

CEO UPDATE

How NAPEO turned a \$12K investment into PAC growth

CEO Casey Clark used a single bourbon barrel to reframe PAC giving as an experience, leading to record-breaking donations.

James Cullum | June 14, 2026

Wondering how to boost donations to a political action committee? The [National Association of Professional Employer Organizations](#) discovered that nothing makes donating to a PAC go down easier than a bottle of Kentucky bourbon.

The \$12 million-revenue National Association of Professional Employer Organizations invested \$12,000 into a barrel from Woodford Reserve's Distiller's Personal Select program last year and scored more than \$177,000 in PAC donations in 2025.

Most years, 70 donors contribute to NAPEO's PAC. In 2025, it was 120, and more than a third of them were first-time donors.

The effort was so successful that in March, NAPEO won the 2025 Outstanding Association PAC Award from the [Public Affairs Council](#).

"It's been fun to get some recognition for it," CEO [Casey Clark](#) said of the bourbon campaign. "It was fun to execute."

Clark said building up the association's PAC was high on his list of priorities when he took the helm in 2023.

"For me, it was really imperative for us to enhance our PAC," he said. "From our standpoint, it was really focused on where can we start to evolve beyond awareness about what PEOs do, to start to enhance PEO comprehension (for) the people who have the greatest ability to influence the future of our industry and all of the small businesses and those employees and communities."

From fun idea to fundraising

The idea to spice up donations came together over cigars and bourbon at a conference in Indianapolis in 2024. Clark added that the bourbon barrel campaign was meant to be a "fun, creative and exciting way to generate attention and participation in NAPEO PAC from new contributors to grow the support base."

"A bottle from the barrel, reserved solely for PAC participants, became a tangible expression of exclusivity and shared belonging," the Public Affairs Council said in a release. "At conferences throughout the year, the bourbon became a visible symbol of PAC participation. Members compared tasting notes. The barrel itself traveled to events as a showpiece, drawing attention and prompting photos; even the barrel lid became a memorable gift for the NAPEO chairman."

Clark said that getting donors interested in the PEO industry, which provides administrative back-end support to small and medium-sized businesses, can be a challenge.

“I think for us, it was, ‘What’s something unique that will raise the visibility of the PAC? What’s something that will get people’s attention?’” Clark said.

A NAPEO member had a personal connection to Brown-Forman, the makers of Woodford Reserve bourbon. Early last year, Clark took staffers and the chair of the organization’s board on a field trip to the distillery in Versailles, Kentucky. After choosing their barrel, two distinct bourbons were mixed together and then put into 180 one-liter bottles with custom labels.

“Thank you for your investment in our industry’s future,” read the special labels on the back of the bottles.

And for members who don’t drink alcohol, the PAC offered an alternative donation incentive: a statue of the Capitol made from stone that was once part of the building’s foundation.

Connecting PAC dollars to policy wins

Based in Alexandria, Virginia, NAPEO has been the main trade association representing the PEO industry since 1984. Its PAC has been contributing to politicians on both sides of the aisle for nearly 20 years.

The organization’s current federal priorities include passage of House Resolution 3223, which states that PEOs aren’t liable for payroll tax credits; a modernization of the Internal Revenue Service’s technology and processes; and publication of PEO customer lists on the U.S. Department of Labor’s website.

Clark added that NAPEO doesn’t “pick sides” when it comes to advocacy and lobbying efforts. The association engages individuals who want to help small businesses become successful. The bourbon also helps make political donations easier for donors, Clark said.

“Donating personal money to politics can feel a little uncomfortable for people,” he said. “When we can show real progress on these policy priorities, and we can show a lot of cosponsors on our federal policy or federal bills, that’s a direct result of the investment that our industry is making in our PAC and in NAPEO.”

NAPEO recently held its annual Congressional fly-in with more than 100 meetings with legislators, “the most we have ever held,” Clark said.

Launching the next experience

Clark said most of his time as CEO has been spent updating bylaws, launching a three-year strategic plan, hiring staffers, conducting self-audits of the organization’s finances — “all of the unsexy things that go along with running an effective organization.”

“The result of all of this work that the team is doing together was the two best financial years our association has ever had, in ’24 and ’25,” Clark said. “We’re really humming right now.”

NAPEO PAC is preparing to unveil its next promotional gift for donors. The association isn’t buying another barrel this year. Instead, the 2026 campaign will tie into America’s 250th anniversary.

For association CEOs looking to replicate NAPEO PAC’s success using a product to boost contributions, Clark said it’s important to pick an item that resonates with the membership.

“Bourbon is the American spirit. PEOs support the backbone of the American economy: small businesses. These two threads woven together represent the idea that PEOs help Main Street, USA, thrive.”