



DECLARATION FOR AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

September 14, 2022

**President Joseph Biden
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500**

Dear President Biden,

We, the undersigned members of the [Declaration for American Democracy](#) (DFAD) coalition, urge you to **take executive action to require the disclosure of political expenditures made by government contractors.**

[Formed in 2018](#), DFAD is now a coalition of more than 250 organizations, including labor, civil rights, environmental, faith, social justice, reproductive rights, and many other types of grassroots community groups. Our member organizations represent **tens of millions of Americans** who are urgently seeking to make the promise of democracy real for all of us.

In an environment where polls show

- [7 in 10 Americans believe](#) America's economy is "rigged to advantage the rich and powerful" and "traditional parties and politicians don't care about people like me,"
- [more than half of Americans](#) "do not have confidence that elections reflect the will of the people," and
- [3 in 5 voters believe](#) "the amount of money that corporations and special interests spend on political campaigns **impacts me and my family,**"

It is long past time for federal action to reduce the power of money in politics.

There is overwhelming, bipartisan popular support for bills protecting our voting rights and democracy, H.R. 5746, the combined the Freedom to Vote Act ([72% of Americans in battleground states](#)) and the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act ([69% of all Americans](#)). But as you know, in recent years **federal legislation to preserve free and fair elections has repeatedly failed to survive a U.S. Senate filibuster.**



Americans across the political spectrum are deeply troubled by the ever greater role big donors have in our political system. This outsized role has been exacerbated by the federal government's failure to take any concrete action to restore common sense safeguards in more than a decade since the Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United v. FEC* gave corporations and others the ability to spend unlimited sums of money to influence elections

The inability of Congress to pass this legislation does not mitigate the need for federal action on money in politics – instead, it deepens the problem of voters believing that our government represents special interests, rather than representing us.

In this particularly perilous time for our country's democracy – as [the same dark money groups](#) that have “spent big” to shape the Supreme Court have also spent millions pushing Trump's Big Lie and funding insurrectionists – **you can help focus public attention on the fact that there are solutions to the corrosion caused by money in politics.** In the absence of Senate action, **we urge you to take a step that is clearly within your own authority, and issue an executive order requiring federal contractors to disclose their political spending, including spending by [their subsidiaries](#) and affiliated organizations.**

Nonpartisan Open Secrets reported that dark money groups poured more than [\\$750 million into 2020 elections](#) through ad spending and record-breaking contributions to political committees, including super PACs.

A recent review showed that PACs associated with just the [10 largest federal contractors spent \\$24.8 million during the 2020 election cycle](#). Those 10 contractors alone received \$213.8 billion in federal money in 2020, almost one third of the \$665 billion received by *all federal contractors* that same year. None of which are required to disclose their political spending.

A 2014 study of 200 corporations with active PACs and lobbyists showed that for every dollar spent influencing politics, the corporations [received \\$760 from the government](#).

Unfortunately, this practice is not new – only the magnitude and specific vehicles for political influence have changed. Our country's history is rife with pay-to-play scandals. But voters across the political spectrum are running out of patience with the unseen manipulation of our government – [83% of Americans support](#) public disclosure of contributions engaged in electoral politics.



Federal vendors' political spending poses significant threats of corruption and cronyism in the contracting process. This is the reason that direct giving by contractors has long been banned. With the advent of secret political spending following the *Citizens United* decision, the need for new disclosure requirements is obvious. The incentives are too great for federal contractors to spend money on elections in exchange for favors with contracts, service deals, leases and more. And even the *appearance* that this could be happening – because the amount of “investment” is hidden from public view – is damaging to our democracy and to the contracting process.

Aside from the risk of corruption, voters simply deserve to understand what companies are trying to influence our politics, and what they want from the government. This Executive Order would provide the public with a picture of the indirect federal campaign spending allowed since *Citizens United* from companies who receive large federal contracts, helping the electorate to make more informed decisions and improving the quality of the contracting process.

In the absence of other federal action to rein in the influence of special interest money, an Executive Order on government contracting would be a modest step toward reform. We urge you to take this opportunity to shine a light on political spending, improve the contracting process, and start the process of reclaiming our “Government by the People.”

Signed,

20/20 Vision DC

American Federation of Teachers

Black Voters Matter Fund

Blue Future

Blue Wave Postcard Movement

Brennan Center

Broward for Progress

Build Back Better USA

Campaign Legal Center

Center for American Progress

Center for Common Ground

Center for Media and Democracy

Center for Media and Democracy

Center for Popular Democracy

Citizen Action of New York



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Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)	Indivisible Illinois Social Action Alliance	Progressive Democrats Of America
Clean Elections Texas	Indivisible Northern Nevada	Project On Government Oversight (POGO)
CNY Solidarity Coalition	Indivisible Santa Fe	Public Citizen
Common Cause	International Corporate Accountability Roundtable (ICAR)	RepresentUs
Communications Workers of America	League of Conservation Voters	Rise Up WV
Daily Kos	League of Women Voters of the United States	Secure Elections Network
DemCast USA	Main Street Alliance	Service Employees International Union
Democracy 21	Maine Citizens for Clean Elections	Sierra Club
Democracy Matters	March On	Sojourners
End Citizens United / Let America Vote Action Fund	Mi Familia Vota	Stand Up America
Faithful America	Michiganders for Fair & Transparent Election	The Workers Circle
Faiths for Safe Water	MoveOn	Transparency International U.S.
Fix Democracy First	National Organization for Women	United Church of Christ Justice and Local Church Ministries
For All	National Voter Corps	UnKoch My Campus
Franciscan Action Network	NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice	URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity
Free Speech For People	Northridge Indivisible	Voices for Progress
Future Coalition	Oregonizers	Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice
Get Money Out - Maryland	Oxfam America	Wolf-PAC
Government Accountability Project	Peace Action	
Greenpeace USA	People For the American Way	
HAZMAT America		
Indivisible		