

STAT News

Conservative group opposing PBM reform spends record number on lobbying

By [Rachel Cohrs](#) July 18, 2023



A conservative group advocating against changing how pharmacy middlemen operate spent more than \$1 million on lobbying last quarter.

GEORGE FREY/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

WASHINGTON — A conservative group advocating against changing how pharmacy middlemen operate spent more than \$1 million on lobbying last quarter — its highest-ever spend by far, according to federal filings. The Council for Citizens Against Government Waste spent \$1.1 million on lobbying last quarter, and only employed a single lobbyist. That’s 22 times the \$50,000 it spent in the same quarter last year. Its prior spending record was \$700,000, from the start of 2020.

The group brands itself as a taxpayer watchdog group, and advocates on a broad range of issues including energy, tax issues, broadband infrastructure, in addition to health care. Its [most recent disclosure](#) states that the group is lobbying the Senate health committee to stop a PBM reform package that passed out of committee [on a bipartisan basis](#), 18-3.

In a [May 1 letter to lawmakers](#), the group called the bill’s transparency requirements “burdensome” and “anticompetitive,” and said banning PBMs from charging insurers more than they pay for a drug amounted to “inserting government into private healthcare.”

In addition to spending much more on lobbying than usual, the group earlier this month funded a [multimillion-dollar ad campaign](#) against Republican Sens. Josh Hawley (Mo.), Katie Britt (Ala.), Tommy Tuberville (Ala.), Mike Braun (Ind.), and Cindy Hyde-Smith (Miss.), accusing them of taking Senate health chair Bernie Sanders’ side on the issue.

It’s unclear which groups or companies may be funding the Council for Citizens Against Government Waste. A spokesperson for the group said it does not comment on its donors.

The Pharmaceutical Care Management Association, which is the lobbying group for the PBM industry, amplified the group’s opposition to the Senate health committee’s PBM reform package in a [May press release](#).