



Kettle Range

CONSERVATION GROUP

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FEDERAL ELECTION
COMMISSION
OFFICE OF GENERAL
COUNSEL

3/24/2004

2004 MAR 30 A 10:09

Federal Election Commission
999 E. St., NW
Washington, DC 20463

RE: FEC's proposed rules to redefine non-profits

Dear Federal Election Commission,

On behalf of the over 800 members of Kettle Range Conservation Group, we strongly oppose the potential redefining of 501(c)(3) non-profits as political committees.

The Kettle Range Conservation Group is a non-profit, environmental organization with the mission to defend wilderness, protect biodiversity, and restore ecosystems of the Columbia River Basin. Our group in no way meets the current definition of a political committee, as our purpose is clearly not to elect federal candidates to office.

The proposed regulations change to reclassify 501(c)(3)'s that oppose or attack a federal candidate or elected official would be a blatant violation of the First Amendment: "...abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press..." Our "free exercise" of speech includes our right to criticize the policies of any candidate or elected official and is guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States. We find it outrageous that the FEC wants to prohibit 501(c)(3) non-profits from public communications that oppose or attack a candidate or publicly elected official.

Political activity is not the major purpose of our organization, and our communications with the public bear this out. The funding we receive from foundations, corporations and individuals to support our mission are a matter of public record. The funding raised by the Kettle Range Conservation Group goes directly to support our programs to protect federal and state roadless areas as wilderness and to protect critical habitat of endangered species. Our comments concerning the viewpoints of any federal candidate or elected official are clearly to support our goals and remain our civil right.

The Kettle Range Conservation Group resolutely opposes the FEC's proposed rules change regarding political committees as they will adversely affect 501(c)(3) non-profits advocacy of non-political issues.

Thank you for your kind consideration of this very important issue.

Sincerely,
Steve Anthes, Vice President, Board of Directors
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www.kettlerange.org

