

# Opioid makers, allies gave \$1 million to Utah politicians

## AP News

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SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Drugmakers that produce opioid painkillers and allied advocacy groups spent more than \$1 million on campaign contributions in Utah over the past decade.

The network of drug companies and nonprofits known as the Pain Care Forum spent more than \$880 million on campaign contributions and lobbying nationwide from 2006 to 2015 to influence state and federal policies, including opioid advocacy, according to a joint investigation from The Associated Press and the Center for Public Integrity.

The investigation comes as the number of overdose deaths from prescription painkillers has soared, claiming the lives of 165,000 people in the U.S. since 2000.

In Utah, more than 4,600 people have died from drug overdoses over the past decade.

Drug companies say they are committed to solving the problems linked to their painkillers.

Some key facts about drug use and the politics of opioids in Utah:

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### UTAH'S PRESCRIPTION DRUG PROBLEM

In 2014, 603 people died from drug overdoses in Utah, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That includes all drugs, but prescription opioids and heroin account for the majority of deaths, the CDC said.

The figure marks a 36 percent increase from 2006, which mirrors a similar jump in drug overdose deaths around the country.

As lawmakers, health care officials and others have been taking steps to address the rising use and abuse of opioids, the number of prescriptions issued in Utah has slightly fallen over the past few years.

In 2015, more than 227 million opioid prescriptions were issued in Utah, according to health information company IMS Health. That's a 7.5 percent drop from two years earlier, but still represents about 0.75 opioid prescription per person.

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## NATIONAL INFLUENCE

Over the past decade, members of the Pain Care Forum and allies have given more than \$55 million to politicians running for the U.S. House and Senate. That includes more than \$838,000 given to Utah candidates since 2006.

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## STATE POLITICS

Members of the Pain Care Forum also funded state politicians and parties.

Utah legislators, state officials and political parties received the fifth-highest amount of contributions in the nation, collecting at least \$298,000 in donations since 2006, according to the National Institute on Money in State Politics.

National Institute on Money in State Politics also reports the Pain Care Forum also has employed an average of 18 lobbyists a year at the state capital.