

**“Outing the Corporations” Investigative Reporting Proposal**

**Application Deadline: July 1**

**Return to: erin@themediaconsortium.com**

*Application Length Limit: 4 pages*

Name: Mike Elk

Title: Spread of Workplace Electioneering and Political Intimidation in the Wake of Citizens United

Organization: The Nation

Will you be responsible for overseeing the program at your organization? No.

If no, please enter name and title here: Richard Kim, Executive Editor

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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?

Prior to Citizens United, the 1971 Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA), as amended in 1976, established that corporations were only allowed to speak to a “restricted class of employees”—such as shareholders and executive and administrative personnel (the corporation’s “restricted class”)— about political matters. Partisan political communication to rank-and-file employees, moreover, was completely prohibited.

By granting corporations full free speech rights, *Citizens United* allowed corporations to talk directly to their employees about political issues. Employers can now hold captive audience political meetings in which workers are forced to attend political presentations or be fired from their jobs. By politicizing the workplace, *Citizens United* creates the conditions in which political intimidation can occur. Employees are less likely to express their own views about politics with their friends and co-workers out of fear of retaliation from employers. Likewise, employees fearful of losing their jobs in a tough economy are much more likely to do what their employers tell them to do even when it comes to subjects like voting.

Karl Krow, a consultant who used to run KOCHPAC, wrote a memo to several top corporations advising them that they need to use their employees more to push political issues. Krow recently took over the Koch-backed Themis project which is expected to rival Karl Rove's American Crossroads.

Previous reporting for *The Nation* exposed that the Koch’s were already engaging in political campaigning among their 50,000 employees at Georgia Pacific. Since this article’s publication, we have received reports of political campaigning by employers among employees at corporations such as General Electric, Delta Airlines and Aetna Healthcare. Americans for Prosperity has since set up a speaking tour designed strictly for employees.

*The Nation* would like to do deep research into seeing how prevalent political campaigning by employers among their employees is in the wake of Citizens United. While there is a lot of research out there looking at the effect of political money unleashed by Citizens United, political intimidation in the workplace could have as equally devastating effect on deranging political discourse in this country as unlimited political donations.

2. Has your organization reported on this topic in the past?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_x\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

If so, please share headlines and links to past reporting over past year

*The Nation* published an article called [“Big Brothers: Thought Control at Koch”](http://www.thenation.com/article/160062/big-brothers-thought-control-koch) in April focusing only on how the Kochs were already using Citizens United to campaign among their employees at Georgia Pacific.

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.

We hope to document the spread of corporate electioneering in the workplace, including but not limited to captive audience meetings, instances or threats of retaliation and the extent of newly enabled workplace propaganda.

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

The Nation would work with labor unions and workers’ rights groups to identify which organizations are currently engaged in political campaigning among workers. We would obtain video testimonials from workers talking about the effect that political campaigning in the workplace has on employees of big corporations based on their first-hand experience.

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.

6. Please provide a quick snapshot of your audience:

Size: 165,000 plus print subscribers; 1.4 million monthly online readers; 130,000 plus Twitter followers.

Geographic Distribution: National and international

Demographics: all ages, races and economic backgrounds, concentrated in New York, California and Washington, DC.

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

The Nation is read by policy makers and grassroots organizers, but perhaps most importantly it reaches a wide range of concerned citizens who have very high rates of political participation.

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.

The Nation has a full-time publicity director who has had success securing television exclusives with major networks. Our editors and writers appear frequently on television and radio. We have over 130,000 Twitter followers and over 25,000 Facebook fans.

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

Mike Elk**Sample Budget Document**

Please fill in this worksheet as a part of your application.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **REVENUE** |  | **NOTES** |  |  |
| Requested amount (between $2500-$7500) $5,000 |  |  | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Other funding $1500 |  | Other dedicated funding your organization can apply to this project | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| In-kind\* |  | How much in your own resources you will put towards this project | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **TOTAL REVENUE: $7,500** |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **How many pieces will you produce? 2-3, plus online features** |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **EXPENSES** |  | **NOTES** |  |  |
|  |  | Please detail expenses out for the work you will produce. Feel free to add/subtract line items. | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Content Creation |  | Detail out costs for content creator(s) | | |
| Reporter | $5,500 | ½ for time; ½ for travel and research expenses |  |  |
| Graphic Journo |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Production |  | Please account for all production costs | | |
| Camera/Tech | $ |  |  |  |
| Editing | S in kind |  |  |  |
| Web Designer | $ in kind |  | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Promotion |  |  |  |  |
| Social Media Promotions | $ |  | | |
| Additional Materials | $2,000 | Video and audio production | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Other Expenses (please detail out) | S |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| TOTAL | $7,500 |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| \* We know your total costs will be more than are covered by the grant. Getting a snapshot of full costs will help us fundraise in the future--TMC | | | | |