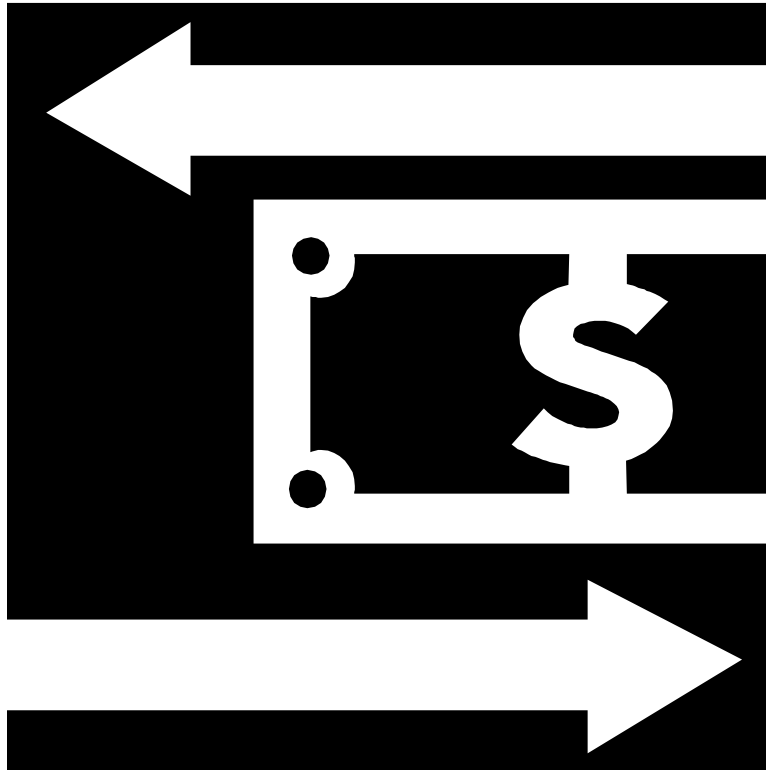


**Following the Money: The Untold Story Shaping the Debate  
Charles Norval Sharpe and Foster Care Reform**



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**March 2004 (revised)**

**Background:**

The death of Dominic James on August 21, 2002 in Springfield, Missouri, at the hands of his foster father highlighted the problems within the Missouri foster care system. Republican legislators, lead by House Speaker Catherine Hanaway, responded with a foster care reform bill in 2003.

The 2003 bill, however, proved controversial. The bill would have made it more difficult to substantiate allegations of child abuse by requiring significantly more evidence to conclude that abuse occurred. The bill also included provisions that would have required children to be taped when being questioned about abuse incidents. Opponents of the bill feared this would intimidate and discourage children from talking. The bill also required that 50% of the foster care system be privatized by 2007, despite the lack of data to support the effectiveness of privatization.

The controversy surrounding the bill led the St. Louis Post-Dispatch (5/4/2003) to editorialize that the bill “protected the accused rather than the abused.” Governor Holden agreed and vetoed the bill. The sponsor did not attempt to overturn the veto.

Despite the controversy surrounding the 2003 bill, Hanaway has proposed another foster care reform bill this year. The 2004 bill contains many of the same provisions that led Governor Holden to veto the 2003 bill, including provisions that require privatization and make it more difficult to substantiate abuse. Moreover, the 2004 bill goes a step beyond the 2003 proposal by making significant changes to the child abuse registry. The change would allow names of those accused of child abuse and neglect to be removed from the central registry during the appeal process, which could take up to one year.

The purpose of this paper is to better understand the behavior and motivation of Republican legislators. We track campaign and committee contributions from Charles Norval Sharpe, owner and operator of Heartland Christian Academy, who would directly benefit from the foster care reform bill. Sharpe, his family members and his employees have given over \$390,000 to the Republican Party and candidates over the past three election cycles and \$0 to the Democratic Party and candidates. We conclude that these contributions have influenced the content of the 2003 and 2004 foster care reform bills.

**Charles Norval Sharpe and his Agenda:**

Reverend Charles Norval Sharpe funds and operates the Heartland Christian Academy on a 16,000-acre compound in rural Northeast Missouri. Sharpe’s use of corporal punishment as an educational tactic has led to a series of felony abuse charges against his employees.

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch (11/17/2001) reported that in October 2001 state officials entered Heartland and removed more than 100 children for their own safety. Sharpe defeated these charges against his employees in court with a high-priced legal team.

Despite repeated allegations of child abuse against Sharpe’s operation, he has been a leader in shaping the foster care reform bill. He has advocated for a list of controversial changes, including:

- Videotaping children testimony
- Child Miranda-style warnings urging children to remain silent
- Increased difficulty in substantiating child abuse

- Allow religious schools to escape requirements to meet basic health and safety standards
- Remove the requirement that keeps names on the abuse and neglect registry while in the appeals process.

The first three changes were presented before the state Supreme Court's Commission on Children's Justice on April 28, 2003 ([St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#), 5/4/2003).

As indicated by the fourth request, Sharpe has also been the state's leading advocate to oppose state licensing for religious-run institutions. Missouri is one of only six states that do not regulate religious run institutions, which has negatively impacted Missouri's children. For example, another student murdered teenager William Futrelle in 1996 at the Mountain Park Baptist Boarding Academy ([St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#), 5/6/2002). The school left Mississippi and set up in Missouri in order to escape regulation. Missouri did not even know the Academy existed until Futrelle's death.

Sharpe's role in advocating for changes to the central registry came as a result of Sharpe and three of his employees being placed on the registry for paddling two children enrolled at Heartland Christian Academy ([St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#), 1/12/2004). Changes to the registry would remove the names of those appealing child abuse charges. The appeals process could take as long as a year to complete.

### **Campaign Funds- The Untold Story Shaping the Debate:**

When trying to understand why Hanaway would continue to push for changes that are not supported by the foster care community, one simply has to follow the money.

As noted earlier, Charles Norval Sharpe, his family members and his employees have given over \$390,000 to the Republican Party and candidates since 1999, while contributing \$0 to the Democratic Party and candidates. The following chart illustrates a breakdown of that money (see Appendix A for detailed description of donations by election cycle). The 2004 election cycle is still in process and, therefore, is only a partial list.

As illustrated by Appendix A, Sharpe's spending patterns changed from the 2000 to the 2002 election cycles. In 2000, Sharpe did not give any money to the House Republican Campaign Committee (HRCC), the Senate Majority Fund of Missouri, or the Missouri Republican Party. However, in the 2002 cycle, Sharpe gave \$2,500 to the HRCC, \$25,000 to the Senate Majority Fund of Missouri, \$120,000 to the Missouri Republican Party, and \$5,650 to GOP state legislative candidates. These committees were primarily responsible for state legislative campaigns.

Sharpe's contributions to state legislative candidates also changed from 2000 to 2002. In 2000, Sharpe gave to only one state legislative candidate, for a total of \$550. But in 2002, Sharpe gave to seven state legislative candidates for a total of \$5,650.

Contributions come from a number of sources that are linked to Sharpe, including his family members, companies, and employees. Sharpe's companies are CNS Corporation and Ozark National Life. Employees include Dale Depping, James Emerson, Alan Weber, and David Melton.

**Sharpe and Associates Overall Contributions  
2000, 2002, 2004 Election Cycle**

	Republican State Candidates	Republican Congressional Candidates	Republican Party Committees	Totals:
2000	\$158,325	\$24,500	\$30,000	\$212,825
2002	\$5,650	\$11,000	\$148,500	\$165,150
2004 (partial)	\$0	\$14,000	\$0	\$14,000
Totals:	\$163,975	\$49,500	\$178,500	\$391,975

One has to wonder how Sharpe's huge donations are shaping the legislative debate. Republican legislators Susan Phillips, Brian Munzlinger, Danielle Moore, Charles Shields, and Sarah Steelman have all been recipients of Sharpe's money at the state legislative level. The following chart details these contributions.

**Sharpe and Associates State Legislative Candidate Contributions (\$5,650 total)  
2002 Election Cycle**

Contributor	Recipient	Party and District	Amount
CNS Corporation	Charles Shields	R, S-34	\$500
CNS Corporation	Sarah Steelman	R, S-16	\$575
Dale Depping	Danielle Moore	R, H-20	\$100
James Emerson	Brian Munzlinger	R, H-1	\$300
Alan Weber	Brian Munzlinger	R, H-1	\$300
Charles Sharpe	Susan Phillips	R, H-32	\$300
Charles Sharpe	Sarah Steelman	R, S-16	\$575
Charles Sharpe	Brian Munzlinger	R, H-1	\$300
Laurie Sharpe	Brian Munzlinger	R, H-1	\$300
Laurie Sharpe	Susan Phillips	R, H-32	\$300
Alan Weber	Ross Walden	R, H-6	\$300
Ozark Nat'l Life	Verna Harris-Laboy	R, H-23	\$300
Charles Sharpe	Verna Harris-Laboy	R, H-23	\$300
Charles Sharpe	Ross Walden	R, H-6	\$600
Laurie Sharpe	Ross Walden	R, H-6	\$600

**Legislative Action:**

Below are two key legislative votes on issues that would impact the foster care system. Note that all of the incumbents who received money from Sharpe voted with his position.

- On 4/9/2003 State Representative Margaret Donnelly proposed House Substitute Amendment #1 for House Amendment #9 to Hanaway's foster care reform bill that would require religious license-exempt residential care centers for youth to meet minimal health and safety standards similar to those that license-exempt childcare facilities are required to meet. Moore, Munzlinger, and Phillips all voted no on this amendment. Ultimately, this amendment was defeated 69-84.

- On 5/12/2003 the state senate voted on proposed changes to the child welfare system that contained a number of provisions that would have been harmful to children, including the video or audio taping of all interviews with children, a provision that Miranda rights were to be read to children who are alleged abuse/neglect victims, and others. Both Shields and Steelman voted in favor of this change. These were the exact same reforms proposed by Sharpe before the Missouri Supreme Court's Commission on Children's Justice. This change passed 22-11.

**Candidate and Voter Preference**

Candidate	Received Funds from Sharpe	Voted in Favor of Sharpe's Positions
Danielle Moore	Yes	Yes
Brian Munzlinger	Yes	Yes
Susan Phillips	Yes	Yes
Charles Shields	Yes	Yes
Sarah Steelman	Yes	Yes

**Conclusion:**

Republican lawmakers responded to the death of a child in the foster care system by making it more difficult to substantiate abuse and opening the system up to unregulated religious run institutions. However, the death of a child in an unlicensed church-run school is ignored in this same legislation. The purpose of the paper is to uncover the motivation behind these actions.

Charles Norval Sharpe is the owner and operator of Heartland Christian Academy. He is one of the largest Republican donors contributing over \$390,000 to Republicans between 1999-2003. One simply has to follow the money to draw the appropriate conclusions.

Employees of Sharpe's operation have been in court several times on child abuse allegations. As a result, he has led the fight to change the system and protect his organization from regulation by calling in favors from Republican legislators. Sharpe's cumulative contributions to the Republican Party has led Republican legislators to pay off their debt to Sharpe at the expense of Missouri's children. In short, Missouri Republicans repeatedly support and enact legislation that benefits Sharpe and they oppose and block legislation that would protect children by regulating Sharpe's operation and other religious run institutions like Sharpe's.

## Appendix A

### 2000 Election Cycle Donations (Federal and State)

Contributor	Date	Amount	Recipient
Charles Sharpe	10/8/1999	\$1,000	Kenny Hulshof
Charles Sharpe	6/20/2000	\$1,000	Sam Graves
Charles Sharpe	6/20/2000	\$1,000	Sam Graves
Charles Sharpe	7/17/2000	\$1,000	Todd Akin
Charles Sharpe	9/2/2000	\$500	Kenny Hulshof
Charles Sharpe	4/21/1999	\$1,000	Roy Blunt
Laurie Sharpe	3/18/1999	\$1,000	John Ashcroft
Laurie Sharpe	3/18/1999	\$1,000	John Ashcroft
Laurie Sharpe	4/21/1999	\$1,000	Roy Blunt
Laurie Sharpe	10/27/2000	\$1,000	Sam Graves
James Emerson	3/17/1999	\$1,000	John Ashcroft
James Emerson	3/17/1999	\$1,000	John Ashcroft
James Emerson	3/31/2000	\$1,000	Todd Akin
James Emerson	12/30/1999	\$7,500	John Ashcroft Victory Committee
Alan Weber	3/17/1999	\$1,000	John Ashcroft
David Melton	3/17/1999	\$1,000	John Ashcroft
David Melton	12/13/1999	\$1,000	John Ashcroft
David Melton	3/31/2000	\$1,000	Todd Akin
David Melton	12/30/1999	\$500	John Ashcroft Victory Committee
CNS Corp	2000 Cycle	\$30,000	Republican Party
Charles Sharpe	8/01/2000	\$550	Randy Asbury
Laurie Sharpe	8/01/200	\$550	Randy Asbury
CNS Corp	8/08/2000	\$550	Randy Asbury
Charles Sharpe	10/27/2000	\$1,125	Wendell Bailey
CNS Corp	6/29/2000	\$875	Wendell Bailey
CNS Corp	6/29/2000	\$250	Wendell Bailey
CNS Corporation	1/22/2000	\$5,000	Matt Blunt
CNS Corporation	12/21/1999	\$5,000	Matt Blunt
CNS Corp	1/3/2000	\$25,000	Todd Graves
CNS Corporation	8/05/2000	\$550	Jim Howerton
CNS Corporate	8/10/2000	\$1,125	Sam Jones
Ozark Nat'l Life	11/28/1999	\$3,000	Bill Kenney
Ozark Nat'l Life	10/29/1999	\$2,500	Bill Kenney
Ozark Nat'l Life	10/08/1999	\$450	Bill Kenney
CNS Corp	12/27/1999	\$50,000	Bill Kenney
Charles Sharpe		\$1,125	Joe Ortwerth
CNS Corp		\$1,125	Joe Ortwerth

Charles Sharpe	8/08/2000	\$1,125	Jim Talent
Laurie Sharpe	8/08/2000	\$1,125	Jim Talent
CNS Corp	1/22/2000	\$20,000	Jim Talent
CNS Corp		\$15,000	Jim Talent
CNS Corp	5/19/1999	\$5,000	Jim Talent
CNS Corp	6/30/1999	\$5,000	Jim Talent
James Emerson	5/19/1999	\$2,000	Jim Talent
James Emerson		\$1,125	Joe Ortwerth
James Emerson	11/01/2000	\$1,125	Jim Talent
David Melton		\$1,125	Joe Ortwerth
David Melton	5/19/1999	\$1,000	Jim Talent
Alan Weber	5/19/1999	\$2,000	Jim Talent
Alan Weber	11/01/2000	\$1,125	Jim Talent
Alan Weber	8/08/2000	\$550	Randy Asbury
Mr. & Mrs. Alan Weber	6/29/2000	\$1,125	Wendell Bailey
Allen Weber		\$1,125	Joe Ortwerth
Total		\$212,825	

**2002 Election Cycle Donations (Federal and State)**

	Date	Amount	Recipient
CNS Corp		\$2,500	House Republican Congressional Committee of MO
CNS Corp		\$120,000	MO Republican Party
CNS Corp		\$25,000	Senate Majority Fund of MO
CNS Corp		\$500	Charlie Shields
CNS Corp		\$575	Sarah Steelman
Ozark Nat'l Life		\$100	Danielle Moore
James Emerson	5/6/2002	\$300	Brian Munzlinger
Alan Weber	5/6/2002	\$300	Brian Munzlinger
Alan Weber		\$300	Ross Walden
Ozark Nat'l Life		\$300	Verna Harris-Laboy
Charles Sharpe		\$300	Verna Harris-Laboy
Charles Sharpe	4/30/2002	\$300	Susan Phillips
Charles Sharpe		\$575	Sarah Steelman
Charles Sharpe		\$300	Ross Walden
Charles Sharpe	3/22/2002	\$300	Brian Munzlinger
Charles Sharpe		\$300	Ross Walden
Laurie Sharpe	3/22/2002	\$300	Brian Munzlinger
Laurie Sharpe	4/30/2002	\$300	Susan Phillips
Laurie Sharpe		\$600	Ross Walden
Charles Sharpe	8/28/2001	\$1,000	Jim Talent

Charles Sharpe	8/28/2001	\$1,000	Jim Talent
Charles Sharpe	3/20/2001	\$1,000	Roy Blunt
Charles Sharpe	12/7/2001	\$1,000	Roy Blunt
Charles Sharpe	4/6/2002	-\$1000	Sam Graves
Charles Sharpe	12/7/2001	\$500	National Republican Campaign Committee/Non-Federal 2
Charles Sharpe	8/20/2001	\$500	Sam Graves
Charles Sharpe	12/12/2001	\$1,500	Sam Graves
Charles Sharpe	1/31/2001	\$500	NRCC
Laurie Sharpe	12/4/2001	\$1,000	James Talent
Laurie Sharpe	12/4/2001	\$1,000	James Talent
James Emerson	8/28/2001	\$1,000	James Talent
James Emerson	8/28/2001	\$1,000	James Talent
David Melton	8/15/2001	\$1,000	James Talent
David Melton	8/15/2001	\$1,000	James Talent
Total		\$165,150	

**2004 Election Cycle Donations (Federal Only)**

Contributor	Date	Amount	Recipient
Charles Sharpe	4/15/2003	\$2,000	Kenny Hulshof
Charles Sharpe	3/25/2003	\$2,000	Christopher Bond
Charles Sharpe	6/30/2003	\$2,000	Christopher Bond
Charles Sharpe	3/26/2003	\$2,000	Sam Graves
Laurie Sharpe	6/30/2003	\$2,000	Christopher Bond
Laurie Sharpe	6/30/2003	\$2,000	Christopher Bond
David Melton	3/25/2003	\$1,000	Christopher Bond
David Melton	6/30/2003	\$1,000	Christopher Bond
Total		\$14,000	

**Sources:**

The Center for Responsive Politics- [www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org) - Washington D.C.

National Institute on Money in State Politics- [www.followthemoney.org](http://www.followthemoney.org) - Helena, MT

[St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#)