

## **Political Groups Challenged for Violating Disclosure Laws in 2014 New Hampshire State Elections**

*Watchdog group files complaint with New Hampshire Attorney General over non-disclosure of political spending by out-of-state special interest groups, both conservative and liberal*

CONCORD, NH – The Coalition for Open Democracy, a New Hampshire nonpartisan group founded by Doris “Granny D” Haddock, has filed a formal complaint with the New Hampshire Attorney General asserting that two well-known organizations based in the Washington, D.C. area failed to comply with multiple provisions of NH’s campaign finance law requiring transparency in their political spending to influence 2014 elections.

In its complaint, filed Oct. 24, 2014, Open Democracy submitted evidence that Americans For Prosperity (AFP) and the National Education Association (NEA) Advocacy Fund made electioneering expenditures to elect or defeat candidates in the 2014 elections but failed to properly disclose those activities at all, in the case of AFP, and failed to disclose those activities within in the stipulated time period, in the case of NEA, as required by state law.

Asserting the voters’ legal right to know who is paying for their elections under RSA 664, the group urged the Attorney General to obtain full and immediate disclosure of all covered campaign expenditures made by both organizations before next Tuesday’s polling.

“The evidence clearly shows that these two groups, and possibly many others, have failed to comply with at least four provisions of RSA 664,” said Gordon Allen, board co-chair of Open Democracy. “In so doing, they have withheld important public information from New Hampshire citizens who are already disgusted by the millions of dollars being spent by outside groups in this election.”

In the complaint, Open Democracy charged that Americans For Prosperity failed to register as a “political advocacy committee” and failed to file campaign finance reports with the NH Secretary of State, in spite of engaging in direct electioneering activities in state races. Evidence of AFP’s electoral spending in multiple races was obtained by Open Democracy and presented to the Attorney General for further investigation.

The complaint further charged that the NEA Advocacy Fund was late in registering as a “political committee” with the NH Secretary of State, as required by law, and failed to file campaign finance reports in a timely manner. Open Democracy also presented evidence of NEA Advocacy Fund’s political expenditures in statewide races.

“Unaccountable, undisclosed spending by outside special interests may be the new normal in federal elections, thanks to the Supreme Court’s Citizens United ruling, but New Hampshire is committed to stopping secret spending in state races while protecting free speech rights,” said Daniel Weeks, Executive Director of Open Democracy, referring to the SB 120 legislation adopted by bipartisan majorities of the New Hampshire House and Senate earlier in the year to bring “independent” electioneering spending to light in state elections.

Similar disclosure requirements have been passed by several states and endorsed by the Supreme Court, but failed to win the necessary bipartisan support in Congress. As a result, the Center for Responsive Politics reports that over \$100 million was spent by “dark money” groups that don’t disclose their donors in federal mid-term races as of October 8th.

“We cannot allow special interest groups on either side of the aisle to flaunt state law and seek to influence our elections in secret,” said Weeks. “Public trust in government and the democratic process is at stake.”

In addition to the two major violations outlined above, Open Democracy is monitoring multiple lesser violations of RSA 664 by organizations filing incomplete or unsigned reports of electioneering expenditures, as well as other campaign finance irregularities by candidates and committees.

The group will report those violations and recommendations for reform as part of its first “Open Democracy Index” for New Hampshire after the election.

##