

June 3, 2013

The Honorable Candice Miller
Chair
House Administration Committee
1309 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert Brady
Ranking Member
House Administration Committee
1316 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Miller and Ranking Member Brady,

The House Administration Committee is scheduled to consider several bills seeking to further dismantle current campaign finance laws whose purpose is to fight corruption and the appearance of corruption. We oppose these measures seeking to end the presidential public financing system and funding for party conventions, instead of repairing these systems. We also oppose the measure scheduled for the same hearing to terminate the Election Assistance Commission.

Our organizations include Americans for Campaign Reform, the Campaign Legal Center, Common Cause, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, Democracy 21, Demos, Public Citizen and U.S. PIRG.

Our organizations believe it is essential to repair the presidential public financing system -- not repeal it. We strongly support the legislation to revise the current presidential system by matching small contributions with multiple public funds for the primary and general elections, by closing the loophole that has allowed corporations, labor unions and wealthy individuals to provide soft money to pay for the conventions and by replacing the public funding for conventions with a new system of hard money contributions.

Together H.R. 94 and H.R. 95 would terminate the presidential public financing system and eliminate public financing for the conventions while placing no restrictions on funding party conventions with corporate and labor union money and large contributions from individuals. As a result, the parties would rely even more on unlimited soft money contributions that have the power to corrupt officeholders and government decisions, as happened in the Watergate scandals. In *Buckley v. Valeo* (1976), the Supreme Court held that the contribution limits enacted in the 1974 reform legislation were necessary to deal with the "reality or appearance of corruption inherent in a system permitting unlimited financial contributions."

The "reality or appearance of corruption" that is "inherent in a system permitting unlimited financial contributions," is precisely the danger that would be increased by these bills.

The Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision has created chaos in the nation's campaign finance system and substantially increased opportunities for big-money corruption. It has also shown just how important it is to have an effective alternative means to finance campaigns that are based on a central role for small donors.

We urge you to oppose H.R. 94 and 95 and instead to support efforts to repair the presidential public financing system with an approach focused on matching small contributions and to reform convention financing by establishing a new system that prevents the use of soft money to pay for the conventions.

We also urge you to oppose H.R. 1994, the Election Assistance Commission Termination Act. We believe the Commission, if fully staffed, could provide vital assistance in addressing the problems in our voting system, including modernized voter registration and ongoing issues with polling station lines so in some communities that voter turnout is actually driven down by them. Congress should strengthen, not terminate, the EAC and ensure that the agency can perform its critical functions in data collection, research, and information sharing among elected officials at every level, the public and concerned organizations. Congress should ensure that the EAC has sufficient authority to carry out these responsibilities.

The presidential public financing system should be repaired, not repealed. The Election Administration Commission should be strengthened, not terminated. We strongly urge you to oppose these measures which would undermine the integrity and the public's faith in our democracy.

Sincerely,

Americans for Campaign Reform
Campaign Legal Center
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington
Common Cause
Democracy 21
Demos
Public Citizen
U.S. PIRG

Cc: All House Administration Committee Members