



November 13, 2017

Dear Senator:

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to urge to you support the Senate Campaign Disclosure Parity Act, legislation that will increase transparency and accountability in government — while saving taxpayers money in the process.

Introduced earlier this year by Senators Jon Tester (D-MT) and Thad Cochran (R-MS), the Senate Campaign Disclosure Parity Act would require Senate candidates to file their campaign finance reports electronically — something that House candidates and presidential candidates have been doing without issue for nearly two decades. There is no reason why Senate candidates should not do the same.

The Federal Election Commission (FEC) estimates that requiring Senate candidates to e-file their campaign finance reports will save taxpayers more than \$876,000 a year — or more than \$1.75 million during the 2017-2018 election cycle. As the agency recently told Congress: “Mandatory electronic filing for Senate reports will create considerable cost savings and will result in easier, more efficient dissemination of data.”

In an age of smartphones, social media and cloud computing, it’s absurd that Senate candidates are still required, by law, to file paper documents to detail their fundraising and expenditures.

Virtually all Senate candidates presently maintain electronic databases of their donations and expenditures. Yet, instead of being able to electronically submit this information to the government, campaigns must print paper reports that are then either mailed or hand-delivered to the Secretary of the Senate.

Senate staffers must scan the documents they receive — often hundreds, if not thousands, of pages — to convert them into an electronic format to send them to the FEC. That agency, in turn, hires private contractors to perform data entry to re-digitize the information that was first stored digitally.

All the while, the risk of mistakes being made is heightened as records are transferred from electronic form to paper and back again. Moreover, the public is kept in the dark for days — even weeks — about who is bankrolling Senate campaigns and how funds are being spent.

This legislation, which is currently sponsored by nearly half of all senators, has support from Democrats, Republicans and independents alike.



Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) has praised the Senate Campaign Disclosure Parity Act as “a commonsense reform that will also save taxpayers money.” Senator Angus King (I-ME) has lauded it as a way to “ensure candidate accountability and increase transparency for voters.” And Roger Wicker (R-MS) has called e-filing a “simple, efficient and cost-effective approach that is long-overdue.”

Thanks to the leadership of Senators Tester and Cochran — along with Senators James Lankford (R-OK) and Chris Murphy (D-CT) — the e-file provision was recently included in the Senate FY18 Legislative Branch Appropriations bill.

Today, we are asking you to take two small but powerful steps to support this commonsense proposal:

- 1) Oppose any efforts to strip the e-filing provision from the FY18 appropriations bill as it moves forward in the weeks ahead.
- 2) Join as a cosponsor of the stand-alone version of the Senate Campaign Disclosure Parity Act (S. 298).

Both of these actions will show the American people that you are ready and willing to help the Senate move more fully into the digital age.

The Senate’s current, paper-based filing system is cumbersome and archaic, as well as a prime example of bureaucratic inefficiency and wasteful spending. Each of our organizations hopes that we — as well as the American people — can count on your support for this pragmatic and straightforward measure.

Sincerely,

Campaign Finance Institute
Campaign Legal Center
Cause of Action Institute
Center for Political Accountability
Center for Responsive Politics
Common Cause
Demand Progress Action
Democracy 21
Government Accountability Institute
Issue One
Judicial Watch

League of Women Voters of the United States
Liberty Coalition
MapLight
National Institute on Money in State Politics
National Legal and Policy Center
OpenTheGovernment
Project On Government Oversight
Sunlight Foundation
Take Back Our Republic
Taxpayers for Common Sense