



NATIONAL JOURNAL

# Who Are Your Donors and What Do They Do

As the candidates rush for small-dollar contributions, their larger donors tell another part of the story.



Marianne Williamson talks to reporters after the first of two Democratic presidential primary debates hosted by CNN Tuesday, July 30, 2019, in the Fox Theatre in Detroit.

**Mini Racker**

🕒 Aug. 7, 2019, 8 p.m.

---

**F**rom the usual white-collar suspects to the serpentine-related, a stroll through 2020 presidential fundraising reveals a range of professions—and which contenders are getting their support.

*A National Journal* analysis of the thousands of donors listed in Federal Election Commission reports filed across the first and second quarters helps illuminate who is supporting both the unwieldy Democratic primary field and President Trump.

While it doesn't give a full picture of each candidate's financial-support base, since those giving less than \$200 are unitemized and have become a [major focus](https://www.wsj.com/graphics/what-the-2020-candidates-have-raised/) (<https://www.wsj.com/graphics/what-the-2020-candidates-have-raised/>) for campaigns, it does provide a window into what those who have given the most do to make a living and whom they like best.

Here are 10 of our most interesting findings:

### **The Nonemployment Boon**

For many candidates, the occupation their donors self-identified most isn't a job at all. Over the first six months of the year, most relied heavily on supporters who indicated that they don't work. Those with the highest percentage: 37 percent of Marianne Williamson donors listed their profession as "not employed" or "none," as did 32 percent of Elizabeth Warren and Beto O'Rourke donors. Retirees were also well-represented, especially among Trump donors; a majority of those who gave to the president are retired.

### **Laying Down the Law**

Among donors who did have an occupation, one profession stood above the rest: attorneys. Setting aside the donors who don't work, the plurality of donors to all but five campaigns practice law.

## **The Techie Revolution**

It's no surprise many Andrew Yang donors work in tech; 4 percent were engineers and 5 percent specified they were software engineers, compared to 3 percent who identified as lawyers. Another appealing candidate for the sector is Bernie Sanders, whose donors are more likely to be software engineers than anything else. Sanders is also the only candidate whose donors include more teachers than lawyers.

## **Spin Doctors**

There are three other candidates who didn't have more attorney donors than anything else: Tulsi Gabbard, whose top donor occupation was physician; Williamson, whose top was consultant; and Trump, whose top was entrepreneur.

## **Trump Card**

Entrepreneurs make up a small fraction of Democrats' donors, while 1,425 of them gave to Trump. Besides ideological and issue-specific reasons, another key to the disparity could simply be how different people label similar work—after all, CEO, owner, and president are some of the most well-represented occupations for Democrats.

Still, Trump's donor profile is unique. "Not employed" or "none" is only the 28th most common response among Trump donors, whereas it's one of the top two for each Democrat. Meanwhile, drivers and farmers are among the 20 most

common professions for Trump donors, but not for any other candidates. This isn't just a result of partisan divisions. Bill Weld's donors, like Democrats', skew toward lawyers and consultants.

## **Keeping House**

Kirsten Gillibrand may barely register in the polls, but she is winning the support of one group. Homemaker is one of the top five occupations among donors to her women-focused campaign. Steve Bullock is the only other candidate for whom homemaker cracks the top five.

## **The Wonks**

Professors are big contributors to the race so far, and are among the five most-represented professions for Warren, O'Rourke, and Julián Castro, and within the top 20 for almost every other Democrat. Scientists make the top 20 for Warren, Yang, and Jay Inslee, while artists do for Warren and Sanders. Students make the top 20 for Sanders and Bullock.

## **2020 Outliers**

"Life coach," "yoga teacher," and "massage therapist" are all among the 20 top professions for Williamson and no one else. While chiropractors aren't flocking to any other candidate, 88 of them gave to Biden, easily cracking his top 20. Meanwhile, banquet servers make it into not just Bill de Blasio's top 20, but his top 10. No more than two donated to any other Democrat.

## **Piggy Bank**

Trump, Pete Buttigieg, Michael Bennet, and Inslee all received donations from a numismatist—that is, they collected coin from coin collectors.

## **Party Animals**

The single reptile breeder who has already given big money is a Sanders donor, as is the only dinosaur expert. The lone insect rancher gave to Bennet, while the salmon exporter gave to Inslee. Among Trump's donors are the sole-snake shop worker and the hypoallergenic-cat breeder. The cowboy? He wants to, as Trump says, "keep America great."

*Editor's Note: This analysis was limited to major candidates who filed second-quarter fundraising reports and are still running for president. That includes 22 Democrats and two Republicans, President Trump and Bill Weld. Treated as equivalent responses were "lawyer" and "attorney," "CEO" and "chief executive officer," "student" and "university student," and "not employed" and "none." Democrat Wayne Messam didn't list enough donors to include them in meaningful comparisons of top-20 lists. Donors who didn't indicate a profession (or a lack-thereof) were excluded from the final analysis.*