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2003 OCT -8 A 8:27

Hon. Mary Dove, Secretary
Federal Election Commission
999 E Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20463

Lawrence Norton, Esq.
General Counsel
Federal Election Commission
999 E Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C.20463

Dear Ms. Dove and Mr. Norton:

I am writing in support of WE LEAD's efforts to raise small dollar contributions that will be reserved until such time as a "presumed presidential nominee" emerges from the primary and caucus process with the necessary delegate support to attain the political party nomination.

As a professor of U. S. politics and government, a political scientist, and as a citizen I have observed a marked decline in public engagement in the political process over the past 30 years, particularly among those in the under 40 age population. Many young Americans yearn to make some impact on the political process, but lack the information or access to do so effectively as individuals.

Over the past year WE LEAD has met these needs for an increasingly sizeable group of women (mostly but not exclusively) under age 40. It has hosted discussion groups, speakers, and provided information on a variety of educational and political events to women who did not have access to such information and who wished to become more connected with the political process. In effect, WE LEAD put a personalized face on political and civic involvement by providing the opportunity for women to find fellowship with other women with similar interests.

As part of its evolution, this group fashioned a novel approach to raising small contributions that they believed would best allow them as individuals to exercise some degree of impact on the 2004 presidential election campaign. This fund-raising proposal both encourages the small contributions that Campaign Finance Reform law was meant to foster and provides a vehicle for sustaining increased political participation through the educational and social dimensions of WE LEAD.

While the Commission has expressed concerns about the legality of this effort to raise small dollar contributions, perhaps the Commissioners could advise WE LEAD how to alter their proposal so as to conform with the "letter" as well as the "spirit" of the law. Such guidance would prevent the undesirable outcome of creating further disillusionment among the women who have expended so much effort in an attempt to energize the 2004 presidential selection process and to encourage small donors to involve themselves in that process. I appreciate your consideration of my comments.

Sincerely,

Shelley Tomkin, Ph.D.