

DAILY CAMERA

Campaign finance

Dark money smothering our voices

Why are our representatives in Washington sneaking campaign finance regulations into March's budget bill?

Colorado has voted overwhelmingly in favor of limiting campaign finance contributions (including those by corporations and unions) and beefing up financial disclosure requirements, especially close to elections. Nationwide, opinion polls show that Americans want to limit big money influence in politics so that our voices aren't smothered.

SCOTUS's Citizens United ruling (2010) prohibited the government from restricting independent political campaign spending by corporations, labor unions, and other associations. It wasn't legislators.

So why do our representatives now want to allow unlimited political activity (speech and spending) by tax-exempt churches and non-profit groups? I remember when Americans worried that John F. Kennedy might take directions directly from the Pope. Now preachers, rabbis and imams can collect political donations and tell their members how to vote?

That's what repealing the Johnson Amendment will do if it passes within this month's budget bill. More dark money smothering our voices.

A budget rider (freeloader, I think) in the Senate would allow parties and candidates to

coordinate their spending, even pooling resources to pay the same P.R. firm. Fine for those who believe parties should control candidates and messages. Stifles individual voices.

Other budget "freeloaders" in the House version would:

- Prevent the creation of new disclosure rules to reveal federal contractors' political spending;
- Block the SEC from requiring that shareholders be told about corporate political spending; and
- Block the IRS from creating standards for "dark money" groups, who are already "dark!"

Add your Colorado voice to mine in telling our members of Congress to quit making anonymous big donors' speech more powerful by allowing, expanding, and then hiding the donors within church, federal contractor, corporate, and other dark money sources. Do it now, or our voices will get even smaller.

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