

Majority Members
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

March 26, 2019

Dear Chair Lowey and Majority Members of the Committee:

We, the undersigned 28 groups write to urge you to ensure three troubling anti-democracy riders from the 2019 spending package do not make it into the 2020 spending bill.

These three poison pill policy riders that would keep our system rigged in favor of wealthy special interests are expressly removed from any future appropriations bills by H.R. 1, the For the People Act. **Following the resounding passage of H.R. 1 by every Democrat in the U.S. House of Representatives, there is now a clear mandate for the removal of these riders from the FY 2020 Appropriations bill.**

Today, our democracy is out of balance, which makes it harder to solve the big problems facing our country and our communities. Our current system allows powerful corporate and wealthy interests to regularly defy the foundational principles of fairness, equity, ethics, accountability, and respect for the rule of law, with the unfortunate result being a government that is more responsive and accountable to wealthy political donors than to the public. In order to restore balance to our democracy we need to use all of the tools at our disposal. That is why we are writing to draw your attention to three poison pill policy riders that have been sneaked into the appropriations process that stymie this progress.

The first rider prevents the U.S. Treasury Department and the IRS from enacting a sensible definition of political activity that would reduce abuse by those willing to manipulate the system to spend secret money in elections. The second would tie the hands of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) from finalizing rules that would reveal how big donors and corporations are spending in our elections. The third prohibits federal contractors from being required to disclose their political spending.

The riders, discussed in more detail below with section numbers from the 2019 spending package, help entrench a political system rigged in favor of wealthy special interests by blocking commonsense transparency rules and maintaining avenues for special interests to secretly influence elections.

- **Sec. 124 – Preventing the IRS and Treasury from making better rules for 501(c)(4) political activity**
 - This rider prevents the Treasury Department from adequately defining what nonprofits can and can't do in elections. Without clear guidance, groups wanting to spend in elections without disclosing their donors can abuse the system free of consequences.

- **Sec. 629 – Preventing the SEC from making a rule requiring corporations to disclose political spending**
 - This rider stops the SEC from finalizing a rule requiring public companies to disclose their political spending. In *Citizens United*, the U.S. Supreme Court decision that opened the flood gates for unlimited corporate spending in our elections, Justice Anthony Kennedy assumed that prompt internet disclosures would be the norm. However, this rider stops the type of critical disclosure regime Kennedy envisioned from being implemented and deprives investors and the public of critical information on corporate political activity.

- **Sec. 735 – Preventing disclosure of political spending by government contractors**
 - The American people have a right to know whether the companies doing their business are being awarded contracts simply because they give big campaign donations.

We appreciate your attention to this important matter and look forward to your proposal of a funding package free from these damaging measures.

Sincerely,

20/20 Vision
 American Atheists
 American Family Voices
 Boston Common Asset Management
 California Clean Money Action Fund
 Center for Biological Diversity
 Center for Media and Democracy
 Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington
 Clean Elections Texas
 Coalition to Preserve, Protect & Defend
 Common Cause
 Democracy 21
 End Citizens United Action Fund
 Franciscan Action Network
 Harrington Investments
 Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility
 League of Women Voters of the United States
 MAYDAY America
 NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
 New Mexicans for Money Out of Politics
 New Progressive Alliance
 Open the Government
 Patriotic Millionaires
 People For the American Way
 Progressive Leadership Initiative
 Public Citizen
 Ursuline Sisters of Tildonk, US Province
 Voices for Progress