

This month's book was *Dark Money* by Jane Mayer. The book was identified by the New York Times as one of the ten best of 2016.

Mayer, an investigative journalist for *New Yorker*, reports the rise of the Koch Brothers and their vast network of think tanks, academic programs and media outlets and their financial contributions to advance the conservative ideology. Their successful influence at the local, state and federal levels is well documented. She labels this network, *Kochtopus*, for its many invasive arms.

*Dark Money* is a dark read and the members were just shaking our heads. How did we (and many others) not recognize this effort? How do you combat this pervasive effort? What was the Supreme Court thinking with its decision in *Citizens United*? The challenge is overwhelming.

Conservatives and liberals alike do not dispute the book's facts and reported contributions. The division would be the response to Mayer's analysis. Mayer argues that conservatives do it to protect their profits, personal income and belief in less government interference. Conservative reviewers say why not? Does not everyone advocate for their own causes? Contributions are legal and both sides do it.

Liberal response is that in light of *Citizens United* and some other court decisions, her warning needs to be taken seriously. Liberals argue the common good is overlooked by this vast network. Too few people are influencing the Republican party and elections at all levels. Gerrymandering efforts have been supported by these individuals.

The Koch brothers have a well defined message and have perfected their efforts over 30 years. In the book group's opinion, liberals and moderates need to stand together to combat this force. Be aware, become involved, donate what you can, volunteer as able and let our many voices drown out the wealthy few.