

Updated: Political Footprint of the Corn Ethanol Lobby



April 2014

The federal government has in one form or another provided lucrative subsidies to the corn ethanol industry for more than 30 years, wasting tens of billions of taxpayer dollars in the process. Corn ethanol lobbyists have secured favorable treatment under the tax code, tariff protection from foreign competition, and even a government mandate for its use. While the most expensive taxpayer support – the \$6 billion-per-year Volumetric Ethanol Excise Tax Credit (VEETC) – ended in 2011, subsidies and mandates for corn ethanol live on in other parts of the federal government.

Taxpayers continue to subsidize ethanol blender pumps through the federal tax code, payments for annual production through USDA's Bioenergy Program for Advanced Biofuels, and a mandate for annual production through the federal Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS), among others. Originally sold as a way to achieve energy independence and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, corn ethanol has failed to deliver on all fronts and instead has caused numerous unintended consequences for taxpayers, consumers, and the environment.

Despite the fact that corn ethanol is a mature industry and its own proponents have admitted that federal subsidies are no longer necessary, lobbyists continue to seek more federal handouts. In Sept. 2013, Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), former Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, introduced S. 1563, a bill to increase taxpayers' role in subsidizing the installation of ethanol blender pumps, storage tanks, and biofuels pipelines. Since ethanol is more corrosive than gasoline, special infrastructure is necessary to dispense blends of ethanol higher than 15 percent (E15). However, because E15 and other blends such as 85 percent ethanol (E85) are not competitive with gasoline prices in most parts of the U.S., gasoline station owners have been reluctant to install expensive new infrastructure to sell them. Small engine, automotive, and other manufacturers have also warned that the use of E15 in small engines and older vehicles will result in voided warranties and product liability issues. Nonetheless, ethanol backers are attempting to further prop up the corn ethanol industry at the expense of taxpayers.

Total Political Donations and Lobbying Expenditures by Corn Ethanol Industry

Organizations and companies lobbying for special treatment of corn ethanol include well-known names such as Archer Daniels Midland, Cargill, POET LLC, and the American Farm Bureau. (Please see the Appendix for a full description of the lobbying entities listed in this fact sheet). These groups use their connections, revolving door lobbyists (those who previously worked for a Member of Congress but currently lobby for the ethanol industry), and huge lobbying expenditures and political contributions to increase the market share of corn ethanol. These well-connected individuals and powerful groups lobby for expanded subsidies and favorable policies in the federal tax code and energy and farm bills. Understanding this complicated nexus is the first step in helping ensure policymaker decisions are based on merit, not muscle.

Table 1 lists total political action committee (PAC) donations to federal candidates by corn ethanol industry organizations over the past six years while Table 2 lists the top 20 recipients of these PAC donations, mostly chairmen of committees with jurisdiction over the RFS or other biofuels subsidies. Table 3 includes lobbying expenditures from 2007-2013 by many of the same organizations. Please note that all information in the following tables was obtained from the Center for Responsive Politics.

Table 1: 2008-2014 Election Cycle Political Contributions to Federal Candidates from Corn Ethanol Industry	
Name of Political Action Committee	Political Donations, as of 3/7/2014
American Farm Bureau Federation & state organizations	\$1,818,392
Archer Daniels Midland	\$760,450
Biotechnology Industry Organization	\$628,249
Cargill Inc	\$686,500
National Corn Growers Association	\$550,666
Poet LLC	\$388,900
AG Processing	\$342,500
Growth Energy	\$253,900
National Farmers Union	\$169,750
Illinois Corn Growers Association	\$159,400
Louis Dreyfus Commodities/Group	\$104,700
Illinois Agricultural Association	\$72,806
Minnesota Corn Growers Association	\$59,550
Magellan Midstream Partners	\$54,750
National Biodiesel Board	\$32,500
Golden Grain Energy	\$21,600
Iowa Renewable Fuels Association	\$18,000
Missouri Renewable Fuels Association	\$17,200
Renewable Fuels PAC	\$12,250
Southwest Iowa Renewable Energy	\$2,250
Total	\$6,154,313

Table 2: Top 20 Recipients of Corn Ethanol Industry PAC Donations to Federal Candidates	
Recipient	Political Donations, as of 3/7/2014
Peterson, Collin (D-MN)	\$69,500
Latham, Tom (R-IA)	\$68,000
Stabenow, Debbie (D-MI)	\$58,000
Shimkus, John M (R-IL)	\$56,859
Lucas, Frank D (R-OK)	\$45,500
Camp, Dave (R-MI)	\$44,500
Klobuchar, Amy (D-MN)	\$44,500
Upton, Fred (R-MI)	\$44,000
Boehner, John (R-OH)	\$43,000
Terry, Lee (R-NE)	\$41,500
Roberts, Pat (R-KS)	\$41,217
King, Steven A (R-IA)	\$37,000
Fischer, Deb (R-NE)	\$35,500
Neugebauer, Randy (R-TX)	\$35,147
Schock, Aaron (R-IL)	\$33,594
Noem, Kristi (R-SD)	\$33,000
Gibbs, Bob (R-OH)	\$32,500
Graves, Sam (R-MO)	\$32,000
Walz, Timothy J (D-MN)	\$31,000
Braley, Bruce (D-IA)	\$30,250

Table 3: Total Lobbying Expenditures by Corn Ethanol Industry 2007-2013	
Lobbying Organization	Lobbying Expenditures
Biotechnology Industry Organization	\$54,140,000
American Farm Bureau	\$38,134,627
Archer Daniels Midland	\$10,870,000
Cargill Inc	\$9,920,963
National Biodiesel Board	\$7,740,954
Growth Energy	\$6,760,000
Renewable Fuels Association	\$6,390,496
Poet LLC	\$5,121,897
National Corn Growers Association	\$3,667,000
National Farmers Union	\$3,547,367
Novozymes North America	\$2,058,407
Magellan Midstream Partners	\$2,046,496
Louis Dreyfus Corporation/Group	\$1,530,000
American Coalition for Ethanol	\$1,423,755
Illinois Agricultural Association	\$1,360,000
Minnesota Corn Growers Association	\$1,120,000
Imperium Renewables	\$925,000
AG Processing	\$380,000
Illinois Corn Growers Association	\$335,000
Andersons Management	\$280,000
Patriot Renewable Fuels	\$150,000
Coalition for E85	\$120,000
Total	\$158,021,962

Top Individual Contributions from Corn Ethanol Lobbyists

Corn ethanol lobbyists influence lawmakers' decisions not only through individual meetings, media campaigns, and letters, but also through individual political contributions from registered lobbyists. During the 2009-2010 and 2011-2012 election cycles, registered ethanol lobbyists donated over \$10 million to political action committees (PACs) (note that these tables highlight individual donations from lobbyists while the tables above list PAC donations from organizations); nearly two-thirds went to Democratic candidates, another third benefited Republicans, and just two percent was dispensed to nonpartisan PACs or other groups. The top ten individual contributors (which lobby on biofuels issues) to political candidates and other organizations are listed in Table 4; recipients then dispense funds separately to run ads or support specific political candidates. Eight of the top ten individuals are revolving door lobbyists, and at least one – Vic Fazio - is a former member of Congress. Recipients are separated into three groups: (1) Table 5: Members of Congress who serve on committees with jurisdiction over energy and farm legislation (which contain various corn ethanol subsidies); (2) Table 6: those who serve on other committees or in leadership positions; and (3) Table 7: PACs

not affiliated with individual political candidates such as the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and the National Republican Senatorial Committee.

Table 4: Top Individual Political Contributors to Federal Candidates in Corn Ethanol Industry				
Name of Lobbyist	Lobbying Firm	Lobbied for	Total Political Contributions, 2009-2012	Revolving Door? Y/N
Fazio, Vic	Akin, Gump	Archer Daniels Midland	\$235,400	Y
Van Scoyoc, H Stewart	Van Scoyoc Assoc	Coalition for E85	\$217,450	Y
Massie, James	Alpine Group	Biotechnology Industry Organization, National Corn Growers Assn, National Biodiesel Board, Renewable Fuels Assn, Magellan Midstream Partners	\$207,450	N
Finley, Shannon	Capitol Counsel	Biotechnology Industry Organization	\$204,933	N
Schulman, Melissa	Bockorny Group	Poet LLC	\$179,650	Y
Pomper, Brian	Akin, Gump	Biotechnology Industry Organization	\$170,390	Y
Brooks, Bob	Alpine Group	National Biodiesel Board	\$168,370	Y
Brain, Charles	Capitol Hill Strategies	Biotechnology Industry Organization	\$168,005	Y
Bockorny, David	Bockorny Group	Poet LLC	\$157,000	Y
Jones, J Jonathon	Peck, Madigan & Jones	Biotechnology Industry Organization	\$156,164	Y

Table 5: Top 15 Recipients of Individual Federal Political Contributions from Biofuels Industry - Members on Committees with Jurisdiction over Biofuels Subsidies and Mandates

Recipient	Position	Individual Political Contributions, 2009-2012
Blanche Lincoln (D-AR)	Former Chairwoman, Senate Agriculture Committee	\$64,300
Jon Tester (D-MT)	Member, Senate Ag Appropriations Subcommittee	\$57,616
Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY)	Member, Senate Agriculture Committee and Environment & Public Works Committee	\$55,316
Max Baucus (D-MT)	Former Chair, Senate Finance Committee; member, EPW and Agriculture Committees	\$42,925
Mitch McConnell (R-KY)	Senate Minority Leader; member, Senate Agriculture Committee and Ag Appropriations Subcommittee	\$33,730
Michael Bennet (D-CO)	Member, Senate Agriculture Committee	\$32,050
Mike Crapo (R-ID)	Member, Environment & Public Works Committee	\$31,250
Ben Nelson (D-NE)	Former member, Senate Agriculture Committee and Ag Appropriations Subcommittee	\$28,650
Tom Carper (D-DE)	Member, Environment & Public Works Committee	\$27,014
Fred Upton (R-MI)	Chairman, Energy and Commerce Committee	\$24,000
Chuck Grassley (R-IA)	Member, Senate Agriculture Committee	\$22,600
Earl Pomeroy (D-ND)	Former member, Senate Agriculture Committee	\$22,475
Joe Donnelly (D-IN)	Member, Senate Agriculture Committee	\$21,250
John Thune (R-SD)	Member, Senate Agriculture Committee	\$20,450
Debbie Stabenow (D-MI)	Current Chairwoman, Senate Agriculture Committee	\$20,233

Table 6: Top 15 Federal Recipients of Political Contributions from Biofuels Industry - Members Not on Committees with Jurisdiction over Biofuels Subsidies & Mandates

Recipient	Individual Political Contributions, 2009-2012
Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD)	\$97,200
John Boehner (R-OH)	\$80,300
Harry Reid (D-NV)	\$67,100
Dave Camp (R-MI)	\$54,750
Eric Cantor (R-VA)	\$49,100
Mitt Romney (R)	\$47,250
Orrin G. Hatch (R-UT)	\$45,200
Rob Portman (R-OH)	\$44,850
Charles E. Schumer (D-NY)	\$43,950
Robert Menendez (D-NJ)	\$43,115
Charles W. Boustany Jr (R-LA)	\$39,834
Joseph Crowley (D-NY)	\$35,201
Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)	\$33,650
Richard E. Neal (D-MA)	\$32,150
Tim Kaine (D-VA)	\$28,750

Table 7: Top 15 Federal Recipients of Political Contributions from Biofuels Industry - PACs Not Affiliated with Individual Political Candidates

Recipient	Individual Political Contributions, 2009-2012
Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee	\$412,414
Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee	\$258,900
National Republican Senatorial Committee	\$158,650
Akin, Gump et al	\$121,741
National Republican Congressional Committee	\$70,050
Biotechnology Industry Organization	\$39,500
Poet LLC	\$21,500
Blue Dog PAC	\$20,500
Republican National Committee	\$18,559
Moderate Democrats PAC	\$14,000
New Democrat Coalition	\$12,250
Pharmaceutical Rsrch & Mfrs of America	\$9,839
Priorities USA Action	\$8,000
US-Cuba Democracy PAC	\$8,000
Arent Fox LLP	\$7,692

Web of Influence

Biofuels lobbyists influence Congressional and administrative decision making in numerous ways. Some specific examples of this complex web of influence include:

- (1) In Sept. 2013, **Sen. Harkin (D-IA)** introduced the Biofuels Market Expansion Act of 2013 which would boost subsidies for the mature corn ethanol industry. The bill, cosponsored by **Sens. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Tim Johnson (D-SD), and Al Franken (D-MN)**, would increase subsidies for ethanol blender pumps and storage tanks and create new federal supports for ethanol pipelines.
 - Magellan Midstream Partners, a pipeline company that has worked with POET, the largest U.S. corn ethanol producer, to lobby for billions in federal subsidies for a new ethanol pipeline, donated \$5,500 to **Sen. Harkin** during the 2008 and 2010 election cycles.¹ From 2009-12, additional donations of \$1,000 each came from Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), one of the largest ethanol producers in the U.S., and Amaizing Energy, another corn ethanol producer.²
 - From 2009-14, **Sen. Klobuchar** received \$15,000 from POET LLC; \$5,000 from Growth Energy, a lobbying group representing POET's corn ethanol refineries; \$1,000 from the Renewable Fuels PAC, which is associated with the Renewable Fuels Association, one of the largest corn ethanol lobbying groups; \$6,250 from the Minnesota and National Corn Growers Associations, which lobby for expanded corn ethanol subsidies; and \$5,000 from ADM.³
 - **Sen. Johnson** received \$2,500 from POET LLC in 2012.⁴
 - **Sen. Franken** received \$6,000 from POET LLC from 2010-14.⁵

- (2) In 2013, **Rep. Schock (R-IL)** successfully added an amendment to the House farm bill (that was ultimately included in the final 2014 farm bill) that allows farmers to receive new crop insurance subsidies for growing pennycress, a weed being tested for use in biodiesel production. In 2009, Schock met with USDA officials to devise short- and long-term plans to obtain insurance coverage for pennycress.⁶ He also secured a \$500,000 earmark in FY10 for BioFuels Manufacturers of Illinois (BMI), a Peoria "Demonstration Plant for Biodiesel Fuels from Low-Impact Crops," which uses pennycress as a feedstock in its production process. BMI contracted with the agribusiness GROWMARK, Inc. "to market and distribute its biodiesel products, including pennycress."⁷
 - **Rep. Schock** is one of the largest recipients of PAC donations from ADM, which is affiliated with Growmark; he received political contributions worth \$24,500 from ADM during the 2008-2014 election cycles.⁸ Schock also received \$2,000 from the National Biodiesel Board in 2012.

- (3) **Sens. Roberts (R-KS) and Donnelly (D-IN)** obtained support for the inclusion of new crop insurance subsidies for biomass and sweet sorghum in the 2014 farm bill, crops which will ultimately be used in biofuels production.⁹ The Kansas Grain Sorghum Producers Association and the National Sorghum Producers met with **Sen. Roberts**, former Ranking Member on the Senate Agriculture Committee, prior to consideration of the 2013 bill. Taxpayer-subsidized crop insurance for these types of biomass will now

receive priority status despite a recent USDA report that deemed insurance for certain biofuels feedstocks infeasible.¹⁰

- (4) In 2012, USDA approved a special crop insurance policy to allow a new type of corn to receive federal subsidies. This high amylase corn, also known as Enogen, was developed by **Syngenta** for use in corn ethanol production. Syngenta AG spent \$1.15 million in 2012 lobbying Congress, USDA, and other government agencies on this and other similar policy issues.¹¹

Conclusion

After more than 30 years of federal support, it's time taxpayers stop subsidizing the corn ethanol industry. Corn ethanol lobbyists are working behind the scenes to increase their share of federal subsidies through the tax code, USDA, and Department of Energy programs and to increase the number of gallons of corn ethanol that can count toward the federal RFS mandate. With a nearly \$17 trillion national debt, taxpayers cannot afford yet another year of taxpayer subsidies for the mature corn ethanol industry.

For more information, contact Taxpayers for Common Sense at 202-546-8500.

Appendix

Listed in alphabetical order below are descriptions of selected companies and trade associations lobbying for favorable corn ethanol regulations and/or industry subsidies.

AG Processing (AGP): AGP, one of the largest agricultural cooperatives in the U.S., is engaged in the procurement, processing, marketing, and transportation of grains and grain products. It owns a corn ethanol production facility in Hastings, Nebraska, in addition to three soy biodiesel facilities in Iowa and Missouri.¹²

American Coalition for Ethanol (ACE): since 1988, ACE has worked to “increase ethanol demand by mobilizing grassroots political support for public policies at state and federal levels.”¹³ According to its website, ACE represents “more than 1,500 members nationwide, including: ethanol producers, farmers, investors, the agriculture community, industry suppliers, rural electric cooperatives, and others supportive of the increased production and use of ethanol across America.”¹⁴

American Farm Bureau Federation: The American Farm Bureau Federation, through its local, state, and national organizations, lobbies on a wide range of agricultural policy issues, including subsidies and regulatory protections for corn ethanol. Farm Bureau Federations are located in all 50 states. One of its “priority issues” for the 113th Congress is a comprehensive energy policy including support for “the production and use of agricultural-based fuel, including corn and cellulosic ethanol and biodiesel.”¹⁵

The Andersons Inc: The Andersons Inc. has several subsidiaries and affiliates, including a Grain Group, Ethanol Group, Plant Nutrient Group, Rail Group, Retail Group, and Turf and Specialty Group.¹⁶ The Andersons Inc. is the largest equity investor and/or operator of three corn ethanol production facilities in Iowa, Michigan, and Indiana; its subsidiary, The Andersons Ethanol Investment LLC, also entered into a joint venture with Marathon Petroleum Company LLC in 2008 to build and operate a 110 million gallon corn ethanol plant in Ohio.¹⁷

Archer Daniels Midland (ADM): Archer Daniels Midland Company was incorporated in Delaware in 1923, a successor to the Daniels Linseed Co. founded in 1902. It is one of the world’s largest processors of oilseeds, corn, wheat, cocoa, and other agricultural commodities and is a leading manufacturer of protein meal, vegetable oil, corn sweeteners, flour, biodiesel, ethanol, and other value-added food and feed ingredients; ADM also has an extensive global grain elevator and transportation network to procure, store, clean, and transport agricultural commodities, such as oilseeds, corn, wheat, milo, oats, and barley, as well as processed agricultural commodities.¹⁸ ADM owns nine corn ethanol production facilities in Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, North Dakota, and Minnesota and was one of the earliest supporters of federal ethanol subsidies.¹⁹

Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO): BIO lobbies on behalf of biotechnology companies supplying corn, fertilizer, chemicals, and various bio-based technologies to agricultural producers.²⁰

Cargill Inc: According to its website, “Cargill is an international producer and marketer of food, agricultural, financial and industrial products and services. Founded in 1865, our privately held company employs 142,000 people in 65 countries.”²¹ Cargill owns two corn ethanol production facilities in Nebraska and Iowa.²²

Coalition for E85: According to its website, the coalition is “composed of retailers, producers, equipment manufacturers, automobile manufacturers and other supporters of E85 [85 percent ethanol] fuel. [The] Coalition's mission is to undertake an immediate and targeted effort to secure a tax credit for E85 fuel in response to impending cuts to current incentives.”²³ The organization includes companies such as Propel, Protect Fuel, Pearson Fuels, Amerigreen Energy, Petro Serve USA, Zarco66 (Phillips 66), Mansfield Renewable Fuel, The Andersons, Kum & Go, MFA Oil, Boelman Energy, Thorntons, CarbonGreen Energy, Walton Engineering, Clean Fuels Development Coalition, National Association of Convenience Stores, Petroleum Marketers Association of America, SIGMA, and the Petroleum Equipment Institute.²⁴

Growth Energy: Growth Energy is a new lobbying organization that represents some of the largest ethanol companies in the U.S., including POET LLC - the largest corn ethanol producer in the U.S. In total, Growth Energy represents 82 corn ethanol production facilities, in addition to its 85 associate members which range from state corn promotion groups to agribusiness giants such as Syngenta Seeds.²⁵

Illinois Agricultural Association: also known as the Illinois Farm Bureau, a state-based organization with ties to the national American Farm Bureau Federation, the Illinois Agricultural Association has lobbied to retain the ethanol tax credit and expand corn ethanol subsidies for ethanol blender pumps.²⁶

Illinois Corn Growers Association: a state affiliate of the National Corn Growers Association, the Illinois Corn Growers Association has lobbied to retain ethanol subsidies.²⁷ In fact, one of its priority policy issues is ensuring continued corn ethanol subsidies such as federal funding for flexible fuel vehicles and ethanol blender pumps.²⁸ The organization represents approximately 5,000 Illinois corn producers.²⁹

Louis Dreyfus: Louis Dreyfus is a global agribusiness in the commodities business, specifically “producing and marketing refined sugar, ethanol, biodiesel and refined canola oil.”³⁰ The company has received biofuels subsidies, including the farm bill energy title’s Bioenergy Program for Advanced Biofuels.³¹

Magellan Midstream Partners: Magellan is principally engaged in the transportation, storage and distribution of petroleum products but has also worked with POET, the largest corn ethanol producer in the U.S., to seek federal funding for a dedicated ethanol pipeline running from Iowa to New Jersey.³² Its asset portfolio consists of: approximately 9,600 miles of pipeline and 49 terminals; petroleum terminals, which includes storage terminal facilities; and 1,100-mile ammonia pipeline and six terminals.³³

Minnesota Corn Growers Association: a state affiliate of the National Corn Growers Association, the Minnesota Corn Growers Association has lobbied to retain biofuels subsidies in the farm bill.³⁴

National Biodiesel Board (NBB): NBB is a national trade association representing the biodiesel industry in the United States; it is comprised of state, national, and international feedstock and feedstock processor organizations, biodiesel suppliers, fuel marketers and distributors, and technology providers. NBB's members include companies such as Archer Daniels Midland Company, Cargill, Inc., Louis Dreyfus, and Imperium Western Products. While most biodiesel is currently produced from soybean or other vegetable oils, corn oil is also increasingly being used as a feedstock in biodiesel production.³⁵

National Corn Growers Association (NCGA): Based in St. Louis, Missouri, with a lobbying office in Washington, D.C., NCGA's mission is to "create and increase opportunities for corn growers."³⁶ Affiliated corn growers associations are located in all but two U.S. states.³⁷ NCGA was one of the earliest supporters of corn ethanol subsidies. The organization continues to lobby for investments "in biofuels infrastructure and [an increase in] the number of flexfuel vehicles."³⁸

National Farmers Union: Founded in 1902, the National Farmers Union advocates on behalf of U.S. farms and ranches in Washington, D.C. The organization supports "ambitious mandates for renewable energy production" and counts the 2008 extension and expansion of renewable energy tax credits, including the ethanol tax credit, as major federal policy wins. While the National Farmers Union represents fewer members than the larger American Farm Bureau, affiliates can still be found in 32 U.S. states.³⁹

Novozymes North America: Novozymes is a biotech company which manufactures enzymes that purportedly increase the efficiency of corn ethanol production.⁴⁰ While Novozymes is based in Denmark and employs over 5,800 people worldwide, its North American site is located in North Carolina.⁴¹

Patriot Renewable Fuels: Patriot owns and operates a 110-million gallon per year corn ethanol production facility in Annawan, Illinois.⁴²

POET LLC: From its beginnings over two decades ago, POET has grown to become the largest corn ethanol producer in the U.S. Based in South Dakota, POET owns 25 corn ethanol production facilities scattered throughout seven states.⁴³ POET also owns and operates a cellulosic ethanol facility in Emmetsburg, Iowa, which plans to convert corn stalks, cobs, husks, and leaves into biofuel at a commercial scale in 2014.⁴⁴

Renewable Fuels Association (RFA): As a lobbying organization representing 51 ethanol companies, RFA has advocated for additional federal subsidies and favorable treatment of corn ethanol for over 30 years.⁴⁵ Its members range from agribusiness giants and large ethanol producers such as Archer Daniels Midland to smaller producers such as Husker Ag, LLC in Nebraska. On its website, RFA states that it "has been the industry's most forceful advocate for expanding the market for ethanol."⁴⁶

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