

Straw Candidacy

September 10, 2019

“No Corporate PACs,” says a Facebook ad by the Sara Gideon for U.S. Senate campaign, “Just You.”

“Gideon is running to unseat Republican Sen. Susan Collins in 2020,” the *Portland Press Herald* reports, noting that “fighting corporate money in politics” has been a prime “focus of her campaign.”

Yet, as Democratic Speaker of the Maine House, the challenger ran something called the Gideon Leadership PAC that raked in a majority of its funds from corporations such as Aetna, American Express, AT&T, Comcast,



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Eli Lilly, Time Warner, Verizon, Visa, and Walmart. *The Maine Examiner* informs that “records from the Maine Ethics Commission show she has built her career, and funded efforts to boost her statewide support, with contributions from large corporations.”

Last month, Gideon was slapped with a the Federal Election Commission complaint ofor violating campaign finance law forbidding one person or entity from making contributions that are reimbursed by another. Gideon made numerous personal contributions to Democrats running for federal office only to turn around and have her leadership PAC reimburse her for the expense.

Her PAC being the true donor, Speaker Gideon is what’s known as a *straw donor*.

But it gets worse, explains Erin Chlopak, a former FEC official and currently with the Campaign Legal Center. “Corporations cannot make contributions to a federal campaign, and you can’t circumvent that ban by using a straw donor to funnel money originally from a company to a federal candidate.”

A spokesperson for Gideon’s campaign blamed “incorrect advice.”

At her level of corporate involvement, I’d say the “incorrect advice” was to emphasize the anti-corporate money pledge.

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.