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Billionaire outpaced all donors in midterms

Democrat Tom Steyer spent \$74 million on campaigns in a bid to make climate change a top issue in politics.

By CHRIS MEGERIAN

SACRAMENTO — In the 2014 midterm elections, no one spent political cash like Tom Steyer, the Democratic hedge fund billionaire from San Francisco who has tried to make climate change a paramount issue in American politics.

He dropped more than \$74 million into congressional and gubernatorial campaigns, almost three times the \$27.7 million spent by the second-biggest individual donor, former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg.

Casino mogul Sheldon Adelson and business executive David Koch, two Republican mega-donors, gave \$3.2 million and \$6.2 million, respectively.

The numbers, compiled from documents filed with the federal government, were detailed by Politico this week. The analysis does not include money donated to nonprofits that aren't required to reveal their contributors.

Much of Steyer's money was spent through Nextgen Climate Action Committee, his political organization. Despite his deep pockets, however, his ability to push Democrats to victory in the midterms was limited.

The U.S. Senate changed to Republican control, and candidates backed by Steyer in battlegrounds such as Colorado and Iowa lost. Some of his candidates won in places including

Pennsylvania, Michigan and New Hampshire, but analysts have said they doubt climate change was an issue that drove voters to the polls.

Steyer and his allies have said this year's campaigns were just the starting point in a multiyear effort to raise the profile of environmental issues.

Steyer put a positive spin on the outcome of his efforts after hosting a conference this month in Oakland. And he expressed a desire to play an even larger role.

"If you look at the statistics about where we were, how people voted and whether they voted, you'll find out we were very successful," Steyer said. "I look at the last election and say, I'm sorry we weren't in more places."

Steyer, who also donated \$294,000 to state campaigns in California this year, de-



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Despite Tom Steyer's deep pockets, his ability to push Democrats to victory in the midterms was limited. Above, Steyer at an L.A. high school in October.

tailed his thoughts on how to keep the environment at the forefront of voters' minds.

"Human beings care about human beings, and they care about local issues,

not global issues," he said. "If you wanted to discuss energy and climate with someone, you better be talking about how it affects human beings where they live and who they love."

Steyer added, "If you can't do that, it's not an issue."

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