

Testimony on Substitute Senate Bill 214, Electioneering Communications

Before the Ohio House State Government Committee

The Honorable Jim Carmichael, Chair

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My name is Catherine Turcer and I am the legislative director for Ohio Citizen Action. Founded in 1975, Ohio Citizen Action is a non-profit, non-partisan organization with 100,000 dues-paying members. The Ohio Citizen Action Education Fund has been producing money and politics studies since 1994. I am the author of a number of money and politics studies including the Run for the Money and 2002 Contributions to Candidates for Justice of the Ohio Supreme Court. I also serve on the Chief Justice's Disclosure Working Group and the Voter Guide and Public Financing Committee.

Ohio Citizen Action has been a strong advocate for full disclosure so that Ohioans can see the economic and policy interests behind the dollars. Timely disclosure of political dollars is the most effective way to keep voters informed, and therefore more active. Strong disclosure improves accountability and reduces corruption.

The Ohio Senate State and Local Government and Veterans Affairs made some improvements to Senate Bill 214. They added a disclaimer requirement for political television advertising and the substitute bill now includes a definition for "person" that bans contributions to electioneering communication from for-profit corporate and union revenues.

Substitute Senate Bill 214 will become a much stronger disclosure bill if it is amended so that employer identification is required of contributors. Full disclosure must include the name of the employer, as well as the name and address, so that Ohioans can track the economic and policy interests of contributors. Voters need this

information so that they can understand who is trying to influence the election. True disclosure is meaningful and Ohioans need employer identification so that we can make sense of a long list of contributors. Good disclosure is timely and research to determine contributors' employers takes a great deal of time. The absence of this essential information may mean that disclosure only provides historical context, not substantive information during the election.

During the 2002 election cycle, there were 31 contributions from Charles Smith with 10 different addresses. The Charles Smith who works for Sifco Industries likely has different economic and policy interests than the Charles Smith who works for the Perrysburg Medical Eye Clinic. Addresses do provide some information but many contributors use multiple addresses, usually home and work. David Brennan, the top contributor to Ohio candidates and political parties during the past few election cycles, lists three different addresses.

Employer identification for political committees in Senate Bill 214 would mirror Ohio law that requires employer identification for contributions to candidate committees.

Employer identification was determined to be constitutional in *Frank v. City of Akron* and attached you will find legal opinions by the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law and the National Voting Rights Institute in Boston on constitutionality of employer identification. Attached you will also find recent editorials calling for full disclosure, including employer identification.

Thank you very much for your time.