

# Putting the First Amendment First

## Conservative Coalition Opposes “527” Bill

Dear Member of Congress:

**The undersigned groups and individuals strongly oppose H.R. 513**, which would force virtually all 527 groups to become political action committees (PACs). A bill essentially identical to this has been introduced as S. 1053 in the Senate.

All of the undersigned groups and individuals believe strongly in the free, unfettered expression of ideas and the right of association enshrined by the Constitution. It is precisely these First Amendment freedoms that this horrendous proposal threatens.

Many of the undersigned groups publish ratings of Congress and may score a vote on these two bills.

Legislation that forces 527 groups to become PACs will severely hamper the ability of average citizens to join together and speak out about issues both during and beyond election seasons. Millions of Americans belong to groups whose speech will be suppressed by this bill.

H.R. 513 goes far beyond the electioneering communications restrictions contained in the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act passed in 2002. That law only banned TV and radio ads by most groups if the ads mention the name of a candidate within 60 days of a November election, while exempting PACs.

This new bill would ban any communication over \$1,000 at any time by any method by any 527 group unless it became a PAC.

Passage of such a bill will divert money donated to 527s to other nonprofit organizations, such as social welfare groups, business associations and labor unions, where the donations and expenditures on such public communications will not be publicly disclosed. Since 527 groups are currently required by law to make such disclosures, transparency will be lost.

This redirection of donations will almost certainly lead to further free speech restrictions on virtually all other organizations, forcing these groups to have PACs to speak to the public about actions taken by Congress or stands taken by candidates.

Advocates of this bill have yet to identify the problem they hope to correct with this misguided proposal. 527s wield no corruptive influence over parties or candidates, which is the only constitutional justification for restricting free expression.

One of the biggest myths about this bill is that it would “level the playing field,” ending the ability of the wealthy to fund “propaganda.” This is completely false. Wealthy individuals would still be free to say whatever they want whenever they want. The proposal would end only the ability of individuals of lesser means to pool their money to independently speak out on issues.

America needs the First Amendment and the ability of individual citizens to form groups precisely for speech that is controversial. To suppress views of those we dislike will inevitably risk suppression of our own.

We who oppose such a proposal want to continue to freely debate our ideas in the public arena. We want Americans to hear all sides -- and to decide for themselves who's right.

When you were sworn into office, you took an oath to “support this Constitution.” We ask you to faithfully uphold that oath by rejecting H.R. 513, S. 1053, and any other bill that restricts political free speech.

Sincerely,

Pat Toomey  
President, Club for Growth

Paul M. Weyrich  
National Chairman, Coalitions for America

John Berthoud  
President, National Taxpayers Union

Thomas A. Schatz  
President, Council for Citizens Against  
Government Waste

David Keene  
Chairman, American Conservative Union

Grover Norquist  
President, Americans for Tax Reform

Tom McClusky  
Vice President for Government Affairs  
Family Research Council

Matt Kibbe  
CEO and President, FreedomWorks

Phyllis Schlafly  
President and Founder  
Eagle Forum

Rev. Louis P. Sheldon  
Chairman, Traditional Values Coalition

Larry Cirignano  
Executive Director, CatholicVote.org

C. Preston Noell III  
President, Tradition, Family, Property, Inc.

James Bopp, Jr.  
General Counsel, James Madison Center for  
Free Speech

Bradley A. Smith, Professor of Law, Capital  
University Law School, and former Chairman,  
Federal Election Commission

Fred Smith  
President, Competitive Enterprise Institute

Lewis Uhler  
President, National Tax Limitation Committee

Jim Martin  
President, 60 Plus Association

Alvin Williams  
President & CEO, Black America's PAC

Jeffrey Mazzella  
President, Center for Individual Freedom

Jason Wright  
President, Institute for Liberty

William Greene,  
President, RightMarch.com

Kerri Houston  
National Spokesperson, LobbySense.com

Colin Hanna  
President, Let Freedom Ring

Kay Daly  
President, Coalition for a Fair Judiciary

Stephen Baskerville  
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Dan Perrin  
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Peter LaBarbera  
Executive Director, Illinois Family Institute

Richard Falknor  
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George Pieler  
Former Tax Counsel, Senate Finance Committee

Matthew D. Staver  
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Stephen Stone  
President, Renew America

Christine O'Donnell  
President, Catholic Advocacy Network

Joseph Cella, President  
Fidelis

Austin Ruse  
President  
Culture of Life Foundation

John Velleco  
Director of Federal Affairs  
Gun Owners of America

Phillip L. Jauregui  
President, Judicial Action Group

John Stemberger  
President & General Counsel  
Florida Family Policy Council

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Amanda K. Hydro  
Executive Director  
College Republican National Committee