



May 8, 2007

Dear Representative:

We are writing to urge you to support disclosure of federal grassroots lobbying expenditures in the upcoming reforms of the Lobbying Disclosure Act (LDA). Disclosure of the funding sources, particularly behind big money grassroots lobbying campaigns, is a critical element in rooting out corruption and establishing a system that creates public trust. Systems to promote trust in government are precisely what Americans voted for in the last election.

Don't be fooled by misinformation!

There are a number of legislative proposals floating to require disclosing of grassroots lobbying. None of them impose reporting requirements on individual citizens, and most aim at those entities spending significant amounts of money. For example, Rep. Meehan's proposal (H.R. 2093) limits disclosure requirements to for-hire "grassroots lobbying firms," not citizen organizations. And only those for-hire firms paid more than \$100,000 in a quarter to conduct legislative campaigns on federal legislation would have to register or report.

However, opponents of disclosure have inaccurately claimed that even the scaled-back version proposed by Rep. Meehan would burden citizen organizations. This is just not true, as a quick look at the bill's provisions will show you.

Disclosure by for-hire firms will not silence citizen organizations.

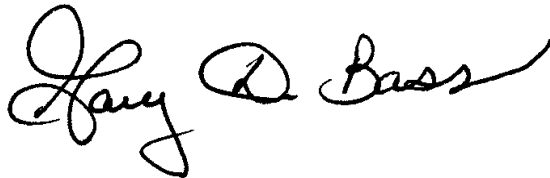
Even a bill reaching beyond the for-hire grassroots lobbying firms would not restrict direct or grassroots lobbying in any way. Charities have been required to report information about grassroots lobbying expenditures to the Internal Revenue Service for more than 30 years, and that has not silenced our voice. Labor unions are also required to report similar information to the Department of Labor. Fairness and the public's confidence in an open government require that the large sums of money being spent on grassroots lobbying by all entities – for-profit firms and nonprofit organizations – also are disclosed.

Grassroots disclosure has been successful at the state level.

While 23 states empower their citizens with information about the entities funding grassroots lobbying campaigns, the federal government so far has not. Our nation would be better served by disclosure of the role money plays in influencing legislative outcomes. For this reason, disclosure of high dollar grassroots lobbying campaigns will help to strengthen our democracy and in no way violates First Amendment rights to petition or lobby our government.

OMB Watch strongly urges you to support disclosure of grassroots lobbying expenditures when the House considers lobbying and ethical reforms.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary D. Bass". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "G" and a distinct "D" before the last name.

Gary D. Bass
Executive Director

Promoting Government Accountability

1742 Connecticut Ave NW
Washington, DC 20009

* tel: 202.234.8494
* fax: 202.234.8584

email: ombwatch@ombwatch.org
web: <http://www.ombwatch.org>