

September 12, 2011

The Honorable Richard Durbin, Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Durbin:

Our organizations support public financing of elections and greatly appreciate the outstanding national leadership you have provided on behalf of this essential reform.

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

We are writing to ask for your help and leadership in blocking any efforts made in Congress to repeal and kill the presidential public financing system.

As Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government, this matter could come before you when your subcommittee or the full Senate Appropriations Committee considers the FY 2012 appropriations for the Treasury Department and/or the Federal Election Commission.

House Republicans already have twice passed legislation in this Congress to end the presidential public financing system.

On January 26, 2011, they passed a free standing bill to kill the presidential public financing system. On February 17, 2011, they passed an amendment to H.R. 1, the FY 2011 spending bill, offered by Representative Tom Cole (R-OK), to prohibit any funds from being used to implement the presidential public financing system. H.R. 1 passed the House on February 19, 2011.

On January 26, 2011, Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell also introduced legislation to kill the presidential public financing system, similar to the Cole legislation passed on that day by the House.

Congressional opponents may try again to kill the presidential system by attaching a rider to the Appropriations legislation for FY 2012 that funds the Treasury Department and the Federal Election Commission when the legislation is considered in Committee or on the floor in

the House or Senate. Or opponents may try to attach a rider to kill the presidential system to the Continuing Resolution for FY 2012 that Congress is expected to pass.

This effort is not just intended to kill the presidential system. It also represents a full scale attack on the very concept of public financing and an effort to get Congress on record in opposition to public financing of elections.

It is essential to the long term goal of repairing the presidential public financing system and to the effort you are leading in Congress to establish a system for congressional public financing that the effort to kill presidential public financing be defeated.

The presidential public financing system served the nation and presidential candidates of both major parties well for most of its 36-year existence, until it became outdated in recent years. The system has protected against government corruption and has given average citizens and small donors a vital role to play in our presidential elections.

The presidential system today needs to be repaired, not repealed. As the Obama Administration stated in opposition to the Cole legislation to repeal the presidential system:

The Administration strongly opposes House passage of H.R. 359 because it is critical that the Nation's Presidential election public financing system be fixed rather than dismantled.

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After a year in which the *Citizens United* decision rolled back a century of law to allow corporate interests to spend vast sums in the Nation's elections and to do so without disclosing the true interests behind them, this is not the time to further empower the special interests or to obstruct the work of reform.

As the national leader for public financing of congressional elections and as Chairman of the relevant Appropriations Subcommittee, you are in a unique position to lead the effort in Congress to prevent congressional opponents from repealing the presidential public financing system.

We would greatly appreciate your leadership in Congress to ensure that the presidential public financing system is not killed. We also would like to again express our great appreciation for your outstanding leadership on behalf of congressional public financing.

Americans for Campaign Reform
Brennan Center for Justice
Campaign Legal Center
Common Cause
Citizens for Responsibility and
Ethics in Washington

Democracy 21
League of Women Voters
People For the American Way
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