

Election Blues

Losers pay to stay in the game

By Robert Ford. *The NonProfit Times*
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Fresh on the heels of the re-election of President George W. Bush, the New-York City-based American Civil Liberties union (ACLU) received more than \$65,000 in donations via its Web site, said Mike Litrownik, ACLU media relations assistant.

It's not uncommon to see this sort of "backlash donations," said Jeff Krehely, deputy director of the Washington, D.C.-based National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy.

Immediately following President Bush's re-election, the ACLU was preparing a full page ad to go into *The New York Times* calling on "civil libertarians to redouble their efforts to oppose the Bush Administration's unrelenting assault on our civil liberties," wrote Emily Whitfield, of the ACLU in a media release.

But in less than 24 hours after the election and before the ad had a chance to run, people flocked to the ACLU's Web site and the organization "experienced its largest ever surge in online donations" - more than 1,200 unsolicited gifts totaling more than \$65,000 (an average gift of \$54 per person) according to Whitfield.

"The spontaneous outpouring of support we have seen is clearly a sign that the American people are ready, willing and able to fight to preserve our civil liberties," said Anthony Romero, ACLU executive director in a prepared statement.

When President Bill Clinton was elected and then four years later re-elected, a number of conservative nonprofits also saw a jump in donation, Krehely said.

Groups such as the Pittsburgh,PA.-based Scaife Foundation and the John M. Olin Foundation in New York City and other conservative foundations saw a similar bump up in donations during Clinton's two terms, Krehely added.

James Pierson, executive director of the John M. Olin Foundation, confirmed Krehely's assessment. Pierson added that conservative magazines such as the *National Review* and the *American Spectator* saw jumps in their circulation during the Clinton Administration. Calling it the "Cob Web Effect," Pierson said organizations opposed to

the party in power would often see increased interest after the opposition wins election.

But the obverse is also true, Pierson added. When President Bush was elected in 2000, there was a decrease in donations to his foundation and he saw the same thing with other conservative organizations.

He says that few suspects the same thing happened with liberal based organizations when President Clinton was elected.

Krehely said increased donations to liberal organizations this year, and conservative in past years, is "an upside" to losing an election. However, getting the money is one thing, "using it wisely is another." Because no matter how much money an organization brings in, there "is no substitute to getting out the vote," to ensure a party's victory, Krehely added.