

Who's Funding Minnesota Protests

Free Beacon, By Walt Rasinger, January 17, 2026



Activist organizations engaged in monitoring Immigration and Customs Enforcement operations in the Twin Cities have received millions of dollars from some of the nation's most influential progressive foundations, according to financial records [reviewed](#) by *The Washington Free Beacon* in a new bombshell investigation.

The funding network spans major philanthropic and political grant-making institutions, including the Open Society Foundations, the Ford Foundation, and the Tides Foundation, underscoring the scale and coordination behind local immigration enforcement monitoring efforts. Several of the groups have long been under investigation for their roles in dark money protests and lobbying that have [drastically shaped](#) the policies of Democrats, making the party much more radical.

Sunrise Movement Takes Central Role

At the center of the activity is the Sunrise Movement, an organization originally [formed to advocate](#) on climate policy that has broadened its local operations in Minnesota to include tracking federal immigration agents. Its Twin Cities chapter conducts training sessions, documents hotels where federal agents are staying, and organizes late-night demonstrations at those locations.

Financial disclosures show the organization has received approximately \$2 million from Open Society Foundations since 2019. The Ford Foundation contributed \$700,000 across 2024 and 2025, while the MacArthur Foundation provided \$250,000 in 2024, *The Free Beacon* explained.

According to the group's stated policies, it typically declines funding arrangements that allow donors to influence operational strategy, reporting instead that contributions support local chapters with general operational needs.

Network of Monitoring Groups

Sunrise Twin Cities operates alongside a constellation of other local organizations, including Unidos MN and Defend the 612, which run monitoring and documentation programs across Minneapolis, the outlet said.

Unidos MN describes itself as an immigrant-led, multiracial statewide organization and operates a rapid response network through its affiliate Monarca. The network maintains a round-the-clock hotline for residents to report immigration enforcement activity. Tax records show the Ford Foundation provided Unidos with \$400,000 in 2024, while the Sixteen Thirty Fund contributed \$150,000 between 2021 and 2022.

Defend the 612 offers training on documenting immigration enforcement and provides resources for tracking federal agents, including vehicle identification information. Donations are funneled through Cooperation Cannon River, a Minneapolis nonprofit backed by Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, the Tides Foundation, and the Solutions Project.

Another organization, Copal MN, operates its own enforcement sighting hotline and has received \$50,000 from the Tides Foundation and \$185,000 from the Sixteen Thirty Fund.

Increased Activity After Fatal Shooting

Monitoring efforts intensified following a January 7 incident in which Minneapolis resident Renee Good, 37, was fatally shot by an ICE agent. Authorities say Good was blocking a road when agents instructed her to exit her vehicle. Instead, she drove forward, and an agent positioned in front of the vehicle fired three shots.

An Instagram account called "MN Ice Watch," which describes itself as documenting and resisting immigration enforcement, does not appear to have a formal organizational structure or fundraising apparatus. The account nonetheless maintains visible social media ties to Sunrise Twin Cities, Unidos, and Defend the 612.

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However, it appears that they have more planned than just "watching." According to their published booklets, they intend to perform a "micro-intifada," a term taken from Palestinian terror attacks, along with "de-arrests," which seems like a jargon word for resisting arrest.

The Free Beacon noted that an Open Society Foundations representative defended the organization's funding decisions, stating: "The Open Society Foundations support the fundamental freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution, including the rights to free speech and peaceful protest that are hallmarks of any vibrant democracy."

Taken together, very little of what is happening in Minneapolis looks "grassroots."