

NON-PROFIT

Public Citizen

Public Citizen, Inc. is a liberal 501(c)(4) lobbying and advocacy organization created by left-wing activist and former Green Party presidential candidate Ralph Nader. ^[1] The organization supports a broad liberal policy agenda focused on opposing to the free-market interests of American business owners. ^[2] The organization signed a petition supporting the Green New Deal (<https://www.influencewatch.org/hub/green-new-deal/>). ^[3]

Throughout its more than 30-year history Public Citizen touts that it successfully advocated for numerous left-wing policy mandates. The group's anti-free-market lobbying agenda supports increased government spending ^[4] and opposed multiple tax cuts. ^[5] The group also touts its support for enacted policies that increased civil liabilities, ^[6] and imposed costly environmental mandates ^[7] and regulatory red-tape ^[8] on businesses.

PC chastises special interest lobbying for undermining the legitimacy of American Democracy. ^[9] However, Public Citizen is a lobbying entity ^[10] funded by a number of liberal financiers and special interests such as liberal billionaire George Soros (<https://www.influencewatch.org/person/george-soros/>), the Carnegie Corporation of New York (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/carnegie-corporation-of-new-york/>), and the Rockefeller Foundation (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/rockefeller-foundation/>). ^[11]

Organizational History

Liberal activist and former Green Party presidential candidate Ralph Nader created Public Citizen, Inc. in 1971 to act as a fund-raising conduit for his two other Washington-based organizations, the Center for Study of Responsive Law and the U.S. Public Interest Research Group (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/u-s-public-interest-research-group/>). Thomas A. Troyer, a tax lawyer, and Paul Gikas, a professor at the University of Michigan Medical School, both served on PC's initial board of Directors. ^[12]

In 2001 Public Citizen distanced itself from its founder Ralph Nader in order to avoid criticisms from Democrats who believed Nader's Green Party presidential candidacy cost Democratic nominee Al Gore the presidency in 2000. ^[13]

Programs

Public Citizen uses lobbying, litigation, research, and advocacy ^[14] to push a broad liberal policy agenda opposed to free-market interests. ^[15]

According to its annual tax filings, in 2015 Public Citizen, Inc. funded three main programs. Congress Watch pressures Congress and lobbies for anti-free market legislation, ^[16] Global Trade Watch advocates for nationalist protectionism, ^[17] and a communications and outreach program supporting the organization's wide range of left-wing policy goals. ^[18]

PUBLIC CITIZEN FOUNDATION

Also see Public Citizen Foundation (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/public-citizen-foundation/>) (nonprofit)

Public Citizen Foundation supports the lobbying and advocacy efforts of Public Citizen, ^[19] Inc. sharing the costs for the Public Citizen, Inc.'s programs, while also funding a Litigation Group program, the Health Research Program, and the Energy Program. ^[20]

Public Citizen runs many of its campaigns in coordination with other left-of-center advocacy groups. In 2017, the group teamed up with Sierra Club (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/sierra-club/>), Greenpeace (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/greenpeace/>), Safe Climate Campaign, and Environment America to push for environmentalist mandates on auto manufacturers. ^[21] In 2016, Public Citizen partnered with over a hundred liberal advocacy groups and labor unions including Planned Parenthood (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/planned-parenthood-federation-of-america/>), U.S. Public Interest Research Group (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/u-s-public-interest-research-group/>), and a number of labor unions including the AFL-CIO (<https://www.influencewatch.org/labor-union/afl-cio/>), American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), (<https://www.influencewatch.org/labor-union/american-federation-of-state-county-and-municipal-employees-afscme/>) Service Employees International Union (SEIU), (<https://www.influencewatch.org/labor-union/service-employees-international-union-seiu/>) and American Federation of Teachers (AFT) (<https://www.influencewatch.org/labor-union/american-federation-of-teachers/>) to oppose numerous conservative budget policies and to support corporate regulations. ^[22]

Lobbying Activities

Since 2007, Public Citizen has spent over \$2.4 million lobbying Congress ^[23] and federal agencies ^[24] on 460 bills. ^[25] The group's anti-free-market lobbying agenda supports increased government spending; expanded civil, environmental, and regulatory burdens; and a wide array of other left-wing policy prerogatives. ^[26]

Public Citizen claims to have successfully lobbied against multiple tax cuts, ^[27] in favor of retaining the death tax, ^[28] and against policies that would have limited federal spending. ^[29] In 2017, the group expressed "outrage" at the passage of a Republican-backed tax cut package, ^[30] and the group's President Robert Weissman opposed the 35% decrease in the corporate tax rate. ^[31]

In 1975, Public Citizen successfully lobbied Congress for environmentalist legislation, including fuel economy mandates for cars. ^[32] In 1980 the group pushed for the Superfund law, which exposed corporations to unlimited liability for environmental cleanup efforts. ^[33] It fought against President Ronald Reagan's efforts to reign in environmentalist regulations, ^[34] and the group claims to have played a major role in President Barack Obama's 2012 decision to reject the Keystone XL pipeline. ^[35]

Public Citizen claims to have successfully pushed congress and federal agencies to implement numerous other regulations banning products, ^[36] extending labor protections, ^[37] and opposing the deregulation of electric utilities. ^[38] It also touts that it helped create new federal regulatory agencies such as the Consumer Product Safety Commission ^[39] and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. ^[40]

In 2020, Public Citizen co-signed a letter addressed to president Donald Trump which advocated for hiring Federal Election Commission (FEC) Commissioners to reach quorum and to enforce election laws.

Funding

Public Citizen chastises special interest lobbying for undermining the legitimacy of American Democracy. ^[41] However, it has received funding from a number of left-wing organizations including George Soros' (<https://www.influencewatch.org/person/george-soros/>) Open Society Foundations (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/open-society-foundations/>) (formerly the Open Society Institute), the Carnegie Corporation of New York (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/carnegie-corporation-of-new-york/>), the Ford Foundation (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/ford-foundation/>), the Foundation for Deep Ecology (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/foundation-for-deep-ecology/>), the Joyce Foundation (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/joyce-foundation/>), the Public Welfare Foundation (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/public-welfare-foundation-inc/>), the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/rockefeller-brothers-fund/>), the Rockefeller Foundation (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/rockefeller-foundation/>), the Schumann Center for Media and Democracy (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/schumann-center-for-media-and-democracy-inc/>), and the Surdna Foundation (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/surdna-foundation/>). ^[42]

The group also often chastises "Dark Money" organizations that air electioneering communications without fully disclosing their donors. ^[43] But Public Citizen is registered as a 501(c)(4) lobbying group and touts that it has run ads against President Donald Trump, ^[44] including one internet attack ad titled "An Honest Campaign Ad." ^[45] The group also touts that in 2003 it ran a special website attacking President George W. Bush's 2004 re-election campaign for taking alleged special-interest contributions. ^[46]

Public Citizen touts that it has sought to lead other left-of-center allies in a unified fight against President Trump. ^[47] It has sharply criticized President Trump's decision to roll back multiple environmentalist policy mandates, ^[48] ^[49] opposed his repeal of numerous regulations, ^[50] and was critical of the President's budget. ^[51]

People

Robert Weissman has served as president of Public Citizen since 2009. Prior to joining Public Citizen, Weissman was executive director at Essential Action where he pushed for stringent legislative and regulatory actions against banks and other companies. ^[52]

Public Citizen, Inc.'s board of directors includes high profile trial attorneys Andrew Friedman, Shannon Liss-Riordan, and Jason B. Adkins. ^[53]

References



1. "Nader Forms Unit To Seek Donations." *N.Y. Times*. June 2, 1971. Accessed January 22, 2018. <http://www.nytimes.com/1971/06/02/archives/nader-forms-unit-to-seek-donations.html> (<https://www.nytimes.com/1971/06/02/archives/nader-forms-unit-to-seek-donations.html>) ^
2. "Public Citizen: About Us." Public Citizen Website. Undated. Accessed January 22, 2018. <https://www.citizen.org/about/about-us> (<https://www.citizen.org/about/about-us>) ^
3. "Green New Deal Hub." Influence Watch. <https://www.influencewatch.org/hub/green-new-deal/> (<https://www.influencewatch.org/hub/green-new-deal/>). ^
4. "Public Citizen: Accomplishments: 1971-1979." Public Citizen Website. Undated. Accessed January 22, 2018. <https://www.citizen.org/about/accomplishments/accomplishments-1979-1971> (<https://www.citizen.org/about/accomplishments/accomplishments-1979-1971>) ^
5. "Public Citizen: Accomplishments: 1971-1979." Public Citizen Website. Undated. Accessed January 22, 2018. <https://www.citizen.org/about/accomplishments/accomplishments-1979-1971> (<https://www.citizen.org/about/accomplishments/accomplishments-1979-1971>) ^
6. "Public Citizen: Accomplishments: 1986-1991." Public Citizen Website. Undated. Accessed January 22, 2018. <https://www.citizen.org/about/accomplishments/accomplishments-1991-1986> (<https://www.citizen.org/about/accomplishments/accomplishments-1991-1986>) ^
7. "Public Citizen: Accomplishments: 1971-1979." Public Citizen Website. Undated. Accessed January 22, 2018. <https://www.citizen.org/about/accomplishments/accomplishments-1979-1971> (<https://www.citizen.org/about/accomplishments/accomplishments-1979-1971>) ^

Related Profiles

NON-PROFITS

By the People (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/by-the-people/>)

OTHER GROUPS

March for Truth (<https://www.influencewatch.org/organization/march-for-truth/>)

Directors, Employees & Supporters

Ralph Nader (<https://www.influencewatch.org/person/ralph-nader/>)

FOUNDER

Kristin Engberg (<https://www.influencewatch.org/person/kristin-engberg/>)

Associated Organizations

Public Citizen Foundation (Non-profit) (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/public-citizen-foundation/>)

Coalition Memberships

Green New Deal Coalition (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/green-new-deal-coalition/>)

Health Care Voter (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/health-care-voter/>)

March for Truth (<https://www.influencewatch.org/organization/march-for-truth/>)

Not One Penny (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/not-one-penny/>)

U.S. Climate Action Network (US-CAN) (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/us-climate-action-network/>)

Donor Organizations

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) (Labor Union) (<https://www.influencewatch.org/labor-union/american-federation-of-state-county-and-municipal-employees-afscme/>)

Carnegie Corporation of New York (Non-profit) (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/carnegie-corporation-of-new-york/>)

Cultures of Resistance Network (Non-profit) (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/cultures-of-resistance-network/>)

Ford Foundation (Non-profit) (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/ford-foundation/>)

Foundation for Deep Ecology (Non-profit) (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/foundation-for-deep-ecology/>)

Joyce Foundation (Non-profit) (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/joyce-foundation/>)

National Association of Letter Carriers (Labor Union) (<https://www.influencewatch.org/labor-union/national-association-of-letter-carriers/>)

Open Society Foundations (OSF) (Non-profit) (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/open-society-foundations/>)

Piper Action Fund (Non-profit) (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/piper-action-fund/>)

Ploughshares Fund (Non-profit) (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/ploughshares-fund/>)

Public Welfare Foundation (Non-profit) (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/public-welfare-foundation-inc/>)

Rockefeller Brothers Fund (Non-profit) (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/rockefeller-brothers-fund/>)

Rockefeller Foundation (Non-profit) (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/rockefeller-foundation/>)

Schumann Media Center (Non-profit) (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/schumann-center-for-media-and-democracy-inc/>)

Surdna Foundation (Non-profit) (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/surdna-foundation/>)

Warsh Mott Legacy (Non-profit) (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/warsh-mott-legacy/>)

Donation Recipients

American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) (Labor Union) (<https://www.influencewatch.org/labor-union/afl-cio/>)

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) (Labor Union) (<https://www.influencewatch.org/labor-union/american-federation-of-state-county-and-municipal-employees-afscme/>)

American Federation of Teachers (AFT) (Labor Union) (<https://www.influencewatch.org/labor-union/american-federation-of-teachers/>)

Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) (Non-profit) (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/planned-parenthood-federation-of-america/>)

Service Employees International Union (SEIU) (Labor Union) (<https://www.influencewatch.org/labor-union/service-employees-international-union-seiu/>)

U.S. Public Interest Research Group (US-PIRG) (Non-profit) (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/u-s-public-interest-research-group/>)

Vendors

Amalgamated Bank of New York (Amalgamated Bank) (For-profit) (<https://www.influencewatch.org/for-profit/amalgamated-bank/>)

Earthjustice (formerly the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund) (Non-profit) (<https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/earthjustice-formerly-the-sierra-club-legal-defense-fund/>)

Supported Movements

Green New Deal (GND) (<https://www.influencewatch.org/movement/green-new-deal/>)

1 Medicare for All (<https://www.influencewatch.org/movement/medicare-for-all/>)

Nonprofit Information

- **Accounting Period:** September - August
- **Tax Exemption Received:** June 1, 1972

Available Filings

2016 Sep

Form Type	Form 990
Total revenue	\$5,262,789
Total functional expenses	\$5,651,797
Total assets (EOY)	\$4,555,741
Total liabilities (EOY)	\$710,533
Unrelated business income?	N
Total contributions	\$4,729,515
Program service revenue	\$0

Investment income	\$56,758
Comp. of current officers, directors, etc.	\$132,358
Form 990	

2015 Sep

Form Type	Form 990
Total revenue	\$5,587,919
Total functional expenses	\$5,934,777
Total assets (EOY)	\$4,933,628
Total liabilities (EOY)	\$868,148
Unrelated business income?	N
Total contributions	\$4,929,872
Program service revenue	\$0
Investment income	\$87,761
Comp. of current officers, directors, etc.	\$455,818
Form 990	PDF (HTTPS://PROJECTS.PROPUBLICA.ORG/NONPROFITS/DOWNLOAD-FILING?PATH=2016_07_EO%2F23-7104508_990O_201509.PDF)

2014 Sep

Form Type	Form 990
Total revenue	\$5,965,884
Total functional expenses	\$4,765,079

Total assets (EOY)	\$5,499,949
Total liabilities (EOY)	\$903,475
Unrelated business income?	N
Total contributions	\$5,381,061
Program service revenue	\$0
Investment income	\$40,643
Comp. of current officers, directors, etc.	\$114,630
Form 990	PDF (HTTPS://PROJECTS.PROPUBLICA.ORG/NONPROFITS/DOWNLOAD-FILING?PATH=2015_02_EO%2F23-7104508_9900_201409.PDF)

2013 Sep

Form Type	Form 990
Total revenue	\$4,400,924
Total functional expenses	\$4,283,228
Total assets (EOY)	\$4,002,828
Total liabilities (EOY)	\$616,075
Unrelated business income?	N
Total contributions	\$3,835,082
Program service revenue	\$0
Investment income	\$14,627

Comp. of current officers, directors, etc.	\$80,696
Form 990	PDF (HTTPS://PROJECTS.PROPUBLICA.ORG/NONPROFITS/DOWNLOAD-FILING?PATH=2014_03_EO%2F23-7104508_990O_201309.PDF)

2012 Sep

Form Type	Form 990
Total revenue	\$5,756,464
Total functional expenses	\$4,654,980
Total assets (EOY)	\$4,054,135
Total liabilities (EOY)	\$814,909
Unrelated business income?	N
Total contributions	\$5,335,628
Program service revenue	\$0
Investment income	\$13,432
Comp. of current officers, directors, etc.	\$78,927
Form 990	PDF (HTTPS://PROJECTS.PROPUBLICA.ORG/NONPROFITS/DOWNLOAD-FILING?PATH=2013_02_EO%2F23-7104508_990O_201209.PDF)

2011 Sep

Form Type	Form 990
Total revenue	\$3,756,108
Total functional expenses	\$3,642,212
Total assets (EOY)	\$2,844,521

Total liabilities (EOY)	\$742,663
Unrelated business income?	N
Total contributions	\$3,324,511
Program service revenue	\$0
Investment income	\$11,666
Comp. of current officers, directors, etc.	\$73,332
Form 990	PDF (HTTPS://PROJECTS.PROPUBLICA.ORG/NONPROFITS/DOWNLOAD-FILING?PATH=2012_03_EO%2F23-7104508_990O_201109.PDF)

Additional Filings (PDFs)

- 2010 Sep Form 990 (https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/download-filing?path=2011_03_EO%2F23-7104508_990O_201009.pdf)
- 2009 Sep Form 990 (https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/download-filing?path=2010_03_EO%2F23-7104508_990O_200909.pdf)
- 2008 Sep Form 990 (https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/download-filing?path=2009_03_EO%2F23-7104508_990O_200809.pdf)
- 2007 Sep Form 990 (https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/download-filing?path=2008_02_EO%2F23-7104508_990O_200709.pdf)
- 2006 Sep Form 990 (https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/download-filing?path=2007_02_EO%2F23-7104508_990O_200609.pdf)
- 2005 Sep Form 990 (https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/download-filing?path=2006_02_EO%2F23-7104508_990O_200509.pdf)

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1600 20TH ST NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20009-1001

<http://Citizen.org> (<http://Citizen.org>)

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