

September 15, 2015

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

Dear President Obama,

Congress this fall must address its responsibility to provide the funds necessary for the government to function in Fiscal Year 2016.

Congress, to date, has failed to send any appropriations legislation to the White House for your signature. House and Senate Appropriations Committees, however, have considered a number of appropriations bills to which a number of very damaging riders have been attached. This includes four riders that would damage campaign finance laws and reform efforts.

Our organizations believe the best approach is to reject all riders and to insist that clean FY 2016 appropriations legislation is sent to you for your signature.

Our organizations include Campaign Legal Center, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, Common Cause, Democracy 21, Demos, Issue One, League of Women Voters, Public Citizen and U.S. PIRG.

In the event that Congress does not pass clean appropriations legislation, however, we strongly urge you to take all steps necessary to prevent the four damaging campaign finance riders from being enacted into law, including the use of your veto power if it is required.

It is also essential to ensure that no other campaign finance riders are added to appropriations legislation and enacted into law. This is all the more necessary given the enormous damage done last year to the campaign finance laws in the Cromnibus Appropriations bill.

A campaign finance rider secretly added to that legislation at the last minute, and with no opportunity for public consideration, gutted the limits on individual contributions to a national party. When the Cromnibus bill was signed into law, the legislation increased these contribution limits to \$777,600 per donor, per year.

It is essential to prevent this year's appropriation process from being used to further undermine the nation's campaign finance laws. The four damaging campaign finance riders that have already been added to House and Senate appropriations bills would:

- Prevent the White House from issuing an Executive Order requiring disclosure of campaign finance activities by government contractors;
- Prevent the IRS from issuing new regulations to stop nonprofit groups from misusing the tax laws to spend secret contributions in federal elections;

- Prevent the SEC from issuing regulations to require public corporations to disclose their campaign-finance activities to their shareholders; and
- Repeal longstanding limits on the amounts that parties can spend in coordination with their candidates.

The first three of these pending campaign finance riders would serve to continue keeping the American people in the dark about the anonymous donors laundering hundreds of millions of dollars in secret contributions into federal elections. Secret money in our elections provides widespread opportunities for government corruption and prevents holding public officials and influence-buying donors accountable for corrupt practices.

The fourth pending rider would repeal longstanding limits on the amounts that parties can spend in coordination with their candidates. This rider was added to a Senate Appropriations Committee bill by Senate Majority Leader McConnell, over the opposition of Democrats on the Committee.

Given what happened last year, furthermore, our organizations are very concerned that an effort may be made to use the appropriations process this year to increase candidate limits.

The current individual contribution limit of \$5,400 for a primary and general election (combined) already greatly exceeds the amount almost all citizens in the country can afford to contribute to a candidate. Any increase in the current candidate contribution limit would serve to increase the influence of only the wealthiest people in the country.

Individual candidate contribution limits were enacted to prevent the corrupting nexus between officeholders and influence-seeking donors. There is no legitimate justification for increasing these limits.

Our organizations strongly urge you to use the powers of your office to ensure that no damage is done in this Congress to the campaign finance laws and to other reform efforts.

We strongly urge you to use all available means, including a veto if necessary, to block the four pending campaign finance riders and to block any other effort to undermine the campaign finance laws from being enacted.

Sincerely,

Campaign Legal Center
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington
Common Cause
Democracy 21
Demos
Issue One
League of Women Voters
Public Citizen
U.S. PIRG