

**US politics & policy**

## Conservative activist launches \$1bn crusade to 'crush' liberal America

Leonard Leo was architect of effort to secure conservative supermajority on the Supreme Court



Leonard Leo: 'We'll direct resources to build talent and capital formation pipelines in the areas of news and entertainment, where leftwing extremism is most evident' © Erin Schaff/New York Times/Redux/eyevine

#### **Alex Rogers** in Washington YESTERDAY

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The conservative activist who led the crusade to overhaul the US legal system is making a \$1bn push to “crush liberal dominance” across corporate America and in the country’s news and entertainment sectors.

In a rare interview, Leonard Leo, the architect of the rightward shift on the Supreme Court under Donald Trump, said his non-profit advocacy group, the Marble Freedom Trust, was ready to confront the private sector in addition to the government.

“We need to crush liberal dominance where it’s most insidious, so we’ll direct resources to build talent and capital formation pipelines in the areas of news and entertainment, where leftwing extremism is most evident,” Leo told the Financial Times.

“Expect us to increase support for organisations that call out companies and financial institutions that bend to the woke mind virus spread by regulators and NGOs, so that they have to pay a price for putting extreme leftwing ideology ahead of consumers,” he said.

Leo has spent more than two decades at the influential Federalist Society, guiding conservative judges into the federal courts and the [Supreme Court](#) itself. In 2018,

conservative justice Clarence Thomas joked that Leo was the third most important person in the world.

Leo's efforts culminated under Trump's presidency, when three Federalist Society-backed judges were appointed to give conservatives on the Supreme Court a 6-3 supermajority, and profound influence over US law. The court has since then ruled to overturn the right to an abortion, among other long-sought rightwing causes.

In 2020, after [Trump](#) lost the election, Leo stepped back from running the daily operations of the Federalist Society, while remaining its co-chair.

The following year, Leo founded Marble, with a \$1.6bn donation from electronic device manufacturing mogul Barre Seid, to be a counterweight to what he said was "dark money" of the left. He spent about \$600mn in its first three years, according to public financial disclosures.

Leo said his goal was to find "very leveraged, impactful ways of reintroducing limited constitutional government and a civil society premised on freedom and personal responsibility and the virtues of western civilisation".

The \$1bn money machine is now funding the conservative mission against private institutions, opposing diversity, equity and inclusion policies, climate and social concerns in investing and the "debanking" of politically conservative customers, in addition to taking on the public sector.

The non-profit is increasingly interested in launching campaigns against "woke" banks and China-friendly companies involved in everything from food production to autonomous vehicles in the US and potentially Europe.

Leo also intends to invest in a US local media company in the next 12 months, although he has not decided which, and is building conservative coalitions through groups such as Teneo Network, a club with chapters across the country.

He also confirmed that Marble had since 2021 helped fund organisations that launched campaigns against companies with DEI, ESG and other initiatives, including BlackRock, Vanguard, American Airlines, Coca-Cola, State Farm, Major League Baseball and Ticketmaster.

This year, Marble aided a [variety of conservative](#) groups in their campaigns against TikTok on the grounds that it was a threat to children and US national security. President Joe Biden signed a bipartisan bill to force TikTok's Chinese parent

company to divest from the video-sharing platform.

Leo's rise to be among the US's most powerful conservatives has drawn scrutiny from liberal attorneys and Democratic politicians. Earlier this year, he refused to comply with a subpoena from Senate Democrats investigating undisclosed gifts to Thomas and Justice Samuel Alito revealed by ProPublica.

In 2020, Leo joined the for-profit public advocacy firm CRC Advisors. Bloomberg has reported that an array of non-profits have paid CRC at least \$69mn since Leo became its co-owner and chair.

While Marble funds Trump-aligned advocacy groups, it is not donating money to sway the 2024 presidential election, Leo said. The non-profit is instead helping the Republican effort to end the Democratic majority in the Senate, which confirms judges and justices.

"The political environment is more topsy-turvy and more uncertain than it's ever been in my lifetime," said Leo. "Political investing is not as good a bet as it used to be."

## US Election Countdown

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