

Connections Between U.S. Senator Lamar Alexander and Corrections Corp. of America

First, Follow the Money ...

According to opensecrets.org, which tracks federal election fundraising, CCA and the company's employees, their spouses and CCA subsidiaries contributed \$31,200 to Sen. Lamar Alexander's political campaigns from 2003 through 2008, and \$21,500 from 1999 to 2004 (note there is some overlap). Between 2003 and 2008, CCA was Lamar Alexander's second largest contributor.

Previously, in the 1997-1998 election cycle, Lamar Alexander's political action committee (PAC) received \$100,000 from CCA co-founder Tom Beasley.

Political connections

As Tennessee's governor, when Lamar Alexander endorsed CCA's 1985 failed bid to take over the state's entire prison system, it was revealed that his wife, Honey, owned stock in CCA. To avoid a conflict of interest Honey Alexander traded her CCA stock for shares in an insurance holding company with the Massey-Burch Investment Group. Her initial \$8,900 investment in CCA grew to \$142,000 when she sold the insurance company stock.

The Massey-Burch Group was headed by Jack Massey, a good friend of Lamar Alexander. The Massey-Burch Investment Group provided venture capital start-up money to CCA co-founder Tom Beasley, and assisted CCA when the company proposed to privatize Tennessee's entire prison system in 1985. After leaving the governor's office, Alexander and his wife were paid \$44,000 for consulting and serving on the board of the Massey-Burch Investment Group.

Tom Beasley, who co-founded CCA in 1983 and served as the company's chairman from 1987 to 1994, is a former chairman of the Tennessee Republican Party. Beasley is a long-time friend of Lamar Alexander; he once lived in an apartment at Alexander's home, and he helped manage Alexander's 1978 gubernatorial campaign.

Attorney J. Mark Tipps, a 1994 campaign advisor to Lamar Alexander who assisted with Alexander's 2000 presidential campaign, has represented CCA as a client. Tipps also served as deputy counsel, along with CCA general counsel Gus Puryear, under Senator Fred Thompson during the U.S. Senate's special investigation of campaign finance in 1997.

Susan Richardson-Williams, a former GOP chairwoman and aide to former Governor Lamar Alexander, was employed as an assistant to CCA co-founder Tom Beasley.

Tom Ingram, Gov. Lamar Alexander's campaign manager and chief of staff for four years, later worked for CCA as a public relations consultant/lobbyist.

Charles L. Overby, a former special assistant for administration to Governor Lamar Alexander, presently serves on the Board of Directors for CCA

Lamar Alexander is a longtime friend of Don Sundquist, who served as Tennessee's governor from 1995 to 2003. Sundquist endorsed Alexander in his 2000 presidential bid. CCA co-founder Tom Beasley was a leading fundraiser in Gov. Sundquist's 1994 campaign and a member of Sundquist's inauguration committee; CCA, a corporate sponsor of the inauguration, donated \$5,000 to the event. Further, Tom Beasley was a business partner in a barbeque franchise that was founded by former Gov. Sundquist (Red Hot and Blue Barbeque).

Peaches Simpkins, a former assistant to Gov. Lamar Alexander and widow of late CCA lobbyist Ed Blank (a former state senator), assisted in Gov. Don Sundquist's 1994 election campaign and was subsequently appointed Sundquist's chief of staff. She reportedly owned over 1,000 shares of CCA stock while advising Sundquist on prison privatization-related issues, which she said "wasn't a conflict in my mind."