

April 1, 2004

Federal Elections Committee
999 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20463

RECEIVED
FEDERAL ELECTIONS
COMMISSION
OFFICE OF GENERAL
COUNSEL

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Madame/Sir

The proposed rules re political action committees should not be given the time of day, coming as they do in the midst of an election. If these proposals must be given serious consideration, they should be dismissed as a tactic intended to silence any group that criticizes a federally elected official. Such gagging rules would do serious harm to the freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution.

The FEC was created to ensure fairness. Any schoolchild knows that it's unfair to change the rules in the middle of the game. In multiple laws and regulations the government has allowed time to implement a new regulation, witness past and current industrial pollution cleanup as well as requirements that the auto industry meet safety and pollution standards. We don't punitively fine industry for past failures; neither should we destroy small organizations with a "look back" rule. To ensure the fairness of new election rules and avoid any appearance of impropriety, no change should be contemplated now.

Elected officials and those appointed by them may appear to have it in their own personal best interest to silence all who would criticize them, and thus gain re-election unopposed. However, no official remains in office forever. Anyone who might seem to benefit from these rules in the short term would do insufferable harm to his own ability to have input in the future. In addition, any official who is re-elected after avoiding virtually all criticism, especially from local groups, would lose any vestige of respect.

We know our rights. Many of us sit by complacently in the sure knowledge that our government is there to protect those rights. Committees such as the FEC have thus been given a tremendous responsibility. It is up to you to prevent such a loss of free speech as would change how we define ourselves and our country. The United States promotes free elections in other countries. Would we do less at home?

I urge you to dismiss these proposed rules out of hand, or to at least postpone any consideration of them until after the November elections. It is in our best interest to promote the existence and work of our tax-exempt organizations. As you consider election reform, act without prejudice to any person or party. Do nothing that would undermine the Constitution.

Sincerely,



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