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Jasmine Banks
Executive Director
479-599-3518
jasmine@unkochmycampus.org

George Mason University's Role in the Conservative Takeover of the Courts

Public Record Requests Yield New Insights into Right-Wing Pipeline

[FAIRFAX, VA]-- Public records obtained by Allison Pienta, UnKoch advocate and alumna of George Mason University's Law School, provide new insights into the "Anonymous Donor" who funded a 2016 renaming of the Law School after Justice Antonin Scalia and put oversight of the Law School under Leonard Leo, the Executive Vice President of the Federalist Society. The records also reveal the University's continuing acceptance of large gifts with express conditions to only hire or endow "conservative" faculty.

According to an [updated report](#) posted on the UnKoch website with source documents, a March 2018 email from Dean Henry Butler soliciting funds from the Paul Singer Foundation reveals that the "Anonymous [Donor] is [Leonard Leo]'s friend" and that "[LL]'s Friend contributes \$4,400,000 per year to Scalia Law" (p. 1). [Multiple news sources](#) identify Rebekah Mercer, the daughter of hedge fund billionaire Robert L. Mercer, as Leonard Leo's "friend" and benefactor. Rebekah Mercer has been called "the most powerful woman in GOP politics" and along with her father was the largest contributor to the 2016 Trump campaign. The Mercers had previously donated nearly [\\$6 million to the Federalist Society](#). Mr. Leo serves as the only non-family board member of Ms. Mercer's right-wing "Reclaim New York" organization and has contributed \$500,000 to her "Make America Great" PAC through his Freedom and Opportunity Fund.

As the named beneficiary of the anonymous donation, Leonard Leo has, through the "BH Fund" which he set up, overseen the renamed Antonin Scalia Law School. During the same time, Leo has acted as Trump's "judge whisperer," and, as recently exposed by the *Washington Post*, has coordinated an astonishing \$250 million in anonymous "dark money" contributions to organizations and public relations campaigns dedicated to shaping our nation's courts in favor of a corporate, conservative agenda. Since 2016, fourteen of sixteen new faculty hires at the Law School have been associated with the Federalist Society, including [Justice Kavanaugh](#), Justice Gorsuch, and Justice Clarence Thomas.

Other public records reveal that a \$50 million bequest to the Scalia Law School by Dorothy Rouse requires the Law School to only endow faculty who will promote "conservative principles." Rouse also left [\\$43 million to the Heritage Foundation](#), which is a dark-money think-tank associated with the Koch network. It was [criticized](#) this year for offering secret, partisan training to judicial law clerks.

"George Mason University continues to be "ground zero" for conservative donors investing in publicly-funded law schools in order to reshape our country's courts in favor of their own ends," said Allison Pienta, 2004 graduate of George Mason University's Law School. She called on the University's newly-appointed Interim President, Anne Holton, to investigate donor influence and the use of donated funds at the Law School.

"We support alumni like Allison who are calling for a deeper investigation into donor influence at George Mason University's Law School," said Jasmine Banks, Executive Director of UnKoch My Campus.

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