

Michael Toner and Karen Trainer Co-Author Book Chapter on 2018 Midterm Spending and Implications for 2020 Election

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Washington, DC—Michael E. Toner, chair of Wiley Rein’s Election Law & Government Ethics Practice, and his colleague Karen E. Trainer co-authored a chapter of a recently released book titled *The Blue Wave: The 2018 Midterms and What They Mean for the 2020 Elections*. The chapter by Mr. Toner and Ms. Trainer explores emerging campaign finance trends and their impact last year on what turned out to be the costliest midterm election in U.S. history.

The book was edited by renowned University of Virginia political analyst Larry J. Sabato and Kyle Kondik, managing editor of the award-winning newsletter *Sabato’s Crystal Ball*. The book features a compilation of well-respected authors from across the political spectrum, who examine the 2018 election and its implications for next year’s presidential race.

In Chapter 8, “The Money Wars: Emerging Campaign Finance Trends and Their Impact on 2018 and Beyond,” Mr. Toner and Ms. Trainer discuss last year’s historic election spending, which was fueled primarily by record-breaking fundraising by campaign committees and outside groups. About \$5.2 billion was raised and spent on the 2018 midterms – a 30% increase over 2014 midterm spending. Democrats won control of the U.S. House last year and made significant state and local gains, while Republicans retained control

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of the U.S. Senate.

Mr. Toner and Ms. Trainer noted that “not all sectors of the campaign finance system shared equally in the money bounty” last year. They explained in their chapter that aggregate national fundraising by political parties increased only slightly during the 2018 election cycle compared with the 2014 cycle, and political party spending represented a much smaller share of total election-related spending in 2018.

“Increasingly, we are seeing a tale of two fundraising stories – one story for super PACs and outside groups, which can accept unlimited contributions and which are thriving – and a very different landscape for political parties, which are forced to operate under strict contribution limits and prohibitions,” Mr. Toner and Ms. Trainer wrote. “Absent legislative action, this imbalance in the campaign finance system could become even more pronounced in future election cycles.”

They also noted that “the stage is set for the 2020 presidential contest to be as highly competitive as the 2016 race and to feature unexpected campaign finance developments and innovations.”

Mr. Toner, a former Chairman of the Federal Election Commission (FEC), is among the nation’s top tier of election lawyers. He is a seasoned election law expert and political veteran with a wealth of experience advising candidates, political committees, trade associations, and corporate clients on federal and state election law compliance.

Ms. Trainer, a former senior campaign finance analyst at the FEC, is a senior reporting specialist in Wiley Rein’s Election Law & Government Ethics Practice. She advises clients on compliance with federal and state campaign finance, ethics, and lobbying rules and reporting requirements, with the guidance of lawyers in the firm.

The Blue Wave, edited by Larry J. Sabato and Kyle Kondik, is available for sale here. Chapter 8 is made available with the permission of Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, all rights reserved, and can be viewed here.