



February 25, 2019

Dear Representative:

On behalf of National Taxpayers Union (NTU), the nation's oldest taxpayer advocate organization, I write to express our opposition to H.R. 1, the "For the People Act of 2019." Though its intention is to increase election transparency, H.R. 1 is far from transparent: it is an unreasonable and potentially unconstitutional federal hijacking of the American electoral system. Its enactment would stifle free speech, force taxpayers to subsidize public elections, and severely threaten the viability of 501(c)(4) tax-exempt organizations. We urge you to stand with taxpayers and oppose this haphazardly designed legislation.

The cornerstone of our democracy is the promise of free and fair elections, coupled with the unabridged freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution. NTU strongly believes these pillars are essential to ensuring the United States remains free and prosperous. However, H.R. 1 fails to address the underlying problems in our election system and instead uses the heavy hand of the federal government to control most aspects of the election process, which are properly under the jurisdiction of state governments. Our founders were wary of large-scale federal involvement, which led to the decentralized federalist system that exists today.

As a nonpartisan 501(c)(4) advocacy organization, NTU would be particularly disadvantaged by this proposed system's heavy-handed regulations. Chief among our concerns is the requirement to divulge the names and addresses of many individuals who freely choose to support our organization. Their information would be held forever in a publicly available government database. Taxpayers, and indeed all Americans have a constitutionally guaranteed right to privacy, and a violation of this sacred right could suppress political speech. Ironically, H.R. 1 justifies many of our supporters' fears about political retaliation if their membership details were to be divulged simply based on the groups they choose to support.

H.R. 1 would also force taxpayers to finance the political campaigns of Congressional candidates and those running for the presidency. Taxpayers would provide a 6-to-1 contribution match to every participating campaign, meaning for each dollar a candidate raises from donations, taxpayers would match it six times over. However, the maximum donation that could be matched would be capped at \$200. Under this system, candidates outside the mainstream on the far right and far left could be given large sums of money to appeal to fringe groups of voters. The cost of this venture has not yet been estimated, but it is likely to be a significant new expense for which taxpayers will foot the bill.

H.R. 1 also features a slew of similarly ill-devised provisions that will leave taxpayers' heads spinning. Anyone who provides "political counseling services" would be required to register as a federal lobbyist. Any American exercising their right to express their views on particular legislation could face new burdensome regulations. This system is hardly fair. Further, H.R. 1 includes language that requires social media companies to disclose

the source of money for political ads ran on their platforms, as well as the cost to run such ads. This is a new standard that advertisements on traditional platforms, such as television and radio, do not have to meet.

While we oppose the underlying bill, NTU does support a provision that would stop members of Congress from using taxpayer money to settle sexual harassment or discrimination cases. NTU also supports the “No Pensions for Corrupt Politicians Act,” which unfortunately was not included in the ethics reform section of H.R.1. This legislation would update current law to immediately halt any federal pension payment to a former member of Congress following a lawful conviction. We urge Congress to pass these pro-taxpayer provisions as separate, standalone legislation.

Despite its compelling “For the People” title, H.R. 1 would greatly harm the ability of taxpayers to freely write, promote, and organize to advocate for better government. This legislation would be more appropriately named the “For the Election Lawyers and Consultants Act,” as they will be see the largest financial windfall should this bill be enacted into law. We strongly urge Members of Congress to oppose H.R. 1.

Sincerely,

Brandon Arnold
Executive Vice President