

April 27, 2016

Dear House Ways and Means Committee member,

Our organizations strongly urge you as a member of the Ways and Means Committee to vote against Rep. Peter Roskam's bill to eliminate the current requirement for 501(c) groups to make non-public disclosure of their donors to the IRS. The bill is scheduled to be marked up by the committee on Thursday.

Our organizations include: Brennan Center for Justice, Campaign Legal Center, Common Cause, CREW, Democracy 21, Public Citizen, Sunlight Foundation and The Rootstrikers project at Demand Progress.

Eliminating the existing requirement for disclosure to the IRS of donations to 501(c)(4) "social welfare" groups would open the door wide for secret, unaccountable money from foreign governments, foreign corporations and foreign individuals to be illegally laundered into federal elections through 501(c)(4) groups.

While foreign money cannot be legally given or spent in our elections, the only real protection we currently have against the use of 501(c)(4) groups to launder foreign money into federal elections is that 501(c)(4) groups must disclose their donors, including foreign donors, to the IRS. This requirement means that 501(c)(4) groups know they can be held accountable if they illegally spend foreign money in U.S. elections.

However if donor disclosure to the IRS is eliminated, no one will know whether a 501(c)(4) group has received foreign funds and is illegally spending them in our elections, other than the foreign donors and 501(c)(4) groups involved. There will be no way to hold them accountable for illegally spending foreign money in federal elections.

We strongly urge you to oppose the Roskam bill when it comes up for consideration in the House Ways and Means Committee.

Brennan Center for Justice
Campaign Legal Center
Common Cause
CREW
Democracy 21
Public Citizen
Sunlight Foundation
The Rootstrikers project at Demand Progress