



Mi Familia Vota Education Fund Testimony- SOS Rules Hearing, 12.15.11

Hello, my name is Grace López Ramírez. I am a Colorado native and currently live in Northwest Denver. I am here to make comments on the proposed campaign finance rules on behalf of Mi Familia Vota Education Fund.

Our non-partisan and non-profit organization works within the Hispanic community to educate voters on issues that affect our families and to promote civic participation of the community. One specific focus of our work is with new American citizens. We conduct voter registration for new citizens at naturalization ceremonies and maintain contact with these new voters through Election Day.

Often we hear from these voters that they don't trust the system. They come from countries where governments are notoriously corrupt, where corporate interests rule and where their votes don't count. They know that when corporate interests control the political system, they feel less engaged and powerless, inevitably discouraging them from voting. And voting is the key to any democracy.

We believe that an open, public and transparent system that links campaigns and those that finance them in an easy to digest way allows voters to be better informed and make more educated choices. And they are more likely to turn out to vote.

Frankly, when campaigns can hide who is donating to them it is impossible for the average voter to recognize who or what is pushing their agenda.

At Mi Familia Vota, we work to turn out Latino and naturalized citizen voters on ballot initiatives and consider it vital for our community to know who is sending them mail, calling, or buying TV and radio ads for these issues. We have heard voters say repeatedly that they want more transparency, not less. Because when voters think there is a hidden agenda or corruption in the system they are dissuaded from participating because they have no faith that the elections will be fair. And fair elections are when everyone has an equal voice.

The Secretary of State's office has proposed regulations to change the definition of "political committee" to limit the number of entities that would be reporting their contribution and expenditure activity by superimposing a 50% floor to define "major purpose." This test is not authorized by the Constitution, and it is not necessary. We urge you to delete this test as part of the "political committee" definition.

The Colorado Constitution does not impose a "major purpose" test for political committees. In only one case has this been an issue, and there the federal court refused to require an entity to adhere to political committee registration and reporting requirements because, on an as applied basis, the entity simply did not engage in enough political activity to warrant such treatment. The legislature, which has broader policy making authority than does the Secretary of State, has not seen fit to impose such a test. Your office cannot create the test and then make the policy decision about what does and does not meet that standard.

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This test is unneeded. Through four election cycles since the passage of Amendment 27, many committees have registered and reported without incident. There has been

little question about the need to comply with the law when an entity accepts money and spends it for the purpose of expressly advocating, or simply donating to, candidates for state and local office. Your test will only limit the number of reporting entities, meaning that disclosure of money in politics will be watered down. And when there is less public awareness of the sources of campaign funds, the opportunity for corruption in government is at its greatest.

Therefore we ask you to please delete Proposed Rule 1.18.2 from your enacted regulations.

Thank you.