

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 28, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama,

Many Members of the House have contacted you in support of your Draft Executive Order, dated April 13, 2011, on the disclosure of political spending by those who do business with the federal government. Today, we once again offer our full support. We stand ready to work with you on this important accountability measure for taxpayers, confident that more transparency, not less, places us on the right side of history.

The transparency we support is already required around the country. In fact, forms of contractor political spending are actually banned in Connecticut, New Jersey, West Virginia, Hawaii, and elsewhere. At the federal level, since 1994, the Securities and Exchange Commission has prohibited brokers and dealers of municipal securities and their PACs, from making campaign contributions to bond-issuing officials, and requires disclosure of their campaign contributions to maximize transparency. The rule was challenged and upheld in Federal Court, and remains in force today.

Republican opposition to transparency is both disheartening and puzzling. Republicans once supported disclosure. In 2000, Senator Mitch McConnell asked, "Why would a little disclosure be better than a lot of disclosure?" In 2007, John Boehner said on *Meet the Press*, "I think what we ought to do is we ought to have full disclosure, full disclosure of all the money that we raise and how it is spent. And I think sunlight is the best disinfectant." Today, they lead the fight against these sensible reforms.

Fortunately, even in the *Citizens United* decision which struck down limits on corporate spending, the Supreme Court, voting 8-1, specifically endorsed disclosure. Justice Kennedy, writing for the majority, states: "The First Amendment protects political speech and disclosure permits citizens and shareholders to react to the speech of corporate entities in a proper way. This transparency enables the electorate to make informed decisions and give proper weight to different speakers and messages."

Adhering to that principle, disclosure will not politicize the procurement process--it will improve it. Political expenditures are already well-known to those that make them and to the officials who benefit. With disclosure, the public will have access to this information as well, allowing them to judge whether contracts were awarded based on merit. A

meritorious procurement system is the only responsible use of taxpayer money, making this a deficit reduction effort as much as a campaign finance reform issue.

We encourage you to respond forcefully to these and other distortions leveled against your Draft Order and the cause of disclosure. Sunlight remains the best disinfectant, and there is nothing partisan about finally shining light on this dark corner of our political system. We believe that with public funds come public responsibilities, and anyone benefitting from taxpayer money has the responsibility to be fully transparent.

Sincerely,

	
	
	
	
	
	

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