



TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL | USA

Transparency International – USA Calls for Full Disclosure of Sources of Political Spending in the U.S. to Combat Corruption by Elected Officials

Anti-Corruption Watchdog Urges Additional Reforms for Elections and Conduct of Elected Officials in New Statement Urging Bi-Partisan Action

Washington D.C., 22 April 2015 - Warning that United States political institutions are at risk of corrosion, Transparency International – USA is calling for the full and timely disclosure of the original funding sources of PACs and Super-PACs. In a new statement released today, the non-partisan civil society organization urged bipartisan action on this and other fronts to support U.S. elected officials in acting transparently and in the public interest.

Claudia Dumas, President and CEO of TI-USA, stated, “As a non-governmental organization dedicated to integrity, transparency and combating corruption, we believe it is important we add our voice to the debate in the U.S. about spending on elections, a debate which has been linked to concerns about corruption and the appearance of corruption. We believe that full, timely and even-handed disclosure of the original funding sources of PACs and Super-PACs facilitates public debate and reduces the risk of corruption. Citizens can assess the strength of arguments for or against a candidate when they know the identity of the persons making the case. Importantly, the reforms we are calling for can be enacted now.”

TI-USA’s new paper contains ten recommendations to promote transparency and integrity by elected officials at the federal, state and local levels. In addition to calling for full disclosure of independent expenditures advocating the election of candidates such as PACs and Super-PACs, the paper urges the development of effective rules to ensure that independent political spending is not coordinated with a candidate’s campaign committee.

The statement includes specific provisions regarding judges, who are elected in some states. It urges especially close scrutiny and full disclosure of spending in connection with the election of judges, selection systems that emphasize merit, and that judges be required to recuse themselves from cases in which one of the parties was a significant election supporter.

Asset and outside income disclosures by elected officials are also recommended, as are stronger and more uniform laws and regulations restricting the size and requiring the disclosure of personal gifts. Such gift laws might have prohibited the acts engaged in by Virginia Governor Bob McDonnell, convicted on corruption charges in 2014 in a highly publicized trial.

Recognizing that federal law is frequently used to prosecute state and local as well as federal officials, the statement also calls on Congress to pass an amendment to federal law to prohibit undisclosed “self-dealing” by public officials, and setting forth TI-USA’s recommendation for an

approach that should withstand Constitutional scrutiny. In a 2010 case involving former Enron Corporation chief executive Jeffrey Skilling, the Supreme Court ruled that the so-called “honest services” statute was unconstitutionally vague and only applies to bribes and kickbacks.

The paper also includes recommendations regarding the Federal Election Commission and internal governance practices by corporations and unions regarding their electoral advocacy.

Added Dumas, “These recommendations do not address every issue. For example, many strongly support a Constitutional amendment to overturn Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission, while others strongly oppose such an amendment. As a result, any Constitutional change would be controversial and slow to emerge. We hope these recommendations can contribute to discussion and early bi-partisan action. The integrity of America’s political institutions matters both to American citizens and to America’s ability to play a credible role on the world stage regarding transparency and combating corruption”.

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