



Theron or Diane Snell <tsnell@wi.rr.com> on 04/06/2004 09:41:19 PM

To: politicalcommitteestatus@fec.gov
cc:

Subject: Ms. Mai T. Dinh

Ms. Mai T. Dinh
Acting Assistant General Council

Attached to this e-mail (in WORD) please find a copy of a memorandum passed by the Racine (WI) Coalition for Peace And Justice opposing the FEC's proposed rule changes affecting some 501 and 527 groups.

For our Statement of Purpose and a list of our activities, please see our web site at: <http://www.rcpj.org> We meet the first and third Tuesdays of each month at the Cesar Chavez Community Center, 2221 Douglas Ave. in Racine, WI.

For the RCPJ, I am:

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Ms. Mai T. Dinh
Acting Assistant General Council
Federal Elections Commission

FROM: Racine Coalition for Peace and Justice

DATE: 6 April 2004

RE: Proposed rule changes for Federal Political Committees

The Racine Coalition For Peace and Justice (RCPJ) strongly opposes the proposed rule changes affecting the classification of some 501 and 527 groups as political committees. Although there are many reasons why these proposals damage the electoral process, the RCPJ sees them as a fundamental threat to how politics should be done. Not only are these changes NOT supported in law (The McCain-Feingold campaign reform law does not require these changes), they actually strike at the heart of the electoral process itself. It would directly affect our mission of educating the public and providing alternative points of view in that process.

The McCain-Feingold Law solely regulates how candidates use so-called soft-money contributions and bans organized political parties who are running specific candidates from using such funds. The law attempts to free public discourse by removing the price-tag for access. It does NOT impinge upon the rights of non-profit advocacy groups from raising money and presenting ideas and issues to the public. It SHOULD not affect any group's right to mention specific candidates or incumbent officials involved in decision-making about issues around which each non-profit group is organized.

A close look at the proposed rules also reveals that these rules are affronts to public speech in two ways. First, these rules affect all communications: ads, mailings, leaflets and even knocking on doors. Thus, these rules would severely limit discussion of and even the raising of specific issues and facts important for any meaningful democratic electoral process if those issues involve real people making real decisions. This cuts at the heart of our political system, a system that requires an informed electorate. An informed electorate needs to know who made what decisions and how those decisions were made.

Secondly, these rules are retroactive. The proposals would punish people since the year 2000 for all forms of public speech and discussion of issues. This essentially criminalizes free speech by putting a retroactive price-tag on it. Obviously this affect is the last thing the McCain-Feingold Law was designed to create.

Finally, this is neither a liberal-conservative issue nor a Republican-Democratic issue. This matter stands at the heart of the political process involving all points of view. After all, no political party, no one candidate, has a lock on the heart of any given non-profit advocacy group. The public, bombarded with sound-bites, cannot be aware of the complexities of all issues. 501 (c)(3 and 4) and 527 organizations bring increased awareness and increased information to the public. Only those who wish to hide information or stifle thoughtful debate can benefit from using monetary regulations to block discussion from the public arena.