

# THE PLAIN DEALER

## Lee Fisher's dormant, 'broke' campaign closes books -- but first, gives \$5,000 to Sherrod Brown

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By Stephen Koff

WASHINGTON -- It was a sad story, told in Columbus during the closing days of Lee Fisher's failing campaign against Rob Portman for a U.S. Senate seat.

Fisher's campaign was darn near broke. There was still some fire and [fun left among his campaign aides](#) (not to mention a firemen's brass pole for the candidate). But Fisher, a Democrat who was then Ohio's lieutenant governor, confirmed on a late October evening in 2010 what his friend, U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown, had just told supporters: Fisher was courageously donating his "last" \$100,000 to the Ohio Democratic Party for its voter mobilization drive.

It turned out that Fisher had already budgeted for a little additional advertising through the end of the 2010 campaign, so he wasn't exactly broke. But still.

So guess what?

Fisher still had a little money left as the calendar page turned. It turns out, according to public records The Plain Dealer just found, that Fisher didn't zero out his federal campaign account until just last month. And before he did that, he wrote two \$2,500 contribution checks to Brown's current election campaign.

One dormant and supposedly broke campaign, that is, just gave money to the active campaign of a like-minded, active campaign of a friend.

This is legal. This might be logical. It represents very little money, politically speaking. And it's a reminder that money in campaigns is fungible. If you and 4,999 of your friends gave \$1 two years ago to Lee Fisher, then who knows -- and no one does -- but your money might be backing a different politician this very moment. Not that many people donate \$1.

Both of the checks from Fisher for Ohio to Friends of Sherrod Brown (the names, respectively, of Fisher's and Brown's campaign committees) were written on Nov. 30, 2011. One was earmarked for the current primary season and the other for the general election next November, when Brown is expected to face Josh Mandel, Ohio's current treasurer who has Senate aspirations.

Fisher also donated \$1,000 of his final campaign dollars to Innovation Ohio, a nonprofit group with deep ties to Ohio Democrats promoting "progressive" policies, as its website says.

And he gave:

\* \$500 to the Healy for Mayor campaign in Canton.

\* \$1,000 to the National Jewish Democratic Council.

\* \$1,000 to Nina Turner for Congress. Turner, a state senator from Cleveland, [recently said she would not run](#) in the Democratic primary against incumbent Rep. Marcia Fudge but might run independently in November.

\* \$250 to Friends of Armond Budish. Budish is [the Democratic, or minority, leader](#) in the Ohio House.

Before closing out his books, Fisher also refunded a few campaign contributions that, according to Federal Election Commission records, came to him in early 2011, months after he lost: \$2,400 each from Invacare Corp. chairman Malachi Mixon and his wife, Barbara, and \$1,000 from Eric D. Friedman, a Deloitte consultant from Beachwood.

But as they say in the cartoons, that's all, folks. On Dec. 16, 2011, more than a year after his U.S. Senate campaign, Fisher filed a termination report with the FEC. His campaign is broke. For real.

**Original Article:**

[http://www.cleveland.com/open/index.ssf/2012/01/lee\\_fishers\\_dormant\\_campaign\\_c.html](http://www.cleveland.com/open/index.ssf/2012/01/lee_fishers_dormant_campaign_c.html)