



Miami-Dade's White Donor Class

How Big Donors Distort Democracy

BY SEAN MCELWEE

Acknowledgment

This report was produced in collaboration with Brian Schaffner, Professor of Political Science at University of Massachusetts Amherst and Jesse Rhodes, Associate Professor of Political Science at University of Massachusetts Amherst.

About Demos

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INTRODUCTION

Although Miami-Dade County is majority people of color, the wealthiest donors to local elections are overwhelmingly white, high-income, and male. The donor pool is dominated by lawyers, lobbyists, and the real estate industry. The experience in Miami-Dade is similar to national elections, where a small cadre of donors—the .01 percent—accounted for over 40 percent of all campaign contributions.¹ These big donors are overwhelmingly white - of the 500 biggest donors in 2014, only 12 were people of color.² An increasing body of research suggests that the financing of our elections by a small group of big donors has very real consequences in terms of the public policies that are enacted.³ In fact, when the preferences of the donor class diverge with those of the average voter, it is the donor class' preferences that win.

These preferences have major impacts. Over the last few years, debates about the budget, unions, and taxes have been at the center of Miami's political battles. The overwhelming power of the donor class may have influenced this debate, as studies suggest the wealthiest Americans are more fiscally conservative and adverse to redistribution than average Americans.⁴ In addition, Miami-Dade has been the home of intense debates about public subsidies for development projects. The power of development raises questions about the role of real estate donors in the political process.

This report examines the demographics of donors to both the Miami-Dade County and Miami City elections. The Miami-Dade data consists of all contributions made to Carlos Gimenez and Raquel Regalado and the county commissioner races so far during the 2016 election cycle. The Miami City data includes donations made to Tomas Regalado and the city council during the 2013 election cycle. The methodology section details the full process for data collection, as well as the specific dates and candidates examined.

KEY FINDINGS

- The donor pool for Miami-Dade's upcoming election is whiter than the population of Miami-Dade, particularly at the highest levels. While 59 percent of Miami-Dade's adult population and 83 percent of donors giving less than \$100 to mayoral candidates are Latino, only 42 percent of those giving more than \$1,000 are. The result is that while whites make up 42 percent of all donors to both mayoral and county commissioner races, they make up 52 percent of the money contributed. In total, 47 percent of county commissioner donors were white, more than double the white share of the adult population.
- There are similar gender gaps in the Miami-Dade donor pool. The small donor pool (those giving less than \$100) is relatively equal, with women making up 51 percent of small mayoral donors and 41 percent of small county commissioner donors. However, the large donor pools are overwhelmingly male. In total, 71 percent of county commissioner donors were men.
- While only 20 percent of Miami-Dade adults make an income over \$100,000, these affluent residents make up more than half of all mayoral donors. County commissioner races were slightly more class diverse, with 39 percent of donors earning over \$100,000.
- Developers account for nearly a third of donations to Miami-Dade elections. Among development-related interests, stadium interests and real estate are the largest.
- The small donor pool in Miami City's 2013 election was racially diverse and representative of the general population. However, donors giving more than \$1,000 were more than 60 percent white, even though whites make up only 16 percent of Miami City's population. The largest donors were 75 percent male and 65 percent had a family income greater than \$100,000.

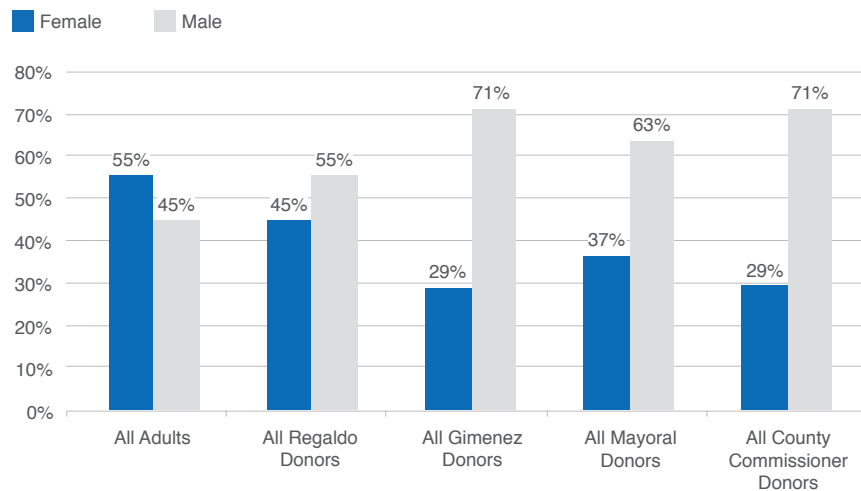
THE 2016 ELECTION

In the 2016 mayoral election, the two leading candidates are incumbent Republican Carlos Gimenez and Raquel Regalado, daughter of Miami-City Mayor Tomas Regalado and also a School Board Member. Between January and October, Gimenez raised \$2,812,791 and Regalado raised \$509,740, according to an analysis by the *Miami Herald*.⁵ The *Herald* reports that Gimenez’s fundraising is strengthened by “big dollars coming from companies and developers with business interests before the county.”⁶ One big donor, Turnberry, is owned by a developer seeking a change in building regulations and a massive economic-development grant. Among Regalado’s biggest donors is Norman Braman, an auto dealership owner who has played an outsized role in Miami-Dade politics (see box). Interestingly enough, it was Braman who initially funded and supported Gimenez’s special election campaign to recall Carlos Alvarez, partially for his support of government financing for the Miami Marlins stadium (see box).⁷ However, the relationship between Braman and Gimenez grew colder after Gimenez advocated in favor of public subsidies for the Miami Dolphins.⁸ Both Regalado and Braman are strongly opposed to the SkyRise Miami project supported by Jeff Berkowitz.⁹ The two have sued both Miami City and Miami-Dade to prevent them from subsidizing the construction of the SkyRise.¹⁰ Between 2006 and 2016, Berkowitz, or organizations associated with him, poured \$83,987 into Miami-Dade politics. The *Miami Herald* reports that Berkowitz “was a top contributor to incumbents in the last round of county-commission elections in 2014, and also a significant backer of Gimenez’s mayoral campaigns in 2011 and 2012.”¹¹

THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF DONORS

To explore how the donor class may distort policy debates, this report examines the demographics of both the mayoral and county commissioner candidate fields. The two major mayoral candidates draw from slightly different bases. Regalado, who is a woman, has far more gender diversity in her donor base, though it is still not representative of the Miami-Dade adult population. While donors to Gimenez and the county commissioners are both 71 percent male, 45 percent of Regalado donors were women. As a whole, the county commissioner donors skewed male even more than the mayoral donor pool (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. 2016 Mayoral and County Commissioner Donors, by Gender | Regalado's Donor Base Has More Gender Diversity

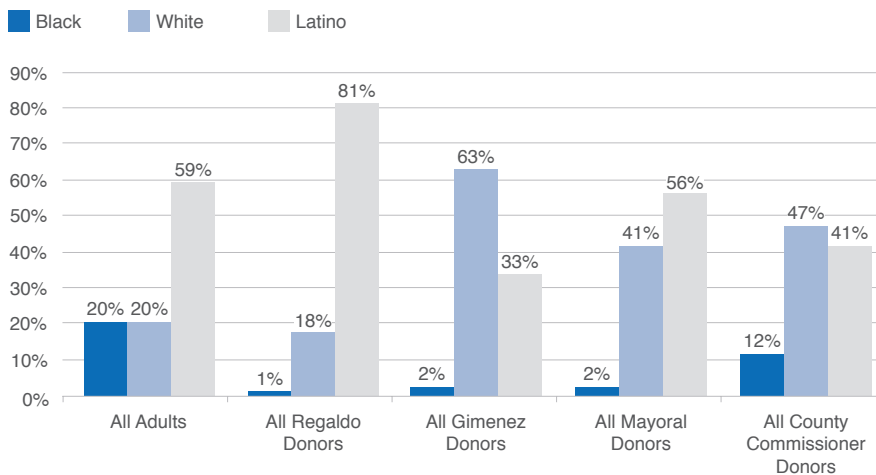


Source: Demos analysis of campaign finance disclosures

Neither candidate had an even close to representative share of donations coming from African-Americans, whose share of the Miami-Dade population is ten times larger than their share of mayoral donors (see Figure 2). Whites make up three times more of Gimenez donors than they do Regalado donors. Whites are also dramatically overrepresented in the donor class, making up more than twice as many mayoral and commissioner donors as their share of the adult population. Though African-Americans and whites make up equal shares of the adult Miami-Dade population, whites make up an eight times larger share of mayoral and commissioner

donors. Latinos, who make up nearly three-fifths of the Miami-Dade adult population, make up four-fifths of Regalado’s donors and a third of Gimenez’s.¹² African-Americans were slightly better represented in the county commission donor pool, though Latinos were underrepresented and whites were over-represented.

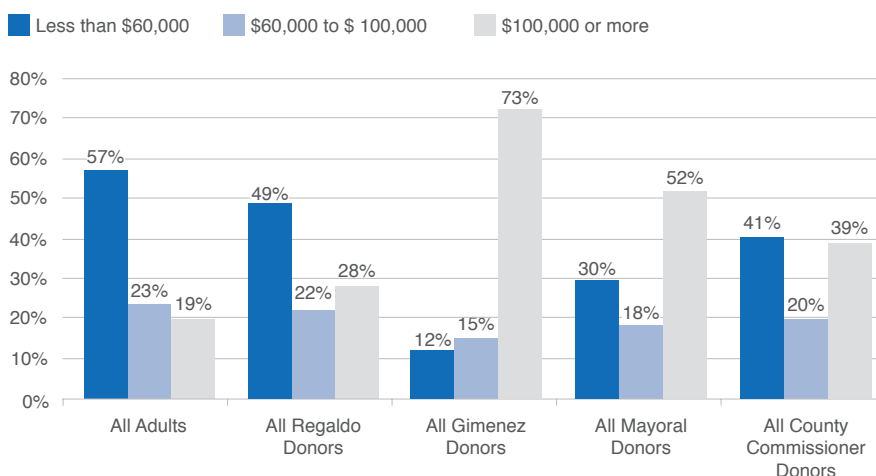
Figure 2. 2016 Mayoral and County Commissioner Donors, by Race
Gimenez Draws from an Overwhelmingly White Donor Pool



Source: Demos analysis of campaign finance disclosures

Regalado draws from a far less affluent donor base. Four times more of her donors have an income below \$60,000 a year compared to Gimenez’s donors. While only 20 percent of Miami-Dade adults make an income over \$100,000, these affluent residents make up 73 percent of Gimenez’s donors and half of all mayoral donors. County commissioner races were slightly more class diverse, with 39 percent of donors earning over \$100,000 (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. 2016 Mayoral and County Commissioner Donors, by Income
Gimenez Draws from an Overwhelmingly Rich Donor Pool

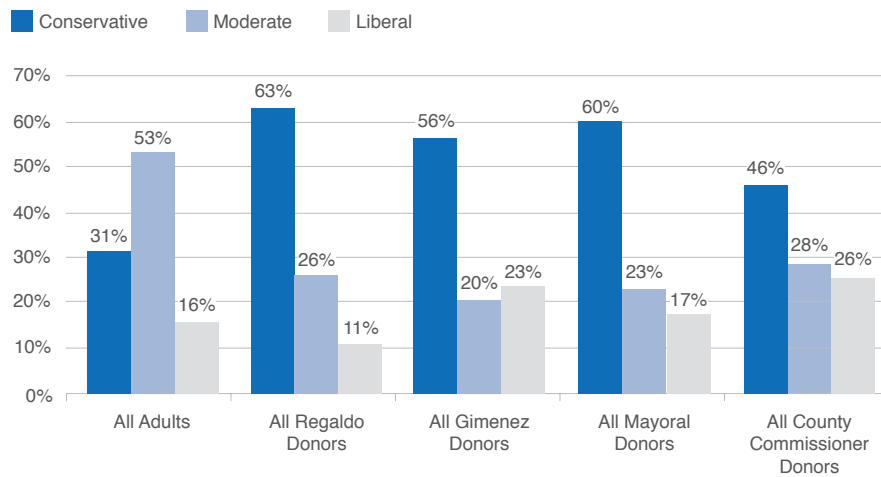


Source: Demos analysis of campaign finance disclosures

The dataset also includes, where possible, an individual’s party of registration. Because Florida is a state that includes party registration on an individual’s registration, a large share of non-donors and donors could be identified. In addition, the dataset includes an estimate of ideology, which has been independently validated for accuracy.¹³

Both candidates draw from people who are more likely to be Republican and conservative than the general Miami-Dade population (see Figure 4). Though 31 percent of Miami-Dade adults are considered conservative, conservatives make up 63 percent of Regalado donors and 56 percent of Gimenez donors. Donors to the county commissioner races were slightly more liberal and less conservative than mayoral donors, but still unrepresentative of the general population.

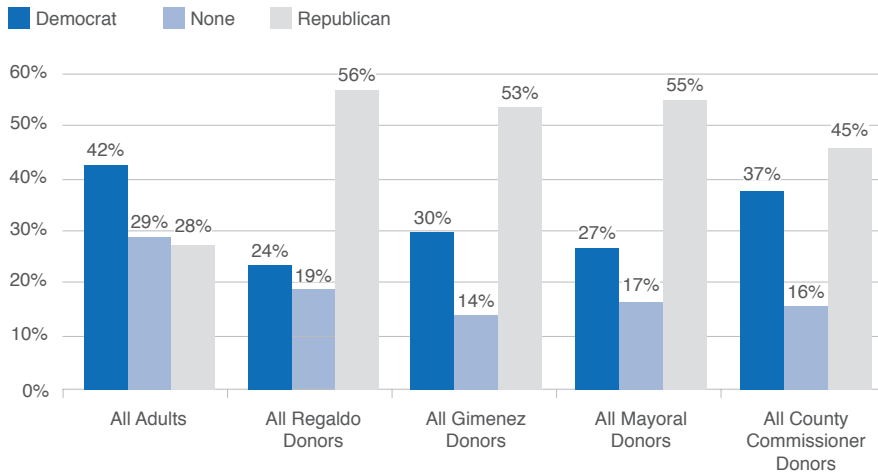
Figure 4. 2016 Mayoral and County Commissioner Donors, by Ideology
 Donors Are More Conservative than the Miami-Dade Population



Source: Demos analysis of campaign finance disclosures

Democrats, who make up 42 percent of Miami-Dade’s population, make up only 26 percent of mayoral donors. However, Republicans, who make up a bit more than a quarter of Miami-Dade’s population, make up more than half of donors to mayoral elections. Donors to the county commissioner races were more likely to be Democrats than mayoral donors, but less likely than Miami-Dade’s adult population (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. 2016 Mayoral and County Commissioner Donors, by Party Identification | Donors Are More Republican than the Miami-Dade Population



Source: Demos analysis of campaign finance disclosures

Young people are also underrepresented in both candidates' donor classes. People 18-29 make up 17 percent of the population, but 3 percent of Regalado and Gimenez's donors and less than 1 percent of donors to county commissioner races.

NORMAN BRAMAN PLAYS POLITICS

Norman Braman has been a big player in both national and Miami-Dade politics for several decades. In 2011, he spent \$1 million to bankroll a recall election that ousted then-incumbent Mayor Carlos Alvarez. The vote was dramatic: with 88 percent opposed to allowing Alvarez to finish his second term, it was one of the most lopsided defeats in recall history.¹⁴ Alvarez stirred up anger with a 13 percent property tax hike at the same time he gave his staff big salary increases.¹⁵

Part of Braman's opposition to Alvarez stemmed from Alvarez's support for public funding of the Marlins stadium.¹⁶ Braman was a big player in the Florida Marlins stadium battle, beginning with a lawsuit he filed in 2008. He said he would drop the lawsuit if the issue was put to a public referendum.¹⁷ The fight exploded when *Deadspin* released documents suggesting the team was profitable, suggesting that the public subsidies were more generous than necessary.¹⁸ The new stadium has sat almost entirely empty¹⁹ and has yet to draw significant business interests or economic activity.²⁰

In 2012, Braman backed four challengers to the County Commission election, giving them each \$5,000 and also creating two unlimited fundraising committees to, "bankroll direct mail, phone banking and other name recognition efforts."²¹ Incumbents balked at

the effort, with Commissioner Audrey Edmonson telling *WLRN*, "I think he has a lot of gall... he is a rich billionaire who is trying to come to selected communities—communities he doesn't live in—and try to control who represents the community."²²

In the upcoming mayoral election, Braman is lining up behind Regalado. He is the third largest donor in the cycle, having contributed \$131,000 to her campaign.²³ He also donated \$75,000 to an electioneering committee that is shared by Raquel and her father, Tomas (the mayor of Miami City).²⁴ Braman's support for Regalado is partially due to his staunch opposition to public subsidies for the Miami SkyRise building. Braman has also come out against public funding for the Miami Dolphins Stadium, owned by billionaire Stephen Ross.²⁵ Braman also battled famed soccer player David Beckham over Beckham's plans to develop part of the Port of Miami into a soccer stadium.²⁶

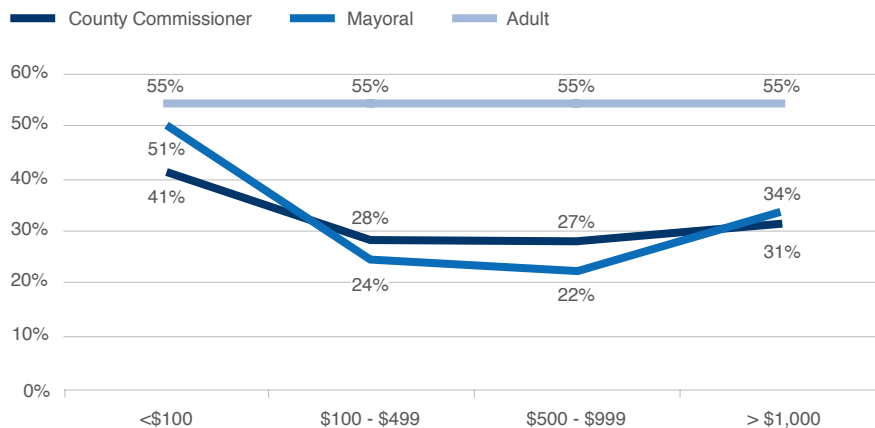
Braman has also been politically active at the federal level. He spent millions bankrolling Rubio's 2016 presidential campaign, largely because of his disdain for Jeb Bush, who vetoed state funds for a breast cancer institute Braman had started.²⁷ Braman's long involvement in Miami-Dade politics shows that big donors are often interested in exercising influence.

THE SMALL DONOR POOL HAS MORE DIVERSITY

Examining the demographics of donors by the size of donation also produces important results. All candidates draw heavily from big donors, so it's useful to explore how these big donors differ from both the Miami-Dade adult population and the small donor pool. This analysis includes all of the donors to Gimenez and Regalado, as well as the county commissioner candidates that were examined above.

A key take-away from examining the small donor pool is that donors giving less than \$100 are almost evenly divided between men and women, though women are better represented in the small donor pool for mayoral candidates. Among the larger donor pools, however, men make up around three quarters of donors (see Figure 6).

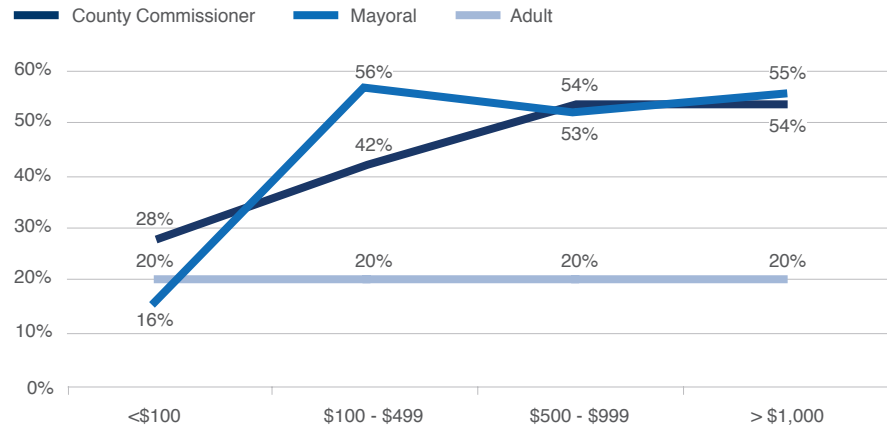
Figure 6. Share of Mayoral and City Council Donors Who Are Women, By Amount Donated | The Small Donor Pool Has Far More Gender Diversity



Source: Demos analysis of campaign finance disclosures

The large donor pool is also far whiter than the general population. Whites make up a quarter of Miami-Dade's population but more than half of donors giving more than \$1,000. The small donor pool is more representative. Latinos make up four-fifths of the smallest donors to mayoral campaigns and only 42 percent of donors giving more than \$1,000, though they make up 59 percent of Miami-Dade adults (see Figure 7). Although whites and African-Americans make up an equal share of the adult population, whites make up a nearly 18 times greater share of the large donor pool.²⁸

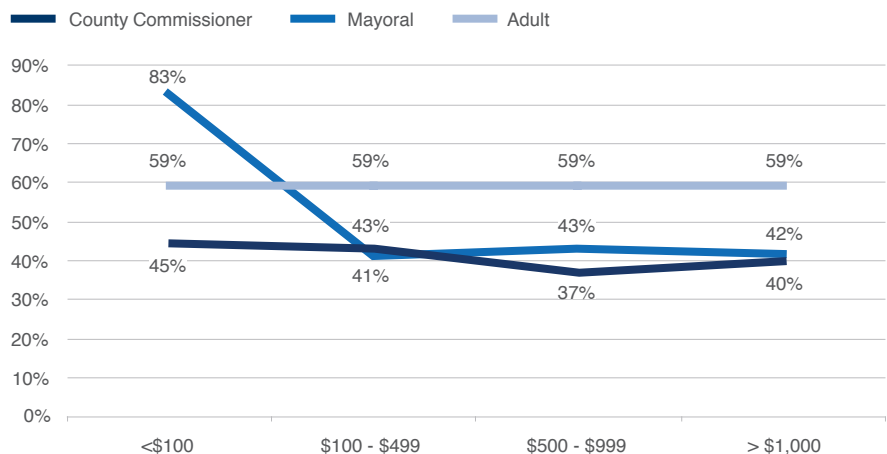
Figure 7. Share of Mayoral and City Council Donors Who Are White, By Amount Donated | Whites Make Up a Larger Share of the Large Donor Pool Than the Adult Population



Source: Demos analysis of campaign finance disclosures

Given how expensive a big contribution can be, it's unsurprising that the big donor pool skews white. One recent Federal Reserve report finds that only 37 percent of Latinos and 33 percent of African-Americans reported being able to pay off an emergency \$400 expense by the end of the month. However, 59 percent of white respondents reported being able to pay such an expense (see Figure 8). The lack of sufficient funds to pay off important bills suggests that very few people of color have excess money to spend on campaign contributions.²⁹

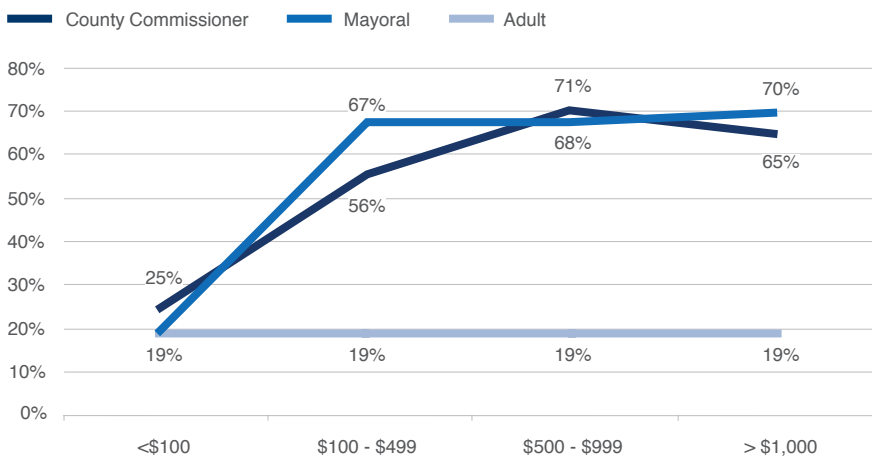
Figure 8. Share of Mayoral and City Council Donors Who Are Latino, By Amount Donated | Latinos Make Up a Larger Share of the Small Donor Pool, Are Underrepresented in the Large Donor Pool



Source: Demos analysis of campaign finance disclosures

The starkest divides between the small and larger donor pools relates to class. Donating money to a political campaign is a luxury for most people. While most Americans can afford a small contribution, few can afford to give the hundreds or even thousands that big donors pour into local elections. The median household income in Miami-Dade was \$53,482 in 2015, meaning that a \$1,000 contribution would be almost a week’s income, nearly impossible for any family to afford.³⁰ The result is that the donor pool does not include many working class people. Those earning less than \$60,000 a year make up 59 percent of donors giving less than \$100 to mayoral campaigns, but only 13 percent of donors giving more than \$1,000 (see Figure 9). Given the expense of a \$1,000 donation, particularly to a middle-income household, this divide isn’t particularly surprising. As the chart below shows, the wealthiest are dramatically overrepresented among the largest donors.

Figure 9. Share of Mayoral and City Council Donors Who Make More Than \$100,000, By Amount Donated | The Small Donor Pool Has More Class Diversity Than the Largest Donor Pool



Source: Demos analysis of campaign finance disclosures

There aren’t any clear patterns across party voting and ideology: donors as a whole are more likely to be conservative and Republican than the general population. Small donors and the largest donors are most likely to be Republican and conservative, while mid-level donors skewed more Democratic and liberal. The small donor pool also had more age diversity than the large donor pools, with more older and younger people. These data suggest that empowering small donors would lead to a dramatically more diverse donor pool in Miami-Dade.

MIAMI CITY'S WHITE, MALE DONOR CLASS

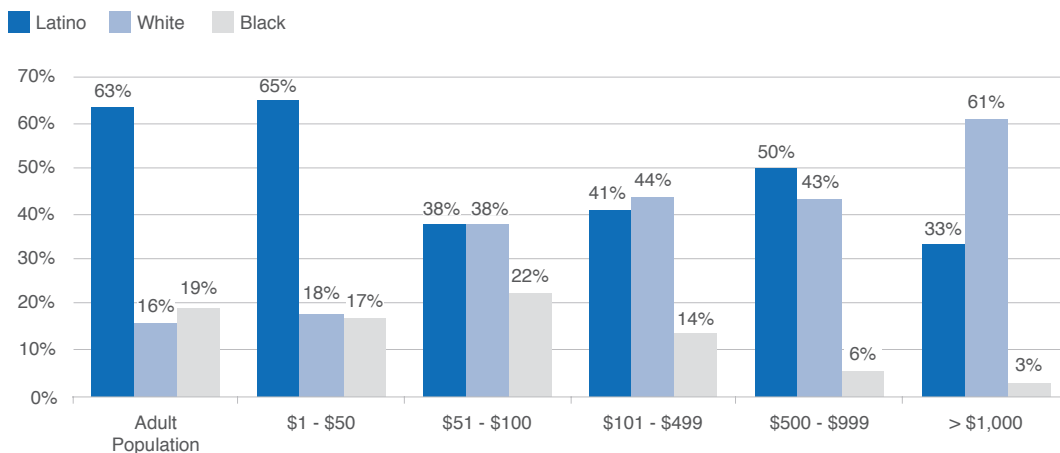
Demos also examined the donors who gave money during the 2013 Miami City election cycle. Most of the money flowed to the incumbent mayor, Tomas Regalado, though we also included donors to his competitors and the city council races. We find that though the large donor pool has little diversity, the small donor pool is representative of the population in general.

Miami is an incredibly diverse city. The adult population is 19 percent Black, 16 percent white and 64 percent Latino. Small donors (those who gave between \$1 and \$50, who make

up about a third of donors) are almost perfectly representative of the city. However, among the largest donors, a different story emerges: here 61 percent of donors are white, a third are Latino, and only 3 percent are Black.³¹ The small donor pool in Miami is incredibly diverse, and matches the general population. The large donor pool does not (see Figure 10).

In Miami, 17 percent of adults have a family income below \$20,000, 37 percent have an income between \$20,000 and \$60,000 and a fifth have an income above \$100,000. These demographics are almost perfectly

Figure 10. Share of Miami City Adult Population and Donors, Latino, Black and White, by Amount Donated | The Miami City Small Donor Pool Has More Racial Diversity Than the Large Donor Pool



Source: Demos analysis of campaign finance disclosures

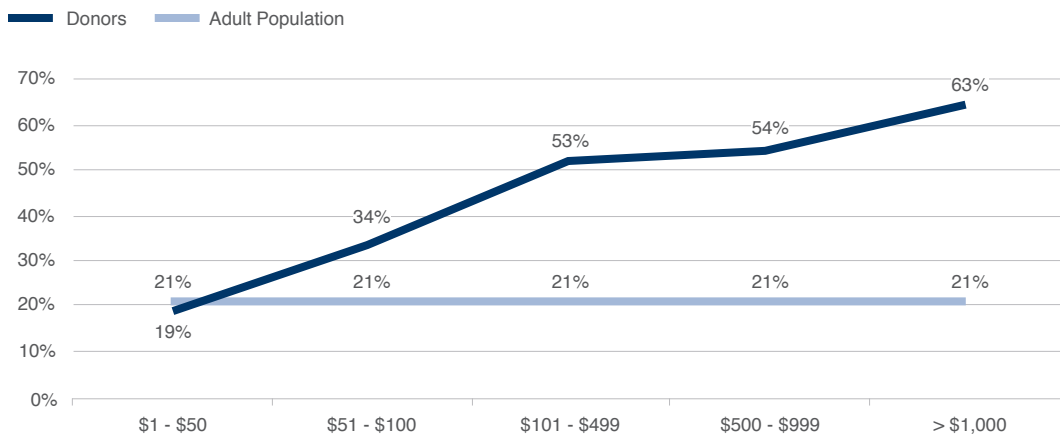
MIAMI CITY'S WHITE, MALE DONOR CLASS (CONTINUED)

represented in the small donor pool – indeed, lower income individuals are slightly overrepresented. However, the large donor pool (those giving more than \$1,000) is heavily skewed towards the wealthy (see Figure 11).

Women make up a bit more than half of the residents of Miami, but only a quarter of the largest donors. While the large donor pool is overwhelmingly male, there is far more diversity in the small donor pool, where women are somewhat over-represented. Among donors giving \$1-50, nearly 6 in 10 are women. Young people are also underrepresented in the Miami donor

pool. While 18-29 year olds make up 15 percent of Miami's adult population, there were no 18-29 year olds who donated more than \$1,000. However, the small donor pool was slightly more age diverse, with 6 percent of donors between 18 and 29. Individuals 45-65 are disproportionately represented among the largest donors, but only slightly overrepresented in the small donor pool. The data from Miami City provide a unique opportunity to explore the smallest donors. These donors are far more representative of the city's population than the largest donors.

Figure 11. Share of Miami City Donors Who Make More Than \$100,000, by Amount Donated | The Miami City Small Donor Pool Has More Class Diversity Than the Large Donor Pool



Source: Demos analysis of campaign finance disclosures

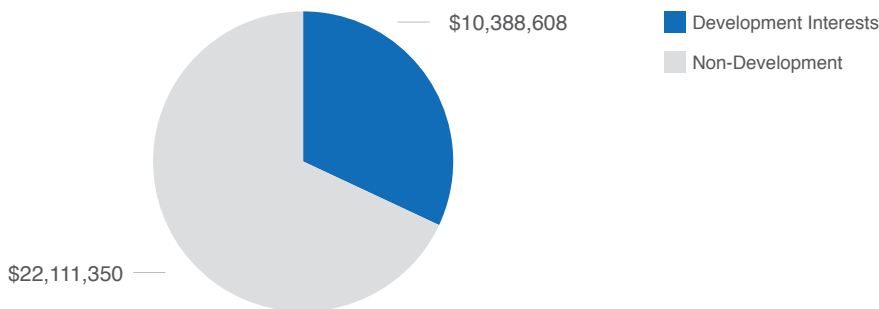
WHY THE DONOR CLASS MATTERS

The lack of race, class, and gender diversity in the both the Miami-Dade and Miami City donor class matters because it may affect whose policy preferences are implemented and who will run for office. Policymakers spend time fundraising from a donor class that doesn't resemble their constituents. An increasing amount of literature in political science finds that big donors are better represented by politicians than non-donors.³² Other research suggests that big donors have different policy priorities than small donors, and are more likely to donate to advance their own personal financial interests than small donors.³³ A study of donors to state legislative and gubernatorial candidates asked respondents to rate from 1 to 5 the importance of reasons behind their contributions. The mean response for “The candidate would be better for my business, industry or job” was 2.2 for small donors, but 3.1 for large donors.³⁴ Large donors were also far more likely to answer, “So my business will be treated fairly.” Both results suggest big donors are far more likely to donate to benefit their business position. It appears that contributions in low-salience elections are even more motivated by self-interest and more influential.

DEVELOPMENT INTERESTS DOMINATE THE MIAMI-DADE DONOR CLASS

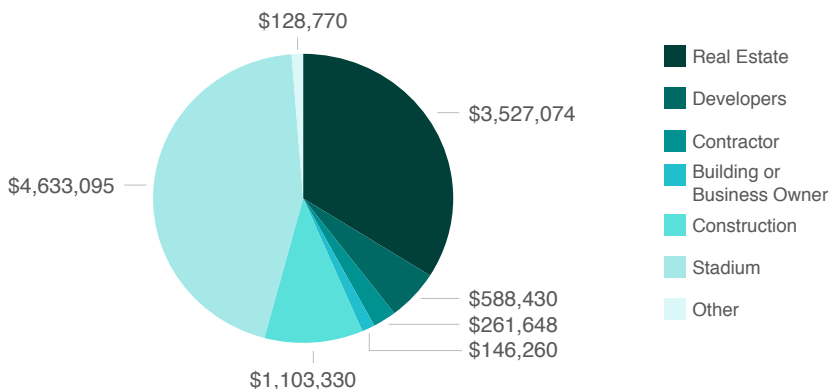
One of the most prominent interests in Miami-Dade County is developers, and some of the most important political battles in the last decade have centered on zoning, public subsidies, and land use. According to Demos' analysis of Miami-Dade contribution data, between September 1, 2012 and April 5, 2016, there were \$32 million worth of donations for which the contributor reported an occupation. Of those donations, nearly one-third came from individuals or businesses reporting real estate, construction, stadium owner, or other development-related interests as their occupation (see Figure 12).³⁵

Figure 12. Share of Money From Development Interests, 2012-2016
 Developers Are A Large Part of The Miami-Dade Donor Class



Source: Demos analysis of campaign finance disclosures

Figure 13. Breakdown of Development Interests, 2012-2016
 Stadiums Are the Most Powerful Development Interest



Source: Demos analysis of campaign finance disclosures

As the chart above shows, the biggest contributors are stadium owners, followed by those who list their occupation as real estate. The next largest blocks are construction and development companies (see Figure 13).

Development interests are putting big money into the 2016 mayoral race. The *Miami Herald* reports that Gimenez's early fundraising hauls came from "securing big checks from county contractors, lobbyists, and even Donald Trump."³⁶ A Demos analysis of the donors to Gimenez's PAC, Miami-Dade Residents First, finds that it received \$2.3 million in donations from individuals who reported an occupation. Of those donors, 39 percent came from the real estate, development, and construction industries.³⁷ In his 2012 re-election effort he raised \$4 million, an impressive sum for a municipal level office.³⁸

Two key battles in the last decade highlight the importance of developers: the Miami Worldcenter and Marlins Park. The Miami Worldcenter is a \$1.7 billion project that includes 10 blocks of luxury apartments and high-end retail.³⁹ The project received \$88 million in property tax abatements over a 12 year period.⁴⁰ The vote was unanimous and included some guarantees that workers would be hired locally and paid well, but it raised some eyebrows. Andres Viglucci noted for the *Miami Herald* that,

*somewhat unusual was the fact that city officials made little attempt to make a case in a three-hour-plus hearing for why the \$1 billion Miami Worldcenter development, in the planning for more than a decade and backed by deep pocketed investors from Palm Beach County and California, needed financial incentives in order to build.*⁴¹

Union organizers worried that the hiring promises wouldn't be enforced and noted that the goal of the Southeast Overtown/Park West Community Redevelopment Agency (which granted the tax cuts) was meant to develop Overtown, and the Worldcenter is not located in Overtown. The developers promised 10,000 jobs paying no less than \$12.83 an hour in a bid for the establishment of a Community Development District. The debates were heated during hearings, with activists chanting "Black Work Matters."⁴²

Miami-Dade was at the center of a heated dispute over funding the new Marlins Park stadium, which the city and county ended up shelling out hundreds of millions to build.⁴³ The Florida Marlins (now called the Miami Marlins in accordance with a deal they made with Miami-Dade county) previously played games in

the Sun Life Stadium, which they shared with the Miami Dolphins, but began seeking a stadium exclusively for baseball in 2004. The stadium deal passed by the Miami-Dade County Commission in 2007 is considered one of the worst ever negotiated, with the team covering less than 20 percent of the cost and the county selling bonds to raise much of the \$500 million for the stadium.⁴⁴ However, these bonds will end up costing the county dramatically more than the \$400 million sticker price. The *Miami Herald* examined just one of the \$91 million loans, and found that the total debt service will cost the county \$1.18 billion by the time it's fully paid off in 2048.⁴⁵ Two experts at the Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Program estimate the full cost of the public contribution to be \$2.4 billion over 40 years.⁴⁶ As the *New York Times* reported,

*Such generous terms were not uncommon during good times, before city and county officials faced yawning budget gaps, potential layoffs and cuts in social services. Yet they forged ahead anyway, largely dismissing voter opposition and the lessons learned elsewhere that new stadiums sometimes fail to deliver the economic punch promised in forecasts and that the public financing for them can handcuff future generations. The deal was a fresh reminder that even during a recession, sports hold sway over communities regardless of the potential costs.*⁴⁷

During the period Demos studied, stadium interests contributed more than \$4.6 million to Miami-Dade politics.

Norman Braman, a wealthy Miami-Dade auto dealer, was a leading opponent of the stadium and backed a legal challenge to prevent it from being constructed.⁴⁸ Braman also funded the recall election of Carlos Alvarez, and the stadium was seen as one key issue in the recall election.⁴⁹ Carlos Gimenez, a staunch opponent of the stadium deal, won the recall election by a large margin, winning 88 percent of the vote.⁵⁰ Gimenez, who was one of the three county commissioners who voted against the deal, told the *New York*, "I'm not anti-baseball, but I'm anti-bad deal. Anyone with any sense can see this is cockeyed."⁵¹ He is one of the only mayors to never attend a game of the local baseball team, saying, "I still wear my Marlins stadium scars quite proudly."⁵² County Commissioner Natacha Seijas, described as a "vocal proponent" of the stadium was also recalled by an equally large margin.⁵³ Miami City Mayor Tomas Regalado was, at the time of the debate, the City Commissioner and was "among the loudest critics" according to the *Miami Herald*.⁵⁴ In 2009 Regalado defeated incumbent Miami City mayor, Manny Diaz, who was an

early proponent of the stadium deal, by a large margin (he won 72 percent of the vote).⁵⁵ Regalado cited his opposition to the stadium deal as part of the explanation for his triumph.⁵⁶

In addition to the development conflicts, Miami-Dade has faced a series of intense budget battles over the last few years, partially due to the decline of property values following the housing market crash. In 2010, the city worked to fill a \$105 million dollar deficit, almost entirely through cuts to state employment.⁵⁷ At the time, the *Sun Sentinel* reported that, “the city could have raised about \$36 million by increasing property taxes,” but declined to pursue that scenario.”⁵⁸ More recently, the city has been in less dire straits because rebounded property values have bolstered revenues, and the state is hiring new employees.⁵⁹ However, debates about development and budgets will become more intense as climate change threatens Miami-Dade and as powerful developers move inland, encroaching on more diverse neighborhoods. Who Miami-Dade politicians chose to side with in these clashes could be influenced by the powerful donor class.

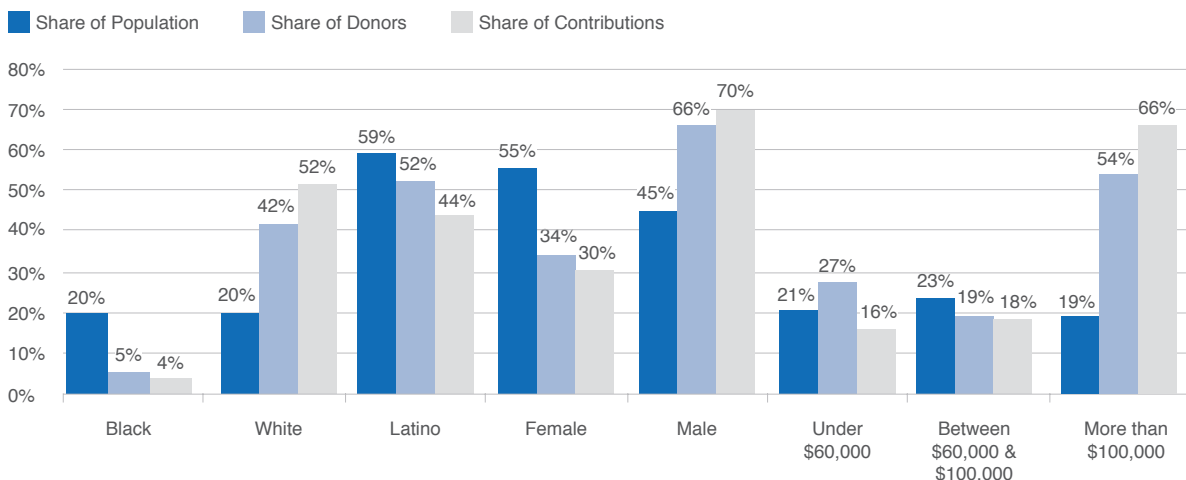
SMALL DONOR MATCHING COULD INCREASE THE DIVERSITY OF DONORS AND REPRESENTATIVES

The dominance of big donors means that candidates rely far more on money from white, male, and wealthy donors. While whites make up 42 percent of Miami-Dade donors, because they are mostly large donors, they account for 52 percent of contributions. Men, who make up 66 percent of donors, accounted for 70 percent of contributions. The wealthy made up 54 percent of donors, but 66 percent of contributions (see Figure 14).

To solve the lack of diversity in the donor pool and reclaim democracy, Miami-Dade should consider a small donor matching program, which has been shown to increase diversity of donors and candidates.

A study of New York City’s 2009 municipal election finds that “donors giving \$10 or less live in neighborhoods that are more racially diverse than the city as a whole.”⁶⁰ The city’s public matching system (which uses public funds to match small donations) successfully increased the diversity of the city’s donor pool.⁶¹ The fact that both Miami-Dade and Miami City’s small donor pools are far more diverse and representative of the larger population suggests that empowering small donors would lead to more representative policymaking.

Figure 14. Share of Donors and Share of Contributions, by Race, Income and Gender
Whites, the Wealthy, and Men Make Up Larger Share of Contributions Than Donors



Source: Demos analysis of campaign finance disclosures

A study of possible candidates finds that the number one personal factor discouraging someone from running for state representative was raising money (82%), far more important than things like “little power” (42%) or serving in the minority party (15%).⁶² Of those surveyed, 27% said the availability of public funding would increase their chances of running for office. This effect was slightly larger among people of color (35%) and those with an income below \$50,000 (44%).⁶³ In Arizona, in the first election after public financing was initiated, there were three times more Latino and Native American candidates running for office.⁶⁴ A study by the Maine Ethics Commission found that public financing led to an increase in first-time candidates, including more women.⁶⁵ The report notes that 65% of candidates in a 2006 survey said that public financing was “very important” in deciding to run for office and 22% said “somewhat important.” For women the number was higher, with 71% saying that public financing was “very important” compared with 53% of men.⁶⁶

Common Cause finds that, “diversity among candidates, especially ethnic minorities, has more than doubled in Arizona, while in Maine the number of women candidates and legislators has increased by 18%. The number of women elected to Arizona offices covered by public financing jumped from 25 in 2002 to 34 in 2006, and the number of racial minority candidates running for Arizona offices covered by public financing went from 13 in 2000 to 37 in 2006.”⁶⁷ A Brennan Center study of the New York City public financing system suggests it increased the diversity of candidates running in and winning elections.⁶⁸ Additionally, some research suggests that public financing bolsters election competitiveness.⁶⁹ Miller provides evidence that it increases the number of challenges to “safe” incumbents. An extensive literature review suggests that public financing does indeed lead to more races being contested.⁷⁰

MIAMI-DADE NEEDS PUBLIC FINANCING

A current Miami-Dade ballot initiative works to limit the power of big money over politics. The ordinance limits campaign contributions from individuals to \$250 per candidate per election for Mayor and County Commissioner, prohibits big contractors from making campaign contributions, and creates a robust public financing system. The system would match small contributions (between \$5 and \$100) from county residents to any mayoral candidate or Board of County Commissioners candidate who qualifies by receiving small dollar donations from 1,500 or 400 individuals, respectively. Qualified contributions will be matched by six times the amount donated, subject to a total cap on public funds.

Big money in politics distorts democracy, imperiling upward mobility, racial justice, and Miami's future. To ensure that politicians respond to the people, not a small, privileged donor class, Miami should institute a public financing system that matches small donors.

APPENDIX: MIAMI-DADE

The numbers are based on an analysis performed by Brian Schaffner and Jesse Rhodes of University of Massachusetts Amherst in collaboration with Demos. They used the disclosure data from Miami-Dade County in order to find data on contributions made during the first five months of the County's 2016 elections for Mayor/County Commission. To find donations to each of two mayoral candidates, Carlos Gimenez and Raquel Regalado, they searched for donations made to each candidate's campaign from October 1st, 2015 through February 29th, 2016. This provided a unique spreadsheet containing the donation amount and the name of the contributor for each candidate. They used the same time parameters in their search for donations made to the following candidates for County Commission: Juan Carlos Zapata, Esteban Bovo, Dennis Moss, Earl Beaver, Xavier Suarez, Bruno Barreiro, Daisy Black, Audrey Edmonson, Barbara Jordan, and Alfred Santamaria. These search criteria returned three spreadsheets (one for each mayoral candidate and a third for the commission candidates collectively), which contained the amount and source of each donation. They used the name and address of each candidate to match these files into Catalist. The match rates for each file are listed below.

Match Rates:

Gimenez: 89%

Regalado: 86%

Commissioners: 89%

APPENDIX: MIAMI CITY

The numbers are based on an analysis performed by Brian Schaffner and Jesse Rhodes of University of Massachusetts Amherst in collaboration with Demos. They used data from the National Institute for Money in State Politics (NIMSP) in order to find information on contributions made to Miami city council and mayoral races in 2013 (the most recent year for which contribution data are available). This provided a unique spreadsheet containing the contribution amount, name, and street address of the contributor to each candidate. That was then collapsed create a single record with the total amount donated for each contributor.

NIMSP data are extremely comprehensive; however, they do not differentiate between contributions by individuals and contributions by corporations in a consistent fashion. Many contributions by corporations were removed by filtering out contributions that did not include a first name in the record.

The records were then matched into Catalist to extract demographic information on the donors. Since Catalist only contains records for natural persons, it automatically screens out corporate contribution records. Catalist was able to successfully match 39.2% of all records; however, the somewhat lower match rate reflects the fact that corporations (which are impossible to match) were included in the dataset sent to Catalist for matching, and should not be seen as an indication of a failure to match individual contributors successfully. Demos and U-Mass Amherst are satisfied with the number of records matched for Miami because this number is consistent with number of donors observed for other municipal elections in cities of comparable size.

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