

March 14, 2014

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama,

Our organizations strongly urge you to veto H.R. 2019 which repeals public funding for party presidential nominating conventions.

The legislation passed earlier this week by voice vote in the Senate after passing the House in December.

Our organizations include Americans for Campaign Reform, Brennan Center for Justice, Campaign Legal Center, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW), Common Cause, Democracy 21, Demos, League of Women Voters, Public Citizen and U.S. PIRG.

Signing H.R. 2019 would contradict and reverse your public position of strongly opposing the repeal of the public financing system for presidential candidates and party nominating conventions.

Furthermore, the legislation which purports to provide funding for a 10-year pediatric cancer research initiative, in reality does not provide any actual increased funds to conduct pediatric cancer research.

H.R. 2019 takes away \$126 million over a ten-year period from presidential convention funding and *authorizes* the money to be used for pediatric cancer research. But it does not *appropriate* any additional funds for pediatric cancer research.

H.R. 2019 does not increase actual spending for pediatric cancer research and the legislation is unnecessary for such research spending to be increased in the appropriations process.

Furthermore, if actual spending for pediatric research were to be increased, it would have to be paid for by funds taken from other programs subject to the existing overall non-defense discretionary spending caps, and not by funds made available by repealing the funding for nominating conventions.

H.R. 2019 is the fourth attempt by Republican congressional leaders, beginning in the last Congress, to repeal the presidential public financing system. H.R. 2019 is a part of this larger effort which your Administration opposes.

The presidential public financing system served the nation well for most of its existence and the system needs to be repaired, not repealed. This is a position you have taken in opposing the repeal of public financing for presidential candidates and party nominating conventions.

On January 25, 2011, the White House released a Statement of Administration Policy that opposed [“H.R. 359 - Termination of Public Financing of Presidential Campaigns and Party Conventions.”](#) According to the White House Statement:

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.

The statement further said:

H.R. 359 would kill the system, not strengthen it. Its effect would be to expand the power of corporations and special interests in the Nation’s elections; to force many candidates into an endless cycle of fundraising at the expense of engagement with voters on the issues; and to place a premium on access to large donor or special interest support, narrowing the field of otherwise worthy candidates. 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.

Signing H.R. 2019 would reverse your position on the presidential financing system.

Signing H.R. 2019 into law, furthermore, will substantially increase the power of corporations, wealthy individuals and special interest groups to obtain influence with federal officeholders and over government decisions. The repeal of public funding for conventions will ensure that more huge contributions from corporations and other special interest donors are used to finance the presidential conventions.

H.R. 2019 would not do anything to actually increase spending for pediatric cancer research.

The legislation does nothing to change the ability of the Appropriation Committees to increase spending for NIH, pediatric research or otherwise, beyond what the Committees already have the ability to do. In other words, the Appropriations Committees already can increase spending for pediatric cancer research without this legislation.

Furthermore, H.R. 2019 does not increase the overall non-defense discretionary spending caps. Thus, if Congress increases NIH spending by \$12.6 million this year, the money would have to

come from other non-defense discretionary spending programs and not by funds made available by repealing the funding for nominating conventions.

Additionally, it should be recognized that the current FY 14 total fund available for the NIH is more than \$700 million below the pre-sequester NIH level for FY 2013. H.R. 2019 does nothing to increase this spending level for the NIH.

H.R. 2019's only actual impact is to end public funding of presidential nominating conventions, a system which has been used by both the Republican and Democratic parties to help fund every one of their presidential nominating conventions from 1976 through 2012.

[A Dear Colleague letter opposing H.R. 2019](#) was sent to House members on December 11, 2013 by Representatives Nita Lowey, Rosa DeLauro, Henry Waxman and Frank Pallone Jr. The letter shows that H.R. 2019 does not provide actual additional funding for pediatric research.

Representative Lowey is Ranking Member on the House Appropriations Committee. Representative DeLauro is Ranking Member on the Labor, Health and Human Services Subcommittee. Representative Waxman is Ranking Member on the Energy and Commerce Committee. Representative Pallone Jr. is Ranking Member on the Energy and Commerce Committee Subcommittee on Health.

According to the Dear Colleague letter:

The stated purpose of H.R. 2019 is to terminate the public contribution to the cost of quadrennial political party nominating conventions and redirect the savings into research on childhood diseases at the National Institute of Health (NIH). While, we strongly support efforts to increase funding for pediatric research and other research at NIH, we caution our colleagues that H.R. 2019 would do nothing to advance that goal.

The letter further stated:

The legislation would indeed end public support for the expenses of the party conventions. It purports to make the resulting savings available to NIH, a mere \$12.6 million per year, or about four-tenths of one percent of the roughly \$3.6 billion that NIH reported spending on pediatric research last year.

However, in reality this bill does not provide any additional funds to NIH. Rather, it specifies that the funds shall be available for NIH pediatric research "only to the extent and in such amounts as provided in advance in appropriations Acts."

Our groups strongly urge you to take action that is consistent with your Administration Policy Statement of January 25, 2011 and that recognizes that H.R. 2019 does not provide any actual increased funding for pediatric cancer research.

Our organizations strongly urge you to veto H.R. 2019.

Americans for Campaign Reform  
Brennan Center for Justice  
Campaign Legal Center  
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)  
Common Cause  
Demos  
Democracy 21  
League of Women Voters  
Public Citizen  
U.S. PIRG