



Some of America's largest technology and telecoms companies, including Facebook, Microsoft and AT&T, are backing a network of self-styled "free-market thinktanks" promoting a radical rightwing agenda in states across the nation, according to a new report by a lobbying watchdog.

The Center for Media and Democracy asserts that the State Policy Network (SPN), an umbrella group of 64 thinktanks based in each of the 50 states, is acting as a largely beneath-the-radar lobbying machine for major corporations and rightwing donors.

Its policies include cutting taxes, opposing climate change regulations, advocating reductions in labour protections and the minimum wage, privatising education, restricting voter rights and lobbying for the tobacco industry.

The network's \$83.2m annual warchest comes from major donors. These include the Koch brothers, the energy tycoons who are a mainstay of Tea Party groups and climate change sceptics; the tobacco company Philip Morris and its parent company Altria Group; the food giant Kraft; and the multinational drugs company GlaxoSmithKline.

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