

## U professor part of conservative effort to reform campaign finance system

By [Cyndy Brucato](#) | 01/14/15



REUTERS/Bernadett Szabo

To encourage small donors, Take Back Our Republic suggests making contributions to federal campaigns up to \$500 exempt from disclosure.

A University of Minnesota law professor and a political consultant who's worked on five Republican presidential campaigns – both alumni of the George W. Bush administration – launched a campaign finance reform group Wednesday tilted toward the conservative point of view.

Richard Painter and Mark McKinnon lead the board of [Take Back Our Republic](#), a fledgling group that does not so much decry the evil of big money as the evil of foreign money in campaigns.



Richard Painter

The group is encouraging political campaigns and third party groups to be vigilant in following the law that prohibits foreign contributions to American campaigns. “We must be careful lest

our political system be seen by foreign interests as a carnival in which all can participate and get the results they seek, even if those results weaken American interests, our national unity, and our national security,” the group states on its website.



A crackdown on accepting foreign money is the stick in the equation, but Take Back also offers a carrot. To encourage small donors, it suggests making contributions to federal campaigns up to \$500 exempt from disclosure. Currently, any contribution over \$200 must be disclosed.

The group also supports a tax credit for small political donors, giving contributors a credit for donations up to \$200 and a deduction for donations up to \$600. Minnesota allows a tax refund — up to \$100 — for contributions to state campaigns.

Take Back describes itself as an education and advocacy group and promises to make all its donations transparent. The group has a six-member paid staff headed by former Republican political operative John Pudner. In his biography on the group’s website, Pudner says he joined Take Back Our Republic to lead “a team of ex-political wonks to help change the very industry in which they once thrived.”