

Exclusive: Data shows that half of 2019 donations to ActBlue came from untraceable 'unemployed' donors

[foxnews.com/politics/exclusive-data-shows-that-half-of-2019-donations-to-actblue-came-from-untraceable-unemployed-donors](https://www.foxnews.com/politics/exclusive-data-shows-that-half-of-2019-donations-to-actblue-came-from-untraceable-unemployed-donors)

EXCLUSIVE: Less than two months ahead of the presidential election – with concerns of foreign interference again at the forefront – a conservative political group is raising "serious concerns" about millions of donations reported by a major Democratic fundraising platform.

A preliminary computer analysis by the Take Back Action Fund, obtained exclusively by Fox News, has found that nearly half of all 2019 donations to ActBlue were made by people claiming to be unemployed.

Action Fund President John Pudner questioned the veracity of those donations and called it a loophole that must be closed for the sake of election integrity.

"After downloading hundreds of millions of [dollars in] donations to the Take Back Action Fund servers, we were shocked to see that almost half of the donations to ActBlue in 2019 claimed to be unemployed individuals," he said. "The name of employers must be disclosed when making political donations, but more than 4.7 million donations came from people who claimed they did not have an employer. Those 4.7 million donations totaled \$346 million ActBlue raised and sent to liberal causes."

The trend is continuing this year: An Action Fund examination of 2020 data from January through August showed an uptick in "unemployed" donations through ActBlue, to 50.1% this year.

ActBlue defends the integrity of its donations and said many come from retirees and people who aren't counted as employed, such as homemakers.

According to the findings of the Action Fund – a nonprofit that aims to "educate the public on conservative solutions for political reform" – 48.4% of ActBlue donations last year, prior to the massive loss of jobs that came with the onslaught of the coronavirus pandemic, came from those who did not list an employer or who claimed to be unemployed.

Pudner said the large number is a red flag that some donations may be illicit contributions from foreign interests attempting to impact U.S. elections.

"It is hard to believe that at a time when the U.S. unemployment rate was less than 4 percent, that unemployed people had \$346 million dollars to send to ActBlue for liberal causes," Pudner said, adding that "4.7 million donations from people without a job ...

raised serious concerns."

REPUBLICANS DEMAND ANSWERS ON MUELLER TEAM WIPING PHONES, SUGGEST 'ANTICIPATORY OBSTRUCTION OF JUSTICE'

ActBlue, created in 2004, bills itself as a "powerful online fundraising platform available to Democratic candidates and committees, progressive organizations, and nonprofits that share our values for no cost besides a 3.95% processing fee on donations."

"And we operate as a conduit, which means donations made through ActBlue to a campaign or organization are considered individual donations," its website explains.

But critics, including the Action Fund, contend that the website allows credit card donations that are not verified, so anyone from any country in the world can donate without a paper trail.

"ActBlue's insistence on refusing to allow banks to verify their donations is an invitation to foreign programmers or others to send money through them using fake American names, and we encourage them to start letting banks verify the identity of donors to stop the potential for millions of dollars to influence our election," Pudner said.

Last year, the Republican Party created a competing fundraising platform called WinRed to counter ActBlue's prowess in small-donor sourcing.

According to the Action Fund, an analysis of WinRed's 4.9 million donations totalling \$302 million found that only 4% came from people who did not list an employer or were unemployed. This year, the rate is 5.6%, according to the data.

	ActBlue	BIDEN*	WinRed	TRUMP*
TOTAL RAISED	889,939,543	163,741,853	301,967,877	82,135,038
NO EMPLOYER/ UNEMPLOYED	346,972,304	55,195,485	17,254,897	2,317,223
Percentage	39.0%	33.7%	5.7%	2.8%
DONATION COUNT	9,855,291	1,235,373	4,885,967	920,645
NO EMPLOYER/ UNEMPLOYED	4,773,219	612,983	194,879	24,109
Percentage	48.4%	49.6%	4.0%	2.6%

2019 data compiled by Take Back Action Fund (Take Back Action Fund)

"We purposely wanted to examine 2019 first, because, before COVID-19, the unemployment rate was at 4 percent or below. It's hard to believe that millions of Americans who were out of work had \$346 million to spare to give to ActBlue for liberal causes," Pudner said.

RUSSIA TARGETING BLACK LIVES MATTER, LEFT-LEANING VOTERS ONLINE: INTELLIGENCE SOURCES

Precisely determining if the donations were authentic and genuinely from those who were unemployed requires further time and resources, he said.

"Auditing these suspect donations to determine if millions lied by indicating they were unemployed when in fact they were not, or if their names were just being used by a foreign programmer or someone else to move money without their knowledge, will take time," Pudner said. "We've planned a series of forensic procedures to identify whether or not these donors of record exist or not, if they made the contributions themselves, and whether they were legally able, and whether or not they are potential 'straw' donors, making the contributions after being given the money and direction by someone else."



Democratic presidential candidate former Vice President Joe Biden departs after speaking at a campaign event on manufacturing American products at UAW Region 1 headquarters in Warren, Mich., Wednesday, Sept. 9, 2020. (AP Photo/Patrick Semansky)

In response to questions by Fox News, a representative for ActBlue said "it is best security practice to refrain from publicly sharing any detailed information about how we analyze contributions."

"But we use an array of data sources, internal validation and third-party services to verify the validity of transactions. We take the security of our platform and integrity of donations very seriously," the spokesperson said. "We report every contribution to federal candidates that comes through our platform, and you can look those up on the FEC. We report the information donors enter about their occupation and employer, and we do see a significant portion of donors who report their status as not employed, such as retired donors or full-time parents."

The issue of unauthenticated political donations was also brought to light by The Washington Post in 2008, which was at the time "allowing donors to use largely untraceable prepaid credit cards that could potentially be used to evade limits on how much an individual is legally allowed to give or to mask a contributor's identity."

In 2015, the Action Fund said millions of dollars "could be moved by allowing unverified credit card contributions," and Pudner said that even today, ActBlue continues to use such an "unverified system."

"We found it took other vendors only a matter of hours to switch their system to allow verification of donations and thus prevent the possibility of illegal foreign money being moved into campaigns," Pudner said. "Choosing to use an untraceable system has a higher cost in terms of the risk of credit card fraud and also tends to incur higher bank fees. And this untraceable system allows someone with a gift card to make donations in anyone's name, even if that person never actually made that donation, or even if that person doesn't exist at all."



FILE- In this Sept. 17, 2019, file photo, President Donald Trump boards Air Force One at Albuquerque International Sunport in Albuquerque, N.M. A new poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds about half of Americans think Donald Trump's actions as president have made things worse for African Americans, Muslims and women. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci, File)

Despite such claims, ActBlue currently holds the highest level of certification as a service provider.

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Both WinRed and ActBlue note on their donation pages that law requires donors to list their employer and occupation.

"The problem," Pudner said, "is on the back end where ActBlue does not allow banks to verify the identity of the cardholder, meaning someone could buy endless gift cards and list any name they wanted and leave the employer line blank or type in words like 'not employed,' 'unemployed.'"

Committee		2019		2020	
Name	ActBlue	WinRed	ActBlue	WinRed	
ID	C00401224	C00694323	C00401224	C00694323	
Donations					
Amount	\$467,193,540	\$45,896,526	\$422,743,153	\$256,024,151	
Transactions	6,055,712	505,978	3,715,956	4,276,693	
AVG	\$77.15	\$90.71	\$113.76	\$59.86	
No Employer					
Amount	\$173,175,960	\$3,778,955	\$175,209,307	\$13,390,221	
Pct	37.1%	8.2%	41.4%	5.2%	
Transactions	2,867,395	28,487	1,863,149	162,641	
Pct	47.4%	5.6%	50.1%	3.8%	
AVG	\$60.39	\$132.66	\$94.04	\$82.33	

Data compiled from January-August 2020 (Take Back Action Fund)

"With half of ActBlue donors indicating they do not have an employer, we recommend they start letting their payment processors verify donations to stop any foreign or other illicit donations by simply listing themselves as an unemployed American," Pudner added.