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March 4, 2015

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

**RE: Oppose H.R. 412, Repealing Presidential Public Financing; and
Oppose H.R. 195, Election Assistance Termination Act**

Dear Representative:

With little warning, Rep. Tom Cole (R-Okla.) has introduced H.R. 412, a bill to repeal the presidential public financing system that has existed for more than a third of a century, with a House Administration Committee hearing scheduled as early as Wednesday of this week. On behalf of more than 350,000 Public Citizen members and supporters, we urge you in the strongest terms possible to defeat this hastily drafted and ill-conceived measure.

Worse than the lack of an open legislative process is the substance of the bill: At a time when the American public is disgusted with special interest influence in Washington, H.R. 412 would give major corporations and other wealthy special interests even more power over elections by eliminating the presidential public funding system.

Ironically, this legislative assault on the presidential public financing system comes on the heels of the fifth “anniversary” of a judicial assault against decades of congressional legislation banning corporate financing of elections. In *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, the Supreme Court set aside *Citizens United*’s original, narrow, challenge to the McCain-Feingold law and instead used the case to engage in a sweeping rewrite of the First Amendment and campaign finance law, allowing corporations and unions to spend unlimited amounts directly to support or oppose candidates. The result has been an unprecedented flood of secret money into federal, state and judicial elections.

Whatever your personal views on the merits of the *Citizens United* decision, it is beyond dispute that the ruling is wildly unpopular with the American public. It has generated exceedingly strong, bipartisan anger and suspicion as to what the secret funders of our elections are attempting to buy. The measure is likely to exacerbate the unintended consequences of secrecy in campaign financing and public cynicism in the electoral process that has resulted from *Citizens United*.

At the same time, Public Citizen also strongly encourages you to oppose H.R. 195, brought up in a similar surprise manner by Rep. Gregg Harper (R-Miss.), which would dismantle the newly-reestablished Election Assistance Commission (EAC). The EAC has finally been

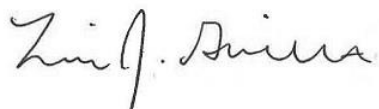
reinvigorated with duly appointed and confirmed Commissioners by Congress, and is now staffed by some of the most conscientious election authorities in the nation.

The Election Assistance Commission was created by Congress under the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002 to help prevent meltdowns of our electoral process like the embarrassing episode experienced in the 2000 presidential election. The EAC is an independent, bipartisan federal commission charged with making our elections run smoothly. Now up and running, it must be given a chance to carry through on its critical mission.

Oppose both H.R. 359 and H.R. 195.

The Congress could send no worse signal about being out of touch with ordinary Americans than to enact such measures that further bolster special interests in American politics.

Sincerely,



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