

Financial contributions to Black Lives Matter are first processed through a Democratic and progressive fundraising group, one which takes a cut of all donations before passing it along to the racial justice organization.

Donations to Black Lives Matter have been skyrocketing in recent weeks amid ongoing protests in response to the killing of George Floyd, a black Minneapolis resident. Floyd died after a police officer knelt on his neck for several minutes; bystander video of the incident captured Floyd screaming, "I can't breathe!" as the officer kept his knee on Floyd's throat.

Major corporations have been scrambling to donate huge sums of money to Black Lives Matter as the sometimes-violent protests have continued. Some of the donations have been astronomical: The Korean pop band BTS donated \$1 million to the group earlier this month, and their fans quickly matched that amount with another \$1 million donation.

Yet those donations do not go straight to Black Lives Matter. Rather, they first pass through ActBlue Charities, a fundraising group that bankrolls Democratic and progressive political efforts across the country. The group offers users a suite of fundraising tools, including data analytics, support services and customized contribution forms, to facilitate donor solicitation efforts.

The organization styles itself as "a nonprofit tech organization that builds digital fundraising tools for Democratic candidates and committees, progressive organizations, and other nonprofits." Republicans are barred from using the service.

The donation page linked from the central Black Lives Matter website actually reroutes users to a secure ActBlue donation form. "ActBlue Charities is a registered charitable organization formed to democratize charitable giving," the form states.

On its website, ActBlue says it takes a 3.95% "processing fee" from "all transactions," after which the donated money "goes straight to the candidate or organization."

The company stipulates that any donations that are rejected by an organization, or go unclaimed for more than 60 days, "will be re-designated as a contribution to ActBlue." Those contributions are "generally to support its social welfare activities," the organization states.

It is unclear just how much money ActBlue has processed for Black Lives Matter. On the Black Lives Matter donation page, ActBlue states that users can obtain the fundraising group's "latest financial report" by emailing the company. Yet when asked, the company would not provide that report.

“If you are hoping to review the financial report of any specific nonprofit fundraising via ActBlue Charities, we’d encourage you to reach out to them directly,” a representative said via email on Wednesday when asked for ActBlue’s most recent financial report.

ActBlue did not respond to further queries repeatedly asking for the report.

The Democratic fundraising group appears to be pulling down significantly larger amounts of donations this spring than it has done in previous years. On its recap for April 2020, it lists over 4.4 million total contributions for that month — three times as many as listed in April 2018 — while the total dollar amount it processed in April, around \$141,000,000, was up from just under \$56 million the same month in 2018.

It is not clear how much of that money was donated specifically to Black Lives Matter. Neither ActBlue nor Black Lives Matter on their websites list the amount of donations the latter group receives. The April numbers do not reflect the recent surge in donations to Black Lives Matter, which only began skyrocketing in late May after Floyd's death in Minneapolis.

Multiple queries to Black Lives Matter over the past two days were ignored. A Facebook message to Kailee Scales, the group’s managing director, was also not answered on Thursday morning.

On a recent Reddit “Ask Me Anything” forum, when asked how donations for the group are spent, Scales replied: “Right now, our programs are focused on civic engagement, expansion of chapters, Arts & Culture, organizing and digital advocacy resources and tools.”