

HOUSE IMMIGRATION REFORM CAUCUS

Although the Immigration Reform Caucus (IRC) in the U.S. House of Representatives isn't as visible on Capitol Hill as other Congressional groups organized around an issue or special interest, its extreme ideological agenda and close ties to the John Tanton Network make it a prominent threat to civil liberties and immigration reform.

Founded in May 1999 by former Rep. Tom Tancredo, IRC members have introduced punitive anti-immigration legislation and played a key role in scuttling recent immigration reforms by dragging worthy proposals through a cesspool of nativism and xenophobia. With 94 members (as of 2009) it constitutes just 23 percent of the U.S. House of Representatives. Integral to the John Tanton Network, IRC is but one piece of today's anti-immigrant movement serving as Tanton's voice against immigration reform at the federal level.

The Network itself is a web of controversial anti-immigrant organizations orchestrated by John Tanton, founder of the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR). IRC associates itself with far-right extremist groups and leaders with virulent anti-immigration agendas promoted by white nationalists.

John Tanton solicited and received \$1.2 million from the white supremacist Pioneer Fund to build his powerhouse organization, The Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR). The Pioneer Fund was founded to promote racial eugenics, a pseudo-science which purports to show that African Americans are mentally inferior to whites.

The relationship between the Immigration Reform Caucus and FAIR is clear and irrefutable. IRC Chair Tancredo was supported throughout his congressional tenure by FAIR and the John Tanton Network. After Tancredo launched his ill-fated presidential campaign in 2007, a former FAIR lobbyist, Rep. Brian Bilbray (R-CA), took over as IRC's chairman.

Bilbray was first elected to California's House District 49 in 1994 and was defeated in 2000. After his defeat, Bilbray pushed through Washington's infamous revolving door, cashing in on his service in Congress to become a lobbyist for FAIR.

FAIR paid Bilbray almost \$300,000 for lobbying between May 2002 and July 2005, according to a March 6, 2006 article by the Copley News Service. When Bilbray took over the Caucus in 2007, he announced plans to work closely with groups like FAIR and the Center for Immigration Studies, a FAIR spin-off, to "seek their input on the legislative proposals." FAIR has also "handled" IRC's public relations for a press conference, and organized a meeting with IRC during its annual lobbying event in 2005.

Perhaps more menacing are the IRC's attempts to overturn the Fourteenth Amendment, the cornerstone of constitutional and civil rights approved after the Civil War. On April 2, 2009 IRC member Rep. Nathan Deal (R, GA-9th), and current candidate for governor of Georgia, introduced the "Birthright Citizenship Act" (HR 1868), to challenge the validity of the 14th Amendment. Out of 78 co-sponsors of the bill, 57 are members of the Immigration Reform Caucus.

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