



March 8, 2006

Ensure Coalition and Grassroots Disclosure Provisions Remain Intact!

Dear Senator:

OMB Watch strongly urges you to **support the Coalition and Grassroots Lobbying Disclosure Provisions** currently within S. 2349, the Legislative Transparency and Accountability Act, currently being debated on the Senate floor, and asks that you **oppose any attempts to strike these important provisions.**

We believe the disclosure of grassroots lobbying expenditures is necessary to ensure a level playing field for all nonprofits. While the legislation does not restrict direct or grassroots lobbying by any organization, it does provide an opportunity to level the current uneven playing field, where wealthy interests spend enormous sums on paid mass communications aimed at lawmakers.

Many of these "Astroturf" campaigns are carried out under appealing names that mask the corporate interests behind them. Successful reforms would change this dynamic, giving the public information about who is funding advertising campaigns during legislative debates.

Many, many forces are opposing this type of meaningful reform. Some organizations are claiming that requiring disclosure of grassroots lobbying expenditures will be burdensome or unfairly limit mom-and-pop groups from petitioning the government.

That is simply incorrect. Disclosure will allow the public to get a better understanding of the money involved in the political process – who is spending it and who are the targets in Congress. It will help uncover "Astroturf" lobbying funded by powerful industry interests. While charities currently file reports on their grassroots lobbying to the IRS, neither industry nor their lobbyists do so. Unscrupulous interests are thus able to misrepresent themselves to both the public and to elected officials.

Additionally, when faced with opposition from front groups, nonprofits have to work even harder to have their voice heard. Most nonprofits do not have extra dollars to spend on advocacy efforts, while these industry-funded groups can pay protesters or help fund campaigns.

Please help level the playing field and make sure these important provisions remain intact.

For these reasons, OMB Watch encourages you to oppose any attempts to strike the important coalition and grassroots lobbying disclosure provisions. If you have any questions, please call Jennifer Lowe-Davis at 202-234-8494.

Sincerely,

Gary D. Bass
Executive Director

