



Staci Hedlund <sdhedlund@houston.rr.com> on 03/31/2004 09:54:04 AM

Please respond to sdhedlund@houston.rr.com

To: politicalcommitteestatus@fec.gov
cc:

Subject: Political Committee Status

12735 Regal Pine Lane
Houston,
Texas 77070

sdhedlund@houston.rr.com
31 March 2004

Mai T. Dinh
Acting Assistant General Counsel
Federal Election Committee

Dear Ms. Dinh,

Regarding the proposed changes in rules governing non-profit and public interest organizations, I am alarmed at the attempt to stifle the voices of Americans. Arguably, the most important work in this country is done by people who are not working for profit, but for the advancement of a cause- education, cancer research, poverty relief, religion-and their voices should be heard without fear of penalty.

This democracy feels less free every day and I am wondering why. As it stands, grieving families cannot see television footage of their loved ones arriving at Dover Air Force Base and protesters must be located in free speech zones during presidential visits. I am worried.

Nothing in the McCain-Feingold campaign reform law or the Supreme Court's decision upholding it provides any basis for these rules. That law is only about banning federal candidates from using unregulated contributions, and banning political parties from doing so, because of their close relationship to those candidates. It's clear that, with one exception relating to running broadcast ads close to an election, the new law wasn't supposed to change what independent nonprofit interest groups can do, including political organizations (527's) that have never before been subject to regulation by the FEC.

In the McConnell opinion upholding McCain-Feingold, the U.S. Supreme Court clearly stated that the law's limits on unregulated corporate, union and large individual contributions apply to political parties and not interest groups. Congress specifically considered regulating 527 organizations three times in the last several years-twice through the Internal Revenue Code and once during the BCRA debate-and did not subject them to McCain-Feingold.

The proposed changes would impoverish political debate and could act as a de facto gag rule on public policy advocacy. They would insulate public officials from substantive criticism for their positions on policy issues. They would actually diminish civic participation in government rather than strengthen it. This would be exactly the opposite result intended by most supporters of campaign finance reform.

The proposed rules are motivated by the desire to silence criticism of a vulnerable administration. As a citizen, I object to the reduction of my rights in order to shield any president from criticism of a job poorly done. Americans have the inalienable right to critique their government. The history of that right distinguishes our nation from the one we are occupying. Hypocrisy is not becoming of us.

With deep regard for civil liberty,

Staci L. Dixon Hedlund

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- Citizen's Statement.doc

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