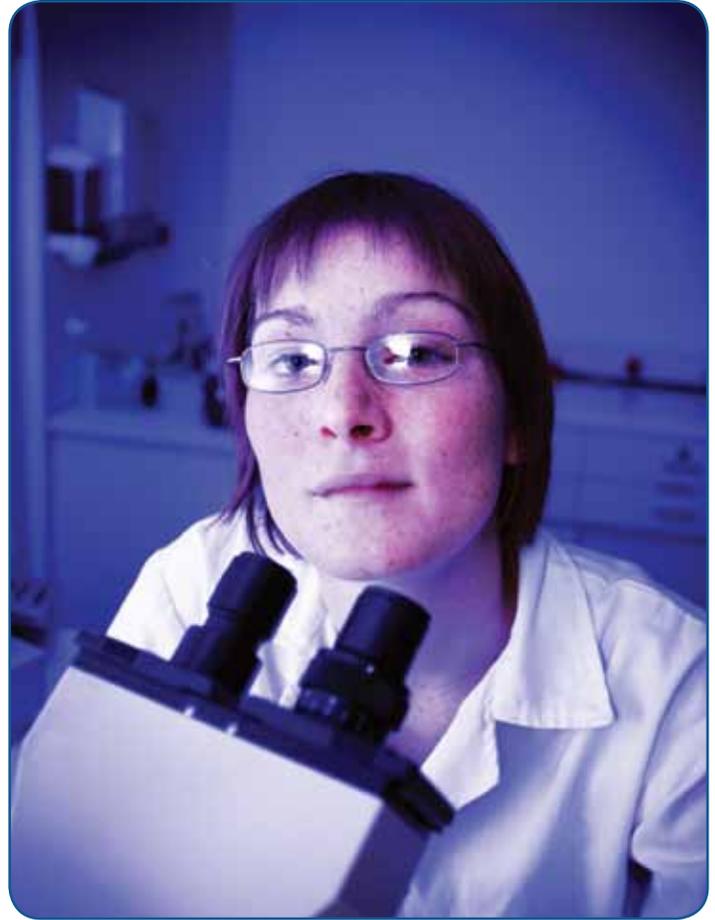
lion, or 61.7 percent, of the PAC contributions from these biotechnology firms. Between the 2000 and 2006 election cycle, more than 70 percent of the contributions went to Republican candidates. But even when the Democrats controlled Congress during the 2008 election cycle, more than half the PAC donations went to Republicans. During the first 18 months of the 2010 cycle, 53.8 percent of PAC donations went to Democratic candidates.

**Employees of the food and agriculture biotechnology firms made almost \$2.5 million in contributions to congressional candidates between 1999 and 2010.** Employee contributions averaged almost \$500,000 per cycle between the 2000 and 2010 election cycle. Republicans received just over 60 percent of the donations.

**Employees donated just over \$200,000 to President Obama's election campaign.** This was 40 percent of what they had historically given to all House, Senate and political party committees combined.

## Endnotes

- 1 Lake Research Partners. "Americans In Near Unanimity in Their Disapproval of Genetically Engineered Fish and Meat in the Marketplace." Press release, September 20, 2010.
- 2 CBS News Poll Database. April, 2008.
- 3 Biotechnology Industry Association. Lobby Disclosure Act of 1995 (Sec. 5). Lobbying Report, Q1 2010, 4/20/10, at 3, 4, 14 and 19. The BIO website states that, "The mission of BIO's Animal Policy Committee Stewardship Initiative is to institute and promote guidelines for the development and use of GE animals..." Available online at [http://bio.org/foodag/animal\\_biotech/#genetic](http://bio.org/foodag/animal_biotech/#genetic), accessed 10/2010.
- 4 BIO Lobbying Report, Q1 2010, 4/20/10, at 2, 3, 5, 15, 20, and 44. BIO position from BIO Press Release. "EU Cloning Proposal Shows Disregard for Science." October 19, 2010.
- 5 Economic Research Service. "Agricultural Biotechnology Intellectual Property: Top 100 Patent Holders, U.S. and non-U.S. companies only." US Department of Agriculture. Available online at [http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/AgBiotechIP/Data/Table12\\_Top100USNonUSCompSummarySubs.htm](http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/AgBiotechIP/Data/Table12_Top100USNonUSCompSummarySubs.htm). Updated 8/26/2004, accessed 11/2010. USDA categorizes the patents under the agencies jurisdiction, which does not include veterinary medicines (like the salmon application), pharmaceuticals, and cloning. On its web site, BIO claims to be "the world's largest biotechnology organization." The mission statement of BIO includes: "The mission of BIO is to be the champion of biotechnology and the advocate for its member organizations - both large and small." It advocates for biotech crops. See <http://bio.org/aboutbio/>, accessed October 2010. CropLife America's mission statement reads, "Established in 1933, CropLife America represents the developers, manufacturers, formulators and distributors of plant science solutions for agriculture and pest management in the United States. CropLife America's member companies produce, sell and distribute *virtually all* the crop protection and biotechnology products used by American farmers." (emphasis added) Available at <http://www.croplifeamerica.org/about>, accessed 10/2010.
- 6 Lobbying report. Biotechnology Industry Organization, mid-year 2004. 8/16/2004, at 3.
- 7 Lobbying report. Biotechnology Industry Organization, Q1, 2004. 4/20/2009 at 3-4.
- 8 Lobbying report. Olsson Frank Weeda Terman Bode Matz PC, Q2, 2010. 7/20/2010, at 2; Syngenta. 2009 Annual Report. February, 2010, at 23.
- 9 Milbank, Dana. "An end to treadmill lobbying." *Washington Post*, February 1, 2006.
- 10 Chaddock, Gail Russell. "Senate's lobby reform: strong enough?" *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 31, 2006.
- 11 Biographical Directory of the United States Congress. Available online at <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=G000439>, accessed 10/2010.
- 12 Biotechnology Industry Association. Biography of James C. Greenwood. Available online at <http://www.bio.org/aboutbio/biography.asp?sp=00078503>. Accessed 10/2010.
- 13 Holland & Knight. Biography of Jim Davis. Available online at <http://www.hklaw.com/id77/biosJDAVIS/>. Accessed 10/2010; Holland & Knight. Biography of Gerry Sikorski. Available online at <http://www.hklaw.com/id77/biosGSIKORSK/>. Accessed 10/2010.
- 14 From the TCH Group website, available at <http://www.tchgroup.com/html/index.php/about/brad-holsclaw/>, accessed 10/2010.
- 15 Sarasohn, Judy. "Special Interests: Lytle answers the USTA's call." *The Washington Post*, July 20, 2000, at A23.
- 16 TCH Group website, available at <http://www.tchgroup.com/html/index.php/category/press/>, accessed 10/2010
- 17 Powell, Stewart and Yang Wang. "GOP raids Democrats' donor list." *Houston Chronicle*. September 6, 2010.



**About Food & Water Watch:** Food & Water Watch is a nonprofit consumer organization that works to ensure clean water and safe food. Food & Water Watch works with grassroots organizations around the world to create an economically and environmentally viable future. Through research, public and policymaker education, media and lobbying, we advocate policies that guarantee safe, wholesome food produced in a humane and sustainable manner, and public, rather than private, control of water resources including oceans, rivers and groundwater.

