

Senator Whitehouse Re-introduces DISCLOSE Act with 49 Cosponsors, Reform Groups Urge Senate to Enact Bill to Close Gaping Disclosure Loopholes Used to Hide Donors from Voters

June 24, 2014

Our organizations strongly support the DISCLOSE Act of 2014 introduced today by Senator Whitehouse (D-RI) with 49 cosponsors.

Our organizations include Americans for Campaign Reform, the Brennan Center for Justice, the Campaign Legal Center, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, Common Cause, Democracy 21, Demos, the League of Women Voters, People For the American Way, Public Citizen and Sunlight Foundation.

The legislation would ensure that voters know the identity of donors who have been secretly financing campaign expenditures in federal elections. Voters have a fundamental right to know this information.

Donors funneled more than \$300 million in secret contributions into the 2012 national elections through outside spending groups.

National polls have shown that citizens overwhelmingly favor disclosure by outside groups of the donors financing their campaign expenditures. The basic right of citizens to know whose money is being spent to influence their votes has long been recognized by Congress in enacting campaign finance disclosure laws and by the Supreme Court in upholding these laws.

The Supreme Court in the *Citizens United* case, by an overwhelming 8 to 1 vote, upheld the constitutionality of and need for disclosure requirements for outside groups making expenditures to influence federal elections. The Court stated:

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.

Notwithstanding the Supreme Court's overwhelming support for disclosure by outside spending groups, flawed FEC regulations and the impact of the *Citizens United* decision have resulted in massive amounts of secret contributions being spent in federal elections. The DISCLOSE Act would close the gaping disclosure loopholes that have allowed this to happen.

The DISCLOSE Act is effective, fair and constitutional. There are no legitimate policy or constitutional grounds on which to oppose and kill this legislation.

If Senators have specific problems with provisions of the Act, they should negotiate with the

bill's sponsors, not stonewall the legislation and continue to keep citizens in the dark about the sources of the huge amounts being spent to influence their votes.

Our organizations strongly urge the Senate to pass the DISCLOSE Act.