

# Vaccines: Did Big Pharma Purchase California's Legislative Machinery?

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*California has some of the most stringent vaccine mandate laws in the United States. Why is that? At first, it seemed that draconian vaccination laws were introduced in response to a measles outbreak that began in Disneyland in 2014. But then later, long after the measles threat had evaporated, California's vaccine mandate was made even stricter. It came as a shock. California's mandate-imposing Senator Pan, himself a pediatrician, had promised this would never occur.*

While everyone is familiar with Big Pharma's lobby and campaign contributions to politicians in Washington, few understood that Pharma gave more than twice as much money to politicians and party committees at the state level as they gave at the federal level. Perhaps it should have come as no surprise; after all, the practice of medicine is regulated at the state level. For example, fraud committed by Big Pharma opioid companies is being litigated at the state level. Vaccine mandates are voted in or out at the state level. Some healthcare price controls are too.

How much money are we talking about? During the twenty years from January 1, 1999 through December 31, 2018, the pharmaceutical and health products industry spent \$877 million dollars on contributions to state candidates and party committees.

**Of this amount, \$399 Million, or 45.5% went to candidates and committees in California.** The other 54.5% went to the other 49 states and the District of Columbia.

Candidates for state office face legal limits on what they can accept from each donor. But in many states, California and Ohio included, **ballot measure committees** are not subject to contribution limits. A whopping 75.4% of the money Pharma spent on state candidates and committees nationwide went to **ballot measure committees**.

Only two states received contributions of over \$50 million dollars in total during the entire twenty-year period: California and Ohio. Ohio received \$74 million total, and California \$399 million.

Now I am rethinking the California legislature's votes to impose extremely strict vaccine mandates on its citizens. Had Big Pharma already purchased California's government machinery? Was the industry just wringing more profit from its investment in the Golden State?

This data in this article come from "[Lobbying Expenditures and Campaign Contributions by the Pharmaceutical and Health Product Industry in the United States, 1999-2018](#)" published in JAMA Internal Medicine on March 3, 2020. It was written by researcher Olivier J Wouters of

the London School of Economics. The facts cited here were derived by him from data obtained by the National Institute on Money in Politics.

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