Name: Don Hazen

Title: Executive Editor

Organization: AlterNet/Independent Media Institute

Will you be responsible for overseeing the program at your organization? Yes

If you have read and agree to the requirements to the program, please mark X here: \_\_\_\_\_X\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Why is your organization interested in reporting on the topic of corporate influence on our democracy?

The primary focus of AlterNet's editorial coverage -- for more than 12 years since we began publishing on the web -- is corporate accountability and the exposure of corporate abuse and corruption across the board in many industries, by separate companies, and by trade associations like the Chamber of Commerce. We have published many hundreds of articles, read by tens of millions of people on a wide range of corporate influence and abuse. Along with our nation's excessive war spending (which is intimately connected with "out of whack" corporate influence), fighting the enormous power of corporations -- the gigantic salaries of executives, and the disregard for workers, communities, and consumers, is the fundamental struggle of our time.

In this project we want to leverage AlterNet's strengths -- our large audience, highly effective messaging on headlines and frames, and an array of editorial talent, both in house and among our contributing writers, to create an editorial project that will be easily accessible to readers and make a splash.

2. Has your organization reported on this topic in the past? **Yes**

*(Below is just a sampling. Unless otherwise noted, all pieces are AlterNet originals.)*

***How Bush’s "War on Terror" Unleashed a Flood of Corporate Political Dollars and Undermined American Democracy*** by Joshua Holland [http://www.alternet.org/world/148624/]

***Bailed-Out Companies Spending Big Money to Elect Politicians They Favor Corporate Hijacking of Our Elections Is Well Under Way, with Foreign Companies Chipping in to Destroy Our Democracy*** by Joshua Holland [http://www.alternet.org/news/148613/]

***How the Chamber of Commerce Allegedly Laundered Millions in Charity Dollars to Beat Back Financial Reform and Reelect Republicans*** by Joshua Holland

[http://www.alternet.org/news/148174/]

***A Ground's Eye View of How Millions of Shady Corporate Political Dollars Are Hijacking This Election*** by Joshua Holland [http://www.alternet.org/news/148680/]

***Unlimited Secret Money Is Drowning Democratic Elections*** by Kevin Zeese [http://www.alternet.org/news/150864/]

***The big corporate money behind the MLPA*** *Initiative* by Dan Bacher [http://blogs.alternet.org/danbacher/2011/02/18/the-corporate-money-behind-the-mlpa-initiative/]

***Campaign Cash: Sen. Jim DeMint’s Making a Mint with Corporate Cash*** by Zach Carter

[http://blogs.alternet.org/speakeasy/2010/10/28/campaign-cash-sen-jim-demints-making-a-mint-with-corporate-cash/]

***Campaign Cash: How Citizens United Will Change Elections Forever*** by Zach Carter

[http://blogs.alternet.org/speakeasy/2010/10/25/campaign-cash-how-citizens-united-will-change-elections-forever/]

***Campaign Cash: Citizens United Becomes Get-Out-of-Jail-Free Card for Corporate Criminals*** by Zach Carter [http://blogs.alternet.org/speakeasy/2010/11/03/campaign-cash-citizens-united-becomes-get-out-of-jail-free-card-for-corporate-criminals/]

***Money Pollution: How the Chamber of Commerce Dirties Our Skies and Our Democracy*** by Bill McKibben [http://www.alternet.org/economy/150005] Source: TomDispatch

3. Please provide a brief outline of a) the likely topic(s) that your media organization(s) would focus on and why. Let us know what scoop you hope to uncover, scandal you hope to lay bare, or top-secret information you want to blow up.

Nothing has undermined our democracy more than the overwhelming influence of corporate interests. And seldom has a problem worsen, as has the influence of corporate money and resources on governance.

Because of the limits of focusing on narrow political contributions, in a system awash with cash, in order to try to make change, we will take a broader view. Our conclusion is the best antidote

at this stage, is to raise the stakes with the public with companies and industries they know, and with headlines and frames that can attract attention.

Using the model of the "Most Political Corrupt Industries in America" (with a special focus on specific companies and trade associations therein) we will use the very deep and widely available data on

corporate political activity, and research by an array of government reform groups, to ascertain levels of political corruption for comparison among companies and industries.

Our objective is primarily, by broad stroke conscious raising, create an environment where the public will know more about how familiar industries behave, influence and benefit in the political market place. At this point, given Citizen's United, and the Obama administrations decision to "not disarm unilaterally -- the most effective strategy is creative transparency pressures which can lead to attempts to limit excessive spending, and also bring about a higher level of consumer consciousness.

If ATT, or Merck, or Archer Daniels Midland are so egregious in their habits, then more public awareness may be able to influence them, to some extent.

 Influence on legislatures is exercised in 3 fundamental ways:

1. Corporate contributions to individual members, and corporate money spent by independent expenditure groups and trade associations on attack ads designed to weaken candidates and push messages on issues.

2. The enormous amounts of money invested in lobbyists who blanket capital hill and state legislatures, having direct access in part because of their campaign contributions and fund raising event s the companies and their lobbyists organize. A record $3.5 Billion was spent on lobbying in

2010.

3. The revolving door: thousands of former legislators and legislative staff have moved for the halls of Congress and state legislatures into the corporate suites and lobbying shops, often paid in the millions of dollars, using their relationships and influence over the remaining members.

AlterNet’s coverage will be centered on six major industries: military/arms, pharmaceuticals, agribusiness, energy, telecom, and banking. Essentially we will use 6 top-notch writer/investigators,

along with help from research orgs -- using the above 3 fundamental criteria, and identify the worst perpetrators within these industries, and then by comparing them, rank the industries.

Not only will we be able to provide hard numbers and background, but we will also be putting a corporate face to this epidemic of political corruption. (We are aware that significant money is funneled through trade associations, and independent expenditure groups, and we will aim to include that in our effort.)

4. Please provide a sketch of how your organization(s) would produce the investigative piece(s), including

a) primary and secondary platform(s) (text/web)

b) Production element(s) video/audio/visual/text (or combo)

c) Community Engagement tactics

d) Other

A) AlterNet’s primary platform will be stories on our website. Editor/investigators will dig up the numbers and use their working knowledge in their fields. We will produce slides, graphs and other visuals to help communicate the results of the data.

B) With sufficient funding we will produce short video interviews with each of the experts, to provide some additional anecdotal information and a personal overview of their fields.

C) AlterNet will engage people through our social media outlets - Facebook, Twitter, well as marketing informing internet referral forums, including Digg, Reddit, Fark, etc.

5. Please provide a simple budget breakdown in a separate document clarifying what resources you will invest on reporting, production and impact. It’s OK to produce a 2-scenario budget (low-end and high-end). You may use the accompanying form or provide one of your own.

*(Please see other enclosure.)*

6. Please provide a quick snapshot of your audience:

As measured by Google Analytics (and it would be good if everyone was using the same criteria for traffic), AlterNet receives about 2 million unique visitors, 3.7 million visitors and approximately 8.5 million page views per month.

Geographic Distribution:

AlterNet is an international news site, with 86 % of its audience in the U.S. and the rest spread around the world. Domestically, most readers are concentrated in the largest population states: California, New York, Texas, Illinois.

Demographics:

Roughly 45% of AlterNet readers are female, 55% male. 74% of readers have a college degree or graduate degree or higher. 39% of AlterNet readers have an income of more than $100,000.

What kinds of influentials in your audience would be receptive to this topic? (i.e. activists, policy makers, high number of retweeters, press contacts)

Our audience includes every kind of influential from elected officials, to journalists, to small business owners, etc. We have almost 60,000 Facebook friends and more than 30,000 followers on Twitter followers who are a huge help in marketing our content.

7. Please provide a brief overview of your Public Relations capabilities, including social networking strategies/opportunities, press and ally relationships/contacts and what you could do to promote your reporting.

AlterNet has a high quality press list of thousands of media professionals, and we would use an aggressive press strategy. We have long term relationships with many other partner sites, and we would be eager to share this work with any other site, electronic media program, or non profit who will help promote it and spread the word.

8. Do you have a reporter already on staff or a freelancer identified that covers this beat?

If so, please note their name.

Executive editor Don Hazen's work on this topic goes back to 1990 when he was a founder of the working Group on Campaign Finance reform with Ellen Miller, Donna Edwards, Randy Keleher and others. Washington bureau Chief Adele Stan, and senior writer Joshua Holland are also experts.

Nick Turse, an expert on military spending and empire, will be joining the AlterNet staff. Les Leopold is our expert on the Banking Industry. David Rosen and Bruce Kushnick are our experts on Telecom. Tara Lohan, our senior editor, has expertise in Big Ag, via her work on Food and Water. Finally, former AlterNet editor Steve Rosenfeld is available as a consultant and freelancer for us and is a well-known expert in the field. He wrote this piece for us just this week:

**Supreme Court's Latest Sabotage of Democratic Process -- Are Only Wealthy Corporations Supposed to Have a Say in Our Government?**

*The Court has issued yet another decision narrowing the options for campaigns and candidates to run for office without relying on the largesse of wealthy people and institutions.*

http://bit.ly/loJlP0