

April 20, 2012

Dear Senator,

Our organizations strongly support S.219, the “Senate Campaign Disclosure Parity Act,” bipartisan legislation introduced by Senator Jon Tester and cosponsored by 22 Senators.

The organizations include Brennan Center for Justice, Campaign Finance Institute, Campaign Legal Center, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, Common Cause, Democracy 21, League of Women Voters, Public Citizen, and Sunlight Foundation.

The Senate Rules Committee is scheduled to hold a hearing on Wednesday, April 25 on S.219. We urge members of the Rules Committee to report this bill and the full Senate to pass the legislation promptly.

S. 219 would require electronic filing of the campaign finance disclosure reports filed by Senate candidates under federal campaign finance laws. Currently, all federal candidates, party committees and federal PACs are required to file their campaign finance disclosure reports electronically -- with the sole exception of Senate candidates who still are filing paper reports.

The exception from filing electronic reports provided for Senate candidates makes no sense, has no legitimate basis and is indefensible. Yet despite the fact that there are no credible arguments against this legislation, efforts to pass the bill have been blocked for years by the threat of filibusters, “poison pill” amendments and other obstructionist tactics.

The only purpose served by the exception from electronic filing for Senate candidates is to deprive the American people of timely and meaningful public information to which they are entitled about the campaign finance activities of Senate candidates during critical periods of their elections. This is particularly the case during the critical period close to an election, because the paper reports filed by Senate candidates require long periods for them to be transferred by the FEC into a searchable electronic database that can then be used by the public and media.

The absence of required electronic filing for Senate candidates is a formula for continuing to keep the American people in the dark about the campaign finance activities of Senate candidates during critical periods of their elections.

Our organizations strongly urge you to vote for S.219 and ensure that citizens have the same access to campaign finance information about Senate candidates that they currently have regarding all other federal candidates, political parties and federal PACs.

Brennan Center for Justice
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