

**Campaign Legal Center • Common Cause • Democracy 21
League of Women Voters • Public Citizen • U.S. PIRG**

June 20, 2007

Dear Majority Leader Reid,

Our organizations greatly appreciate the outstanding leadership you provided in the Senate passage earlier this year of strong lobbying disclosure reform legislation and strong Senate ethics rules reforms.

The organizations include the Campaign Legal Center, Common Cause, Democracy 21, the League of Women Voters, Public Citizen and U.S. PIRG.

With the House and Senate now having passed important lobbying reform bills, both of which contain strong provisions to require lobbyists to report the contributions they “bundle” for members of Congress and other recipients, the focus of the lobbying reform effort now moves to conference.

The Senate-passed bill, in addition to the “bundling” disclosure provision, contains a separate critical provision to require lobbyists to disclose the fundraising events they hold for Members. The House Judiciary Committee report makes clear that the House-passed “bundling” disclosure legislation similarly is intended to cover contributions raised by lobbyists in connection with fundraising events.

The “bundling” disclosure provision and the separate requirement that lobbyists disclose the fundraising events they host or co-host for Members are both indispensable and they represent the most critical provisions in the lobbying reform bill. They are the defining issue of the lobbying reform legislation.

As a *Washington Post* editorial (May 22, 2007) stated:

The most controversial part of the [lobbying reform] package is also the most essential. It would require that lobbyists reveal the amounts they help raise for lawmakers, not just disclose the campaign checks they write directly. The provision wouldn't bar “bundling”; it would simply shine some light for the public on what lawmakers and lobbyists already know, namely, how much the former are indebted to the latter. Fierce behind-the-scenes resistance to this plan is the best available proof of how badly it is needed.

Campaign contributions are an important means used by lobbyists to seek influence with members of Congress whose decisions they are in the business of trying to influence. Lobbyists provide campaign contributions to assist Members by making direct

contributions to Members, by hosting fundraising events for Members and by “bundling” contributions for Members.

Currently, however, only the direct contributions made by a lobbyist to a Member are disclosed to the public, while the other two means of how a lobbyist provides contributions to assist a Member remain nonpublic and unknown to citizens.

This is the case, furthermore, despite the fact that the widespread practice of Washington lobbyists hosting fundraising events and “bundling” contributions for members of Congress almost always results in far more money being provided by a lobbyist to assist a Member than the funds directly given by the lobbyist to the Member.

Requiring lobbyists to disclose the fundraisers they hold and the contributions they “bundle” for a Member goes to the heart of the public’s right to know about the efforts lobbyists make to advance their lobbying goals. Requiring effective disclosure of this information is an essential element of any new lobbying disclosure reform legislation.

With strong “bundling” disclosure provisions in both the House and Senate bills, there is simply no basis for the conference report to contain any final “bundling” language that is weaker than the provisions in either of these bills. Similarly, there is no basis for failing to include in the final conference report the provision requiring lobbyists to disclose the fundraisers they host for Members.

It is also essential that the strong Senate ethics reforms and earmark reforms passed by the Senate not be weakened or undermined in conference.

Our organizations urge you to ensure that the final conference report on lobbying reform legislation includes strong and effective provisions to provide for the disclosure by lobbyists of the fundraising events they hold and the contributions they “bundle” for Members. We also urge you to ensure that the strong Senate ethics reforms and earmark reforms passed by the Senate are included in the final conference report.

Campaign Legal Center
Common Cause
Democracy 21

League of Women Voters
Public Citizen
U.S. PIRG