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## SPENDING AT THE SIDE DOOR

by *Maralee Schwartz*

Channeling as much as \$535,000 into a single campaign, four political action committees (PACs) -- the Auto Dealers, the American Medical Association (AMA), the Realtors and the National Rifle Association (NRA) -- have found a way around federal law restricting PAC contributions to \$5,000 for an individual candidate: independent spending on behalf of the candidate.

"The NRA has raised so much money that it can 'max out' with every candidate it wants to, and still has a lot left over," said **Brad O'Leary**, an NRA fund-raiser. The leftover \$658,578 has been converted into "independent expenditures" supporting the campaigns of 17 House and Senate candidates, according to a study by Ed Zuckerman, editor of "Pacs and Lobbies."

These groups have spent \$5.01 million in independent expenditures. With about \$535,000, the single largest beneficiary is Colorado Senate nominee Kramer. The AMA spent \$100,600 on his behalf, the Realtors \$324,999 and the NRA invested \$111,875. Running second to Kramer is Sen. Hawkins, who received \$437,500 from the Auto Dealers and \$60,378 from the NRA.

The Realtors have put the most dollars into independent expenditures, \$1.63 million. Their largest contribution, \$481,486, went to Rep. James R. Jones, the Democratic Senate nominee in Oklahoma.

The AMA has spent \$1.47 million and the Auto Dealers \$1.26 million. An AMA spokesman said the independent expenditures were in addition to \$3 million it has contributed directly to candidates.

Most of the special-interest PAC money has been spent on favorable radio, television and billboard advertising.