

The BABE PAC

How the Michigan Republican Establishment Worked With Joe Bellino and Lee Chatfield to Get Around Campaign Contribution Limits

Despite its name, the Building Accountability Behind Experience Political Action Committee (BABE PAC), appears to be doing the opposite of building accountability in Lansing. In fact, it appears to be yet another cog in the extensive Republican political money machine, used to flout campaign contribution limits and funnel tens of thousands of dollars to the House Republican Campaign Committee in 2020.

The BABE PAC's most recent large expenditures, contributions to former Michigan House Speaker and current Republican candidate for attorney general, Tom Leonard, also raise numerous questions about the flow of money in Lansing.

In the midst of everything coming to light in the investigation into Chatfield's [political financial empire](#), the information contained within this Progress Michigan research memo—of which the scope is limited—is likely only scratching the surface of how Michigan Republicans collude with their donors to obscure funding sources and work around Michigan campaign finance laws.

The Basics

The Michigan Campaign Finance Network [has linked](#) the BABE PAC to Michigan State House Representative Joe Bellino, who has been a representative for Michigan's 17th District since 2017 and recently declared his candidacy for the Michigan State Senate to represent the 16th District, currently represented by Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey.

The treasurer on record for the BABE PAC is Andrew Reed. The address listed for the PAC appears to be his residential address and the phone number listed appears to be his cell phone number. Reed has worked in various positions in the House for years, according to [his LinkedIn profile](#), including as a legislative director from 2018 to 2019 and a member advisor from 2019 to the present, coinciding with when Lee Chatfield was Speaker.

Reed has been paid \$3,000 by the BABE PAC through his consulting firm AJR Strategies, which also received over \$87,000 from Bellino's state representative campaign between 2017 and 2020. AJR Strategies has received over \$185,000 from various Republican campaigns since its creation in 2015. Recent stories about Chatfield's staffers, Rob and Anne Minard, [raking in over a million dollars](#) through their own consulting firm seem to indicate a pattern of Republican staffers using their positions for monetary gain.

The PAC's record keeper is listed as Justin Carpenter, who, according to [his LinkedIn profile](#), worked for the Michigan Senate from 2018 to 2021 and now works for the Michigan House. From 2019 to 2021, he was the legislative aid to State Senator and Senate Majority Caucus Whip Peter Lucido. Carpenter is also listed as the record keeper on Bellino's newly formed [candidate committee](#) for his state senate campaign, seeming to confirm the PAC's link to Bellino.

Show Me the Money

BABE PAC and the Chatfield Majority Funds

The link between the BABE PAC and Lee Chatfield comes in the form of contributions to the PAC, which received 38 percent of all its contributions from various Chatfield PACs. BABE has received 63 separate contributions from 2019 through 2021, totaling \$117,994. Of that, \$45,000 was contributed by Chatfield PACs: \$25,000 from the Chatfield Majority Fund and two contributions of \$10,000 each from the Chatfield Majority Fund 3.

Receiving Committee Name Committee ID-Type	Schedule Type Description	Received From Address Occupation-Employer	City State Zip	Date	Amount	Cumul
BUILDING ACCOUNTABILITY BEHIND EXPER 519348-IND	DIRECT	CHATFIELD MAJORITY FUND 15012 SENIORS COURT	BATH MI 48808-0000	07/10/20	\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00
BUILDING ACCOUNTABILITY BEHIND EXPER 519348-IND	DIRECT	CHATFIELD MAJORITY FUND 3 PO BOX 1013	EAST LANSING MI 48826-0000	09/24/20	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00
BUILDING ACCOUNTABILITY BEHIND EXPER 519348-IND	DIRECT	CHATFIELD MAJORITY FUND 3 PO BOX 1013	EAST LANSING MI 48826-0000	10/19/20	\$10,000.00	\$20,000.00

With so many other PACs at his disposal, it raises the question of why Chatfield and Michigan Republicans might have needed to use this additional PAC, which, overall, trafficked much smaller amounts of money than his other organizations. The possible answer comes, as it usually does, by following the money.

BABE PAC and the House Republican Campaign Committee

In 2020, the Republican State Leadership Committee contributed \$880,000 to Chatfield's various majority fund PACs, including \$212,500 to the Chatfield Majority Fund PAC and \$227,500 to the Chatfield Majority Fund 3 PAC, which donated a combined \$45,000 to BABE that same year.

Committee Making Expenditure Committee ID-Type	Sched Type	Payee Name Address City, State Zip Exp Type-Purpose	Exp Date	Exp Amt or Value
REPUBLICAN STATE LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE 512371-IND	DIRECT	CHATFIELD MAJORITY FUND PO BOX 1013 EAST LANSING, MI 48826-0000 DI-CONTRIBUTION	07/16/20	\$25,000.00
REPUBLICAN STATE LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE 512371-IND	DIRECT	CHATFIELD MAJORITY FUND PO BOX 1013 EAST LANSING, MI 48826-0000 CONTRIBUTION	08/27/20	\$25,000.00
REPUBLICAN STATE LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE 512371-IND	DIRECT	CHATFIELD MAJORITY FUND PO BOX 1013 EAST LANSING, MI 48826-0000 CONTRIBUTION	09/21/20	\$62,500.00
REPUBLICAN STATE LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE 512371-IND	DIRECT	CHATFIELD MAJORITY FUND PO BOX 1013 EAST LANSING, MI 48826-0000 CONTRIBUTION	10/01/20	\$62,500.00
REPUBLICAN STATE LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE 512371-IND	DIRECT	CHATFIELD MAJORITY FUND PO BOX 1013 EAST LANSING, MI 48826-0000 CONTRIBUTION	10/13/20	\$37,500.00



REPUBLICAN STATE LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE 512371-IND	DIRECT	CHATFIELD MAJORITY FUND 03/27/20 3 PO BOX 1013 EAST LANSING, MI 48826-0000 CONTRIBUTION	\$40,000.00
REPUBLICAN STATE LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE 512371-IND	DIRECT	CHATFIELD MAJORITY FUND 08/27/20 3 PO BOX 1013 EAST LANSING, MI 48826-0000 CONTRIBUTION	\$25,000.00
REPUBLICAN STATE LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE 512371-IND	DIRECT	CHATFIELD MAJORITY FUND 09/21/20 3 PO BOX 1013 EAST LANSING, MI 48826-0000 CONTRIBUTION	\$62,500.00
REPUBLICAN STATE LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE 512371-IND	DIRECT	CHATFIELD MAJORITY FUND 10/01/20 3 PO BOX 1013 EAST LANSING, MI 48826-0000 CONTRIBUTION	\$62,500.00
REPUBLICAN STATE LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE 512371-IND	DIRECT	CHATFIELD MAJORITY FUND 10/13/20 3 PO BOX 1013 EAST LANSING, MI 48826-0000 CONTRIBUTION	\$37,500.00

In 2020, BABE PAC contributed a total of \$35,000 to the House Republican Campaign Committee and in 2021, BABE PAC contributed \$20,000 to the Committee—over 70 percent of their total expenditures. The short amount of time between BABE PAC receiving money from the Chatfield funds and transferring money to the House Republican Campaign Committee—especially the first \$25,000 contribution, which, according to BABE PAC’s records, only took ten days in July of 2020 to make its way to the Committee from the Chatfield Majority Fund through the BABE PAC—seems to make it clear this PAC has been used as a passthrough account.

Committee Making Expenditure Committee ID-Type	Sched Type	Payee Name Address City, State Zip Exp Type-Purpose	Exp Date	Exp Amt or Value
BUILDING ACCOUNTABILITY BEHIND EXPER 519348-IND	DIRECT	HOUSE REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGN CMTE 520 SEYMOUR AVE LANSING, MI 48933-0000 DI-DIRECT	07/20/20	\$25,000.00
BUILDING ACCOUNTABILITY BEHIND EXPER 519348-IND	DIRECT	HOUSE REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGN CMTE 520 SEYMOUR AVE LANSING, MI 48933-0000 DI-CONTRIBUTION	10/20/20	\$10,000.00
BUILDING ACCOUNTABILITY BEHIND EXPER 519348-IND	DIRECT	HOUSE REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGN CMTE 520 SEYMOUR AVE LANSING, MI 48933-0000 DI-CONTRIBUTION	04/20/21	\$10,000.00
BUILDING ACCOUNTABILITY BEHIND EXPER 519348-IND	DIRECT	HOUSE REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGN CMTE 520 SEYMOUR AVE LANSING, MI 48933-0000 DI-DIRECT	07/29/21	\$10,000.00

So, why this game of hot potato? Why not just donate money directly from the Republican State Leadership Committee, directly from one of Chatfield’s Majority Funds, or directly from Bellino’s campaign to the House Republican Campaign Committee? The answer, it seems apparent, is contribution limits.

Michigan has few limits on what PACs can donate to one another, but as one of Michigan’s four caucus committees, the House Republican Campaign Committee is subject to contribution limits. No person or organization may donate more than \$41,975 to the Committee in a single calendar year.

In 2020, the Republican State Leadership Committee, the Chatfield Majority Fund, and the Chatfield Majority Fund 3 (as well as Chatfield’s other majority fund PACs) had all contributed the maximum legal amount to the House Republican Campaign Committee.

Receiving Committee Name Committee ID-Type	Schedule Type Description	Received From Address Occupation-Employer	City State Zip	Date	Amount
HOUSE REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE 000436-IND	DIRECT	CHATFIELD MAJORITY FUND PO BOX 1013	EAST LANSING MI 48826-0000	04/20/20	\$41,975.00
HOUSE REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE 000436-IND	DIRECT	CHATFIELD MAJORITY FUND 2 PO BOX 103	EAST LANSING MI 48826-0000	04/20/20	\$41,975.00
HOUSE REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE 000436-IND	DIRECT	CHATFIELD MAJORITY FUND 3 PO BOX 1013	EAST LANSING MI 48826-0000	04/20/20	\$41,975.00
HOUSE REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE 000436-IND	DIRECT	CHATFIELD MAJORITY FUND 4 PO BOX 1013	EAST LANSING MI 48826-0000	07/20/20	\$41,975.00
HOUSE REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE 000436-IND	DIRECT	REPUBLICAN STATE LEAD CMTE 1201 F ST. NW STE. 675	WASHINGTON DC 20004-0000	04/20/20	\$41,975.00

Bellino himself was apparently so eager to contribute to the House Republican Campaign Committee in 2020, that he ended up surpassing the limit by \$2,975. That money was refunded to Bellino by the Committee in 2021. In the meantime, the BABE PAC was donating thousands more to the Committee.

Receiving Committee Name Committee ID-Type	Schedule Type Description	Received From Address Occupation-Employer	City State Zip	Date	Amount	Cumul
HOUSE REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE 000436-IND	DIRECT	CTE JOE BELLINO 1285 HOLLYWOOD DR.	MONROE MI 48162-0000	04/20/20	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00
HOUSE REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE 000436-IND	DIRECT	CTE JOE BELLINO 1285 HOLLYWOOD DR.	MONROE MI 48162-0000	07/20/20	\$10,450.00	\$15,450.00
HOUSE REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE 000436-IND	DIRECT	CTE JOE BELLINO 1285 HOLLYWOOD DR.	MONROE MI 48162-0000	10/07/20	\$12,000.00	\$27,450.00
HOUSE REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE 000436-IND	DIRECT	CTE JOE BELLINO 1285 HOLLYWOOD DR.	MONROE MI 48162-0000	10/26/20	\$15,000.00	\$42,450.00
HOUSE REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE 000436-IND	DIRECT	CTE JOE BELLINO 1285 HOLLYWOOD DR.	MONROE MI 48162-0000	11/06/20	\$2,500.00	\$44,950.00
HOUSE REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE 000436-IND	DIRECT	CTE JOE BELLINO 1285 HOLLYWOOD DR.	MONROE MI 48162-0000	04/20/21	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00
HOUSE REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE 000436-IND	DIRECT	CTE JOE BELLINO 1285 HOLLYWOOD DR.	MONROE MI 48162-0000	10/20/21	\$10,000.00	\$20,000.00

By funneling their money through the BABE PAC, the Republican State Leadership Committee, the Chatfield PACs, and Bellino could all work around Michigan law, bypass the legal limit for their contributions to the House Republican Campaign Committee, and provide more than the maximum contribution to the Committee.

BABE PAC and Tom Leonard

The final BABE PAC expenditure of note comes in the form of two contributions to Tom Leonard. Leonard, the former speaker of the Michigan House and therefore Bellino’s leader, and also Chatfield’s mentor, is currently running for attorney general.

In 2021, BABE contributed \$15,000 to Leonard’s attorney general candidate committee. BABE has only contributed to a handful of candidates in its short lifetime, and the contribution to Leonard is 10 times as much as their next highest candidate contribution, and nearly 20 percent of BABE’s overall expenditures.

BUILDING ACCOUNTABILITY BEHIND EXPER 19348-IND	DIRECT	TOM LEONARD FOR MICHIGAN PO BOX 261 DEWITT, MI 48820-0000 DI-DIRECT	12/21/21	\$10,000.00	TOM LEONARD for ATTORNEY GENERAL STATEWIDE
BUILDING ACCOUNTABILITY BEHIND EXPER 19348-IND	DIRECT	TOM LEONARD FOR MICHIGAN PO BOX 261 DEWITT, MI 48820-0000 DI-DIRECT	10/20/21	\$5,000.00	TOM LEONARD for ATTORNEY GENERAL STATEWIDE
BUILDING ACCOUNTABILITY BEHIND EXPER 19348-IND	DIRECT	FRIENDS OF RANDY RICHARDVILLE 2060 N CUSTER RD MONROE, MI 48162-0000 DI-CONTRIBUTION	10/14/20	\$1,500.00	RANDY RICHARDVILLE for COUNTY COMMISSIONER
BUILDING ACCOUNTABILITY BEHIND EXPER 19348-IND	DIRECT	FRIENDS OF BRYAN POSTHUMUS 11908 ELKINS ST NE GREENVILLE, MI 48838-0000 DI-DONATION	07/19/21	\$1,000.00	BRYAN POSTHUMUS for STATE REPRESENTATIVE
BUILDING ACCOUNTABILITY BEHIND EXPER 19348-IND	DIRECT	BEAU LAFAVE SOS 1021 EAST C STREET IRON MOUNTAIN, MI 49801-0000 DI-DIRECT	10/20/21	\$1,000.00	BEAU LAFAVE for SECRETARY OF STATE STATEWIDE

Interestingly, corresponding contributions to Bellino’s state representative campaign account can be found from two PACs [connected to](#) Tom Leonard: the Michigan Values Leadership Fund and the MI Values Leadership Fund II. On the same day that the BABE PAC recorded sending \$5,000 to Leonard’s campaign, 10/20/21, Bellino’s campaign records receiving \$5,000 from the Michigan Values Leadership Fund.

On 12/7/21, Bellino’s campaign reports receiving \$10,000 from the Michigan Values Leadership Fund and two weeks later, on 12/21/21, the BABE PAC reports contributing the same amount to Leonard’s campaign.

Receiving Committee Name Committee ID-Type	Schedule Type Description	Received From Address Occupation-Employer	City State Zip	Date	Amount
COMMITTEE TO ELECT JOE BELLINO 517544-CAN	DIRECT	MICHIGAN VALUES LEADERSHIP FUND PO BOX 261	DEWITT MI 48820-0000	10/20/21	\$5,000.00
COMMITTEE TO ELECT JOE BELLINO 517544-CAN	DIRECT	MICHIGAN VALUES LEADERSHIP FUND PO BOX 261	DEWITT MI 48820-0000	12/07/21	\$10,000.00

Of note: there is a discrepancy in reporting for these contributions. While Bellino’s campaign records show both contributions coming from the Michigan Values Leadership Fund, the PAC expenditure records show one contribution coming from the Michigan Values Leadership Fund and the second contribution coming from the MI Values Leadership Fund II.

Committee Making Expenditure Committee ID-Type	Sched Type	Payee Name Address City, State Zip Exp Type-Purpose	Exp Date	Exp Amt or Value	Support/Oppose Candidate or BQ Office Sought
MI VALUES LEADERSHIP FUND II 518020-IND	DIRECT	CTE JOE BELLINO 1285 HOLLYWOOD DRIVE MONROE, MI 48162-0000 DI-DIRECT CONTRIBUTION	12/07/21	\$10,000.00	JOE BELLINO for STATE REPRESENTATIVE 17
MICHIGAN VALUES LEADERSHIP FUND 512771-IND	DIRECT	CTE JOE BELLINO 1285 HOLLYWOOD DRIVE MONROE, MI 48162-0000 DI-DIRECT CONTRIBUTION	10/20/21	\$5,000.00	JOE BELLINO for STATE REPRESENTATIVE 17

The circular nature of these donations, not to mention their timing, seems curious, raising questions about what conversations may have been happening between Bellino and Leonard behind closed doors.

**Note: A previous version of this report, released February 4, 2022, incorrectly referred to Lee Chatfield as the “owner” of BABE PAC, which is in fact linked to Joe Bellino. Progress Michigan apologizes for this error and thanks the Michigan Campaign Finance Network for calling our attention to it. The report has now been updated to reflect Progress Michigan’s latest research.*