

# Democracy North Carolina

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## **As Coal Ash Controversy Intensified, Duke Gave Another \$437,000 to Help GOP Causes in 2013; Group Calls on McCrory to Disclose Duke's Donations to Renew NC**

New research by the election reform group Democracy North Carolina indicates that as Duke Energy faced increased pressure from environmental groups over its coal ash pollution, the company stepped up its political operation and donated more than \$400,000 during 2013 to Republican committees and lawmakers, including the campaign committee of Gov. Pat McCrory, a former Duke executive.

The 2013 donations totaled \$437,000 and include (1) donations from Duke Energy's PAC to NC Republican politicians and party committees and (2) donations from the corporation to two GOP national "soft-money" committees that support NC legislative and gubernatorial candidates. By contrast, during 2013 the Duke PAC and corporation gave about half that amount – \$227,000 – to Democratic NC politicians, party committees and the comparable national Democratic soft money group.

Throughout 2013, environmental groups criticized Gov. McCrory's Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for allowing Duke Energy to continue its pollution and for entering into a settlement agreement to block the groups from suing Duke under the Clean Water Act. This week, the federal government issued a subpoena to examine DENR's records to determine if a crime had been committed.

"Political corruption needs to be a part of the investigation," said Bob Hall, executive director of Democracy North Carolina. "What we know about the cozy relationship between McCrory and Duke is disturbing and what we don't know needs to come out into the open."

In a [previous report](#), Hall called the settlement agreement between Duke and DENR "a sweetheart deal anchored with \$1 million in campaign contributions." The report detailed how McCrory's 2008 and 2012 gubernatorial campaigns benefited from Duke Energy contributions totaling \$1.1 million through the end of 2012. The two gubernatorial campaigns received \$332,836 in direct campaign donations linked to Duke. They also received a big boost from \$761,800 that Duke and Progress Energy donated to the Republican Governors Association which spent more than \$10 millions to bolster McCrory's two campaigns.

Progress NC, a nonprofit advocacy group, and the Associated Press also examined campaign records and found \$1.1 million in direct and indirect support for McCrory from Duke Energy during 2008-2012.

**"In addition to the \$1.1 million that helped McCrory, we now know that Duke has spent more than \$400,000 to help the governor and other Republican politicians during 2013," Hall said.**

**“One thing we don’t know is how much Duke or its subsidiaries gave to Renew North Carolina, the pro-McCrory shadow campaign committee that does not disclose its donors. Duke and McCrory should release that information to the public now,” he said.**

The Renew North Carolina Foundation was launched by several McCrory campaign insiders to promote his agenda. It began raising funds with Gov. McCrory’s help and has already paid for ads touting him and his achievements.

“People are tired of big money buying special treatment. Duke’s use of campaign donations to buy protection from regulators needs to be fully examined,” Hall said.

Here is a summary of Democracy North Carolina’s research detailing the \$437,000 donated by Duke and its subsidiaries during 2013. In several cases, the dates of a donation and an action related to coal ash have an eerie coincidence, but Hall was reluctant to draw a precise *quid pro quo* related to any single donation. “The whole mess should be probed,” he said.

- On January 18, 2013, the Pat McCrory Committee logged in a \$4,000 donation from Duke Energy’s PAC. Less than two weeks earlier, on January 8, the Southern Environmental Law Center announced it was filing a lawsuit to stop Duke’s coal ash pollution.
- On April 24, 2013, the Republican Governors Association received \$100,000 from the company – less than a month after SELC notified Duke and North Carolina regulators that it would file a lawsuit under the Clean Water Act to stop Duke’s coal ash pollution of Mountain Island Lake, a vital source of drinking water for the greater Charlotte area.
- On September 17, 2013, the Republican Governors Association received \$175,000 from the company, bringing the total to \$275,000 for 2013. SELC and conservation groups filed suit on September 12 against the coal ash pollution of Sutton Lake near Wilmington and on August 29, SELC moved to block the NC Department of Natural Resources’ ability to craft a second weak agreement with Duke that would allow the company to continue its coal ash pollution.
- On September 20, 2013, the Republican State Leadership Committee received \$50,000 from Duke Energy. RSLC is a 527 “soft money” committee that has spent millions on ads to elect GOP lawmakers in North Carolina, on consultants for the NC GOP’s 2011 redistricting plan, and on the re-election of NC Supreme Court Justice Paul Newby in 2012.
- During 2013, Duke Energy’s PAC sent \$100,000 in campaign contributions to three dozen North Carolina Republican legislators and Council of State members, plus \$8,000 to the Republican Party and Committee to Elect Republican Women. That total of \$108,000 is four times the \$27,000 that the PAC gave to 11 NC Democratic officials during 2013; it gave nothing to state Democratic Party committees during the year.
- All totaled, Duke gave \$325,000 to the two national Republican groups, \$4,000 to McCrory, and \$108,000 to other GOP state politicians and party committees for a total of \$437,000 in 2013. During the year, Duke gave about half that amount to the Democratic Governors Association (\$200,000) and to NC politicians (\$27,000) – or a total of \$227,000. No donations from Duke were found to a 527 Democratic committee similar to the Republican State Leadership Committee.