

# Special Research Report from Americans for Limited Government on the Report, “Unfair Advantage”

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AMERICANS FOR LIMITED GOVERNMENT  
9900 MAIN STREET  
SUITE 303  
FAIRFAX, VA 22031  
703.383.0880  
[WWW.GETLIBERTY.ORG](http://WWW.GETLIBERTY.ORG)

**Report on:**

“Unfair Advantage”

**Who’s Behind the “Unfair Advantage” Report?****Flying under a False Flag**

In July 2010, several leftist organizations produced a report entitled “Unfair Advantage: The Business Case Against Overseas Tax Havens.” The four groups listed on the front cover of the “Unfair Advantage” report—**Business and Investors Against Tax Haven Abuse, American Sustainable Business Council, Business for Shared Prosperity, and Wealth for the Common Good**—appear to consist of websites and amalgamations of other far left groups and small businesses. No 990s can be found for any of the groups at Guidestar.org. The fact that these groups appear to lack documentation, makes it appear that these groups were formed for the purpose of misleading Congress.

**No Transparency**

The organizations that are part of this effort are focused on leftist social and environmental goals. Three groups do not disclose their board membership on their websites, or whether or not they even have boards. Because so little information is available about most of these groups, this paper focuses on those who wrote or assisted with the report and affiliated groups and individuals.

**Small Number of Supporters**

This left-wing coalition claims to speak for 50,000 business owners and so-called “social enterprises.” For comparison, the National Federation of Independent Business has a membership of about 350,000.

**Supporters are Leftists**

On the Business and Investors Against Tax Haven Abuse website, there is a list of twenty-five businesspersons who signed the petition opposing the use of tax havens. An examination of the FEC records shows that the vast majority of contributions given by these businesspeople went to Democrat candidates, Democrat organizations, and liberal PAC’s, such as MoveOn.org. One of these



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signers, Victor Marcus, who was a generous Democrat donor, appears to have died last year.

### ASBC Supports Additional Regulation

The American Sustainable Business Council (ASBC) was the only group transparent enough to list the members of its board and its partners. ASBC supports further regulation of chemicals, advocated for the creation of a Consumer Financial Protection Agency, has called for CO2 emission reductions, and applauded the passage of the financial reform bill. Last year, ASBC sent a letter to the Obama Administration urging the enactment of certain environmental, social, and fiscal policies. Analysis of the political contributions of the sixteen most prominent signers of the ASBC letter shows that the vast majority of contributions went to Democrats and leftists.

### Partners of ASBC

The following is a list of nine organizations that partner with ASBC along with a bit of information about each:

**Association for Enterprise Opportunity (AEO)** helps “disadvantaged and underserved” groups start and run microenterprises, which are very small businesses. Over the last decade, AEO has successfully lobbied the federal government for over \$300 million for microentrepreneurs. Some view these enterprises as the governmental equivalent of payday lenders.

**B Laboratories** advocates for the creation of non-traditional “B corporations,” businesses that “meet comprehensive and transparent social and environmental performance standards” among other things.

**Responsible Wealth** is a project of United for a Fair Economy. Responsible Wealth advocates for the estate tax and the expiration of the Bush tax cuts. The board of United for a Fair Economy is stacked with radical, leftist activists. According to federal and Massachusetts campaign finance records, the Director of Responsible Wealth, Mike Lapham, has given over \$7,500 to leftists and Democrats.



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**The Green Chamber of Commerce** has advocated for climate change legislation and the creation of a Consumer Financial Protection Agency.

**Social Enterprise Alliance** is an association of “organizations pursuing a social or environmental mission using market-based strategies.”

**New Voice of Business** is a business group focused on the “triple bottom line”: people, planet, and profits. They promote “economic, social and environmental sustainability.” They seek to counter the “old voice” of business “so that media report that the business community is divided on key economic issues.”

**Social Venture Network** was inspired by a Robert Reich book. “Social Venture Network inspires a community of business and social leaders to build a just economy and sustainable planet.”

**BALLE (Business Alliance for Local Living Economies)** began as a project of the Social Venture Network. BALLE encourages people to buy, bank, eat, source, invest, and travel locally.

**Green America** has launched a campaign against mountaintop removal coal mining. Green America is also organizing campaigns against Southern Company, Exxon, Dynegy, and Dominion demanding that they cut their carbon emissions and use more renewable energy. Green America claims that Exxon’s “apparent success is based on a dangerous disregard for the planet and its people.” According to Green America’s letter to Southern Company, “Nuclear is not the answer to global warming. It’s too risky.... Coal has no future in America.”

### Groups Are Staffed by Leftists

The campaign contributions from those who work for these organizations have virtually entirely gone to Democrats and leftists.

### Groups Are Small Non-Profits

An examination of the most recent available 990’s for eight of these groups



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reveals that these are small non-profits. Only one, Green America, has annual revenues in excess of over \$5 million. Six groups have annual revenues of under \$1.3 million; of those, four have revenues of under \$600,000.

#### “Unfair Advantage” Authors

**Holly Sklar** is currently the director of Business for Shared Prosperity. Sklar has also served as senior policy adviser for the Let Justice Roll Living Wage Campaign and as an affiliate staff member for Demos, a think tank allied with ACORN and the Institute for Policy Studies. She writes for *The Nation*, *USA Today*, and *Z Magazine*, a radical left-wing publication. She has written extensively about wealth, poverty, taxes, and the minimum wage. In her writings, she regularly stokes the fires of class warfare. Several of her books have been published by South End Press, whose slogan is “Read. Write. Revolt.” The following is a list of her books:

- *Trilateralism: The Trilateral Commission and Elite Planning for World Management* (1980)
- *Who's who in the Reagan Administration* (1981)
- *Poverty in the American Dream: Women & Children First* (1983)
- *Plant Closures: Myths, Realities, and Responses* (1985)
- *Reagan, Trilateralism, and the Neoliberals: Containment and Intervention in the 1980s* (1986)
- *Washington's War on Nicaragua* (1988)
- *Streets of Hope: The Fall and Rise of an Urban Neighborhood* (1994)
- *Chaos Or Community?: Seeking Solutions, Not Scapegoats for Bad Economics* (1995)
- *Shifting Fortunes: The Perils of the Growing American Wealth Gap* (1999)
- *Raise the Floor: Wages and Policies that Work for All of Us* (2001)
- *Titans of the Enron Economy: The Ten Habits of Highly Defective Corporations* (2002)
- *A Just Minimum Wage: Good for Workers, Business and Our Future* (2005)

Sklar has addressed the Democratic Socialists of America several times. In 2008, she gave \$800 to Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaign.



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**Chuck Collins** attended Hampshire College. He is an author and the co-founder of both United for a Fair Economy and Wealth for the Common Good. He co-authored a book with Bill Gates, Sr. arguing for the death tax. He also wrote *Economic Apartheid in America: A Primer on Economic Inequality and Insecurity* and co-authored *The Moral Measure of the Economy*. He has also served as an affiliate staffer of Demos and as the Tax Program Director of Business for Shared Prosperity. Currently, he is a senior scholar at the Institute for Policy Studies and directs IPS’s Program on Inequality and the Common Good, serves as a director of the Fair Economy Action Fund, and is a fellow at On the Commons. A search of federal and Massachusetts campaign finance records shows that Collins has given \$1,000 to Democrat candidates since 2002; he also contributed to a ballot initiative campaign to decriminalize marijuana.

**Scott Klinger** is a shareholder activist, the Policy Director for Wealth for the Common Good, and an Associate Fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies. He is also the Director of Corporate Engagement at First Peoples Worldwide, a group that advances the cause of indigenous peoples. He serves on the board of Sustainable Ventures, a group for liberal investors. He formerly worked for Walden Asset Management as a security analyst and portfolio manager. He is a graduate of Duke University. He contributed to Robert Reich’s 2002 campaign for Massachusetts governor.

### Those Who Assisted with “Unfair Advantage”

**Bob Keener** works at Business for Shared Prosperity. He previously served as Co-Director of the Responsible Wealth Project and Communications Director at United for a Fair Economy and co-author of “Executive Excess 2004: Campaign Contributions, Outsourcing, Unexpensed Stock Options and Rising CEO Pay.” He has also run his own public relations firm, Keener Communications. Previously, he served as Director of Marketing for The Internet Company.

**Kristi Ceccarossi** is a self-proclaimed class warrior. She works at Wealth for the Common Good and as Communications Coordinator for the Program on Inequality and the Common Good at the Institute for Policy Studies. She also co-directed



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Boston Localvores, a group dedicated to building a sustainable food system. Previously she was a newspaper reporter covering energy, government, and the environment in New England and Florida. She also served as managing editor of The Commons, a nonprofit Vermont newspaper. She received her bachelor’s degree from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and her master’s degree from Emerson College.

**Atlee McFellin** works as Strategy Consultant at the American Sustainable Business Council. He previously worked as Strategy Consultant at Green for All, Steward at New Economy Network, Research Intern at Veris Wealth Partners, and Research Intern at Domini Social Investments. He attended Albion College and the New School for Social Research. He was a member of Students for a Democratic Society and the Radical Student Union which staged an occupation of the Graduate Center at the New School. He also founded the Michigan Peace Network, a collection of 50 peace and justice groups.

**Chris Hartman** is currently the principal at Tower Street Research, a communications firm. His clients include Dēmos, the Institute for Policy Studies, and United for a Fair Economy. Previously he served as a Research Associate at the Harvard Business School, and the Research Director and Education Coordinator at United for a Fair Economy. He also served as a Researcher-Writer for CHC Communications, a VISTA Community Organizer at the Corporation for National and Community Service, as an editor for Simon and Schuster, and as a Research Assistant at the A. Alfred Taubman Center for Public Policy and American Institutions. He graduated from Brown University.

### What is the Institute for Policy Studies?

Most of the individuals who contributed to the “Unfair Advantage” report have ties to the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS), a radical left-wing think tank. IPS was founded in the 1960s; and for the past five decades, IPS has reliably churned far-left propaganda.



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**Anti-Anti-Communist**

IPS has regularly attacked the United States and Israel, while praising and defending violent revolutionaries and regimes in such places as Cuba, Nicaragua, Vietnam, Cambodia, and China. IPS views America as an imperialist country that is a threat to world peace. In the 1980s, Joshua Muravchik characterized the ideology of IPS as “communophilism”—not quite adhering to the Communist Party line, but broadly supporting most communist regimes and revolutionary groups around the world.

While IPS despises the role of the United States in the world, it deeply respects the United Nations. IPS opposed the creation of no-fly zones in Iraq, opposed sanctions on Iraq, and opposed unilateral efforts to deal with terrorism. In 2004, Phyllis Bennis, Director of the New Internationalism Project at IPS, wrote, “Haven’t we—and the rest of the world—had enough of Washington’s rogue behavior?”

**Anti-Israel**

IPS has long had ties to the Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP), a radical, pro-Palestinian group. In fact, MERIP is so radical that it issued the following statement after the 1973 terrorist killings of the Israeli Olympic athletes:

"Munich and similar actions cannot create or substitute for a mass revolutionary movement, but we should comprehend the achievement of the Munich action.... It has provided an important boost in morale among Palestinians in the camps."

MERIP has never stopped shilling for the Palestinians, recently criticizing Israel’s boarding of the Turkish ships that were attempting to break the blockade of Gaza. MERIP also called on the Turkish ruling party to stand up to Israel and the United States.



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### Anti-Corporate

While coddling tyrants and condemning America, IPS also finds time to criticize capitalism and free trade. Among other things, IPS opposes globalization, the World Trade Organization, and the North American Free Trade Agreement. In 2004, the director of IPS and the president of the IPS board published *Alternatives to Economic Globalization: A Better World Is Possible*. In this book, they argue that capitalism is “a system in crisis,” and they call upon “an alliance of leading activists, scholars, economists, researchers, and writers” to make the case against globalization. According to Jarol Manheim, IPS “serves as a central node—and, according to some critics, the mother ship—of a network of progressive organizations with an aggressively anti-corporate agenda.”

### Funded by Soros

Harry Belafonte, friend of Hugo Chavez and Fidel Castro, serves on the board of IPS. IPS is funded by George Soros’s Open Society Institute and the Tides Foundation.

### Conclusion

The groups that backed the “Unfair Advantage” report are shadowy and hard to pin down. The report’s authors are left-wing radicals, far outside of the mainstream, and the coalition for which they claim to speak is small and ideologically narrow. To sum it up, the people behind this report are little more than far left activists who are more interested in redistributionist policies than in wealth and job creation.

*For more information contact Richard McCarty, Senior Research Analyst, Americans for Limited Government.*



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