

US MILITARY CONTRACTORS FINANCE “PRO-WAR DEMOCRACY”: The Election We Should Be Following

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For progressives and populists around the country who take an interest in Congressional races there are always a few good challengers we might hope to send to Washington. Incumbents, we assume, can take care of themselves.

But in Northern Ohio, redistricting has thrown two incumbents into one district. It's a heavily Democratic district created purposely to guarantee a number of other districts to Republicans. The incumbents are both Democrats, both white, both 65, and many imagine that they do similar work in Washington. In fact, they could not be more different. One of them does tremendous good for our national politics, working to move our government in a better direction from inside it, just as the rest of us do from the outside. We cannot afford to lose him. We would be obliged to work for his reelection even if his opponent were far above average. The record suggests something else.

A useful example to highlight the contrast between Congressman Dennis Kucinich and Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur is found in the funding of wars. Between 2001 and 2009, Congresswoman Kaptur voted for \$545 billion in war funding, voting Yes over and over again for Bush's wars. Congressman Dennis Kucinich voted for a total of \$17 billion. (See the chart below.)

In the lead up to the invasion of Iraq, Kucinich's [was the clearest voice](#) against it. He circulated evidence of war lies to his colleagues. He organized many of them to vote No with him. Kaptur, too, voted No on the authorization.

But once the war had started, many Congress members, including Kaptur, turned around and voted to fund its continuation and escalation, year after year, even as the public turned more and more strongly against the war. While Kucinich was working to impeach Bush and Cheney, Kaptur was voting to fund their wars. While Kucinich was advancing resolutions to shift the debate toward ending wars and preventing new ones, Kaptur was claiming wars made us safer and reciting "support the troops" rhetoric, as though what veterans need most is the creation of more injured veterans.

This distinction matters more than ever as the prospect of a war on Iran looms larger. Kaptur wants NASA and the Pentagon to work together more closely, while Kucinich opposes the militarization of space. Kaptur seems to believe the military industrial complex is a beneficial jobs program, whereas Kucinich seems to believe it is what Eisenhower said it would be.

Congresswoman Kaptur has been spending a lot of money on television ads in hopes of defeating Kucinich in the upcoming primary. Where does her money come from? Well,

according to the Center for Responsive Politics (OpenSecrets.org), in the current election cycle, she gets 77% of her money from PACs, and 5% from small individual contributors. Kucinich, in contrast, gets 5% from PACs, and 68% from small individual contributors. Kucinich does not get money from war contractors. Kaptur is a different story. Thus far, in the current election cycle, her fourth biggest “contributor” is a little operation known as General Dynamics. Her third biggest is Teledyne Technologies. Tied for seventh place are American Systems Corp and Northrop Grumman. Tied at 16th are Boeing and Lockheed Martin. Most of these corporations have been among Kaptur’s regular funders in past campaigns as well. They are also among the leading violators of U.S. laws.

According to the Federal Contractor Misconduct Database (ContractorMisconduct.org), these are the worst four offenders from any industry:

Contractor Misconduct \$ (Since 1995)	Federal Contract \$ (FY2010)	Instances of Misconduct (Since 1995)
1. Lockheed Martin \$590.1m	\$34367.4m	57
2. Boeing Company \$1600.5m	\$19366.6m	43
3. Northrop Grumman \$850.7m	\$15522.7m	35
4. General Dynamics \$78.5m	\$14908.8m	13

Among the types of misconduct engaged in by these four leaders, as detailed at the above database, are the following: contract fraud, kickbacks, defective pricing, unlicensed exports, emissions violations, groundwater cleanup violations, inflated costs, providing of bribes and sexual favors, nuclear safety violations, nuclear waste storage violations, federal election law violations, radiation exposure, illegal transfer of information to China, violations of the National Labor Relations Act, embezzlement, racial discrimination and retaliation, age discrimination and retaliation, unauthorized weapons sales to foreign nations, retaliation against whistleblowers. And that’s just Lockheed. In fact, that’s just a small sampling of just Lockheed. Why take money from these companies?

According to the National Priorities Project (CostOfWar.com) Kaptur’s Ninth District of Ohio (prior to redistricting) has shelled out over \$3.1 billion for wars since 2001. That expense has been with Kaptur’s full cooperation. And that is an expense measured purely in dollars taken from tax payers to pay for wars. It does not include further costs for veterans’ care, for interest on war debt, for increased fuel prices, or for lost opportunities. Nor does it include the cost already extracted of several times the \$3.1 billion for a base annual military budget that has roughly doubled this decade and done so on the basis of the wars.

According to a report titled “The U.S. Employment Effects of Military And Domestic Spending Priorities: An Updated Analysis,” ([PDE](#)) by Robert Pollin and Heidi Garrett-Peltier of the Political Economy Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, (October 2009), spending the same dollars on the military (without specifying war spending which would likely make the contrast even greater) produces many fewer jobs than if spent in

other industries. If Ohio's Ninth District's \$3.1 billion had been spent on tax cuts for working people, instead of on the military, the people of the Ninth District could have seen a net gain of 9,920 jobs. That's considering the full impact of jobs lost, directly created, and indirectly created. Military spending, purely in terms of job creation, is worse than nothing. Tax cuts — not for Mitt Romney but for the rest of us — does more good.

But the same study also shows a better path. If the \$3.1 billion had been taken away from the military and spent instead on clean energy, we would have seen a net gain of 17,050 jobs. If instead the investment had gone to healthcare, the net gain would have been 24,000 jobs. And if the choice had been to fund education, the gain in jobs would have been 54,250. Could Ohio's Ninth District use 54,250 jobs? Not many people would choose to chase those jobs away in order to support wars based on lies, wars that endanger us, wars that devastate the natural environment, wars that erode our civil liberties, wars that carry a heavy human cost — not just an economic one. Not many people, but one of them is Marcy Kaptur.

If you visit Kaptur's campaign website at MarcyKaptur.com, only one specific issue is immediately visible, front and center: celebration of a World War II memorial. At Kucinich.us there is also only a single issue immediately visible: a petition urging the Congressman's colleagues to stop funding the war in Afghanistan. In the "Agenda" section of Kaptur's site there is no acknowledgement that war or peace is an issue to be considered at all. In the "Issues" section of Kucinich's site, there is a section on war and peace that addresses a number of specific wars.

There is also, on the Kucinich site, a lot more detail than on Kaptur's about numerous other issues. The example of wars and war funding is fairly typical. In rough terms, Kucinich tends to back peace, justice, and the will of the public, while Kaptur tends to back the very same things when and if the leadership of the Democratic Party happens to do so. Back on February 25, 2010, she voted to extend the PATRIOT Act without reforms of its abusive procedures. Kucinich voted No. Back on October 23, 2007, Kucinich had also voted No on the Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act, while Kaptur voted Yes. On December 8, 2010, she voted against the DREAM Act, while Kucinich and a majority of the House and of the Democrats voted for it. Any elected official will let us down sometimes, but Kaptur is just no Kucinich.

Many organizations agree. VoteSmart.org lists the rankings of various groups. Planned Parenthood gives Kucinich a score of 100%, Kaptur 71%. The ACLU scores Kucinich 94%, Kaptur 75%.

Also favoring Kucinich in their rankings are the Arab American Institute, the Human Rights Campaign, the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, the League of Conservation Voters, Peace Action, the AFL-CIO, the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, etc. I'm not being selective here. There don't seem to be any progressive analysts scoring Kaptur over Kucinich on anything. Progressives like Alan Grayson and Barney Frank are urging us to support Kucinich over Kaptur.

How independent and principled a member of Congress is has a direct, and sometimes devastating, impact on their district and the nation and the world. Kaptur believes a nuclear power plant at the edge of Lake Erie with a bad history of safety violations should be allowed to continue to operate, while Kucinich has asked for it to be repaired or

decommissioned. Only one of these two representatives is putting the safety of the public first.

I believe people who care about the future of the United States, from Ohio's new Ninth District or anywhere else, should be following and supporting Kucinich's campaign. If he loses, we lose. We may not always agree with him. He may not always be able to win over a majority of his colleagues. He may sometimes let us down. But were he not there, votes that helped end the Iraq war would have never been held. Debates that have helped curtail further war making would simply not have happened. Articles of impeachment for Bush and Cheney would never have been introduced. Countless witnesses before House committees would have gotten off without ever facing the important questions. Many people pushing for single-payer healthcare in their states would have never heard of it. Our televisions would be better able than they are now to pretend that majority positions on major issues do not exist, because there would not be that one man in the government willing to raise the issue and publicly lobby his colleagues to join him.

We're such defeatists these days, that we either condemn Kucinich's compromises, forgetting that Kaptur outdoes him in that regard 100-fold, or we imagine that because he's so much better he must be doomed to lose. On the contrary, Kucinich has a long history of winning congressional elections, both primaries and general. While the redesigned district includes a larger population from Kaptur's former district than from Kucinich's, it includes more Democrats from Kucinich's than from Kaptur's. Kucinich inspires his supporters, and in primaries it is the relative turnout of tiny percentages of people that decides.

Who is in Congress or the White House is going to be of far less importance than who is in the streets and what kind of people's movement is developed to nonviolently resist injustice and war. But without a single voice inside Congress willing to speak up in the ways Kucinich has, the people's movement will suffer. There's no lesser-evilism required here. Kucinich is actually a good representative. There's no partisanship required here. Love a party or hate them all; regardless, we should reward those who have listened to our demands. Or why would anyone listen again?

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The table below shows enacted appropriations, adapted from "The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11" by Amy Belasco, Congressional Research Service, March 29, 2011, ([PDF](#)). Votes are on final passage of the conference report unless there was no recorded vote. In that case, the indicated vote is on initial House passage.

Name of Law

Public Law No.

Date Enacted

DOD Funds (\$bln)

Kucinich Voted

Kaptur Voted

FY01 Emerg. Supp. Approp. Act for Recovery from and Response to Terrorist Attacks on the US

P.L. 107-38

9/18/01

13.6

Yes

Yes

FY02 Dept. Of Defense and Emergency Terrorism Response Act

P.L. 107-117

1/10/02

3.4

Yes

Yes

FY02 Emergency Supplemental

P.L. 107-206

8/2/02

13.8

No

Yes

FY03 Consolidated Appropriations

P.L. 108-7

2/20/03

10.0

No

Yes

FY03 Emergency Supplemental

P.L. 108-11

4/16/03

62.6

No

Yes

FY03 DOD Appropriationsa

P.L. 107-248

10/23/02

7.1

No

Yes

FY04 DOD Appropriations Act (rescission of FY03 funds)

P.L. 108-87

9/30/03

-3.5

No

Yes

FY04 Emergency Supplemental

P.L. 108-106

11/6/03

64.9

No

No

FY05 DOD Approps Act, Titles IX & Xb

P.L. 108-287

8/5/04

25.0

No

Yes

FY05 DOD Appropriations Actc

P.L. 108-287

8/5/04

2.1

No

Yes

FY05 Supplemental Appropriations

P.L. 109-13

5/11/05

75.9

No

Yes

FY06 DOD Approps. Act, Title IX

P.L. 109-148

12/30/05

50.0

No

Yes

FY06 DOD Appropriations Actc

P.L. 109-148

12/30/05

0.8

No

Yes

FY06 Emergency Supplemental

P.L. 109-234

6/15/06

66.0

No

Yes

FY07 DOD Appropriations Act

P.L. 109-289

9/29/06

70.5

No

Yes

FY07 Supplemental, Amendment #2 (Did not include Withdrawal Deadlines from Iraq)d

P.L. 110-28

5/25/07

94.5

No

No

FY08 Continuing Resolution

P.L. 110-92

9/29/07

5.2

No

Yes

FY08 DOD Appropriations Act

P.L. 110-116

11/13/07

11.6

No

Yes

FY08 Consolidated Approps. Act

P.L. 110-161

3/11/04

70.0

Not voting

No

FY08 Supplemental, FY09 Bridge Approps. Act (Roll call #431)d, e

P.L. 110-252

6/30/08

157.9

No

No

FY09 Consolidated Security, Disaster Assistance, and Continuing Appropriations Act

P.L. 110-329

9/30/08

2.5

No

Yes

FY09 Supplemental Approps. Act

P.L. 111-32

6/24/09

80.0

No

No

FY10 Consolidated Appropriations Act

P.L. 111-117

12/16/09

1.4

No

Yes

FY10 DOD Approps. Act, Title IX

P.L. 111-118

12/19/09

127.3

No

Yes

FY10 Supplemental

P.L. 111-212

7/27/10

30.8

No

No

FY11 DOD and Year-Long Continuing Resolutionf

P.L. 112-10

4/15/11

159.1

No

No

TOTAL WAR FUNDING VOTED FOR

\$17 billion

\$545.3 billion

a. FY03 Appropriations Act included \$7.1 billion in regular FY03 defense appropriations

for GWOT that DOD cannot track; the FY04 DOD Appropriations Act rescinded \$3.5 billion in FY03 war monies.

b. Title IX funds in FY05 do not include a \$1.8 billion scoring adjustment that reverses the previous rescission of FY04 funds because this did not change wartime monies.

c. Reflects funds obligated for Operation Noble Eagle from DOD's regular appropriations as reported by the Defense Finance Accounting Service.

d. The House took separate votes on different sections of the bill, which were then combined when sent to the Senate.

e. The FY08 Supplemental included funds for both FY08 and bridge funds for FY09.

f. This bill was the final DOD Appropriations Act and the final version of the CR. It was preceded by seven other CRs.

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