

June 29, 2015

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Over the course of your Presidency, you have proven to be a strong leader in tackling the climate crisis. From the announcement of a new emissions reduction commitment to historic fuel efficiency standards to the EPA's landmark Clean Power Plan, your administration has taken huge steps to protect the health of our families and our communities from the toxic pollution of the fossil fuel industry while growing the American clean energy economy. Now, we urge you to take another step forward to protect our environment *and* protect our democracy by showing the same strong leadership to get big corporate money out of politics.

You have already shown strong leadership on providing more access on who is accessing our government. From releasing White House visitor logs, to creating an ethics hub for lobbying and ethics reports, to posting a database about how the economic stimulus was spent. But continued progress on climate change and efforts to increase openness of our government is hampered by the lack of information on corporate political donations, which are rising in the wake of the Supreme Court's ruling in *Citizens United*.

The very same corporations that pollute our air, water and lands can now pump unlimited sums of money into campaigns without having to disclose the complete amount of spending – trying to buy access and influence in the halls of government. There is no single solution to address the influence of money from big corporations and many of the steps forward do not fall within your authority. But one does, and it could make a difference right now.

We write to urge you to issue an Executive Order requiring full disclosure of political spending by business entities receiving federal government contracts. Such an Executive Order would shine a light on those corporations receiving taxpayer dollars and then turning around and spending resources to influence the very institutions responsible for allocating those dollars.

This action is a reasonable and responsible response that follows in the tradition of transparency that has helped strengthen our democracy. Already more than a dozen states have imposed specific campaign finance disclosure requirements on government contractors. Furthermore, the majority opinion in *Citizens United* described transparency measures as valid responses to concerns about unlimited spending noting that with disclosure “[s]hareholders can determine whether their corporation’s political speech advances the corporation’s interest in making profits, and citizens can see whether elected officials are ‘in the pocket’ of so called moneyed interests.”

Without transparency, the public interest is at risk. Companies may be using money from federal contracts paid with taxpayer dollars to fund campaigns. By requiring disclosure of political spending, which is clearly permitted by *Citizens United*, your administration will enable the questions of influence to be debated and resolved in the public forum.

As you move ahead with important advances to fight climate change, increase fuel efficiency and reduce air pollution, it is especially important that the public know how companies are trying to use money, including taxpayer money, to thwart this progress. The use of political donations is at least as significant an avenue of influence as are the White House meetings and “revolving door” jobs, which you have

already sought to address. It is time to address this major gap in transparency policies, as political donations swell. This is critical information for the American public to consider and an important solution to understanding the influence big polluters have on our democracy. Issuing an Executive Order would be sensible, logical and well within your authority. We urge to you do so as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Michael Brune  
Executive Director  
Sierra Club

Rhea Suh  
President  
Natural Resources Defense Council

Gene Karpinski  
President  
League of Conservation Voters

Erich Pica  
President  
Friends of the Earth

Ken Kimmel  
President  
Union of Concerned Scientists

Jacqueline Savitz  
Vice President, US Oceans  
Oceana

Michael Green  
Executive Director  
Center for Environmental Health

Margie Alt  
Executive Director  
Environment America

Robert Wendelgass  
President  
Clean Water Action