

Disclosure Messaging from ReThink Media

General

- **In a democracy everyone's voice should be heard.** The Framers of the Constitution and the founders of West Virginia intended to form a government that would be accountable and representative of everyone, not just wealthy donors and special interests. Making your voice heard shouldn't require a price of admission in West Virginia.
- **Our democracy is based on the principle of one person, one vote – not one dollar, one vote.** From telling Congress that money shouldn't drown out the voices of everyday voters to requiring transparency in who is spending money in our state elections, democracy requires us to recognize each other as equal in the political process. Contributing to a candidate's campaign or spending millions on political ads should not give you more access to our government than an everyday voter.

Disclosure

- **Everyone has a right to know:** increased disclosure ensures the public knows who is trying to influence our elections. There are plenty of liberal and conservative organizations, secretive dark money groups, and wealthy billionaires and corporations trying to align our government with their beliefs instead of the people's will. Increased disclosure will allow us to "follow the money" so we know who is supporting the candidates running for office and supporting those nasty TV ads.
- **Our right to know who is influencing our elections is not a partisan issue.** No matter your political beliefs or who you support for president, we all benefit when we know what is going on in the government. Conservative Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia supports increasing transparency and disclosure. In the Citizens United decision he wrote, "Requiring people to stand up in public for their political acts fosters civic courage, without which democracy is doomed."
- **The current state of affairs in West Virginia allows anyone to hide their identity while influencing our elections.** House Bill [or] Senate Bill ____ will shine a light on all groups that spend money influencing West Virginia's elections. Any group that spends more than \$1,000 in West Virginia will have to disclose this information to the Secretary of State. We deserve to know who is trying to influence our votes and persuade our public officials, not be kept in the dark.
- **Secret money has no place in West Virginia.** The U.S. Supreme Court's decision in Citizens United has allowed groups to raise unlimited money to influence elections without revealing where they got the money. Out of state billionaires should not be dictating what happens in our state by anonymously giving secret money groups 6-figure checks for nasty TV ads¹. This is why we need to require any group that spends more than \$1,000 to influence our elections to say where the money came from. West Virginians stand up for what they believe in. We shouldn't allow this lowly form of campaign cowardice to continue.

¹ Or negative consequence like "to keep our wages low"

**Because of big money in politics, how is my issue affected?
What doesn't happen that I want?
What happens that I don't want?**

Draft Script

In a democracy everyone's voice should be heard.

If we want _____[*desired outcome*]_____, we should have a way to express our needs to our government.

The first step to level the playing field is full disclosure of where campaign cash comes from. We deserve to know how much _____[*special interest group*]_____ is spending to tamper with our elections. They shouldn't be able to use secret money and nasty TV ads to _____[*negative result*]_____.

Any group that spends at least \$1,000 in our elections should be required to report where the money came from.

West Virginians stand up for what they believe in. We shouldn't allow this lowly form of campaign cowardice to continue.

Draft Legislator Pitch

If we want _____[*mutually desired outcome*]_____, we must have an electoral system that puts the needs of everyday voters before the interests of _____[*opposing special interest group*]_____.

To ensure this, we need to make sure every secret money group – liberal and conservative – attempting to sway election results has to disclose where the money came from.

We all remember the \$3 million Don Blankenship spent to influence our Supreme Court under the guise of "And For the Sake of the Kids."

The public shouldn't have to rely on a billionaire's arrogance to follow the money. Out-of-state groups and big donors shouldn't be able to legally hide their identity to alter West Virginia's elections.

Will you support _____[*bill number*]_____ to put the voters above the special interest groups?

Desired outcome/Mutually desired outcome: Earn a living wage; Protect workers wages

Special interest group/Opposition: Americans for Prosperity or the Koch Brothers

Negative result/consequence: Keep our wages low; Eliminate prevailing wage; Bust our unions

Desired outcome/Mutually desired outcome: Safe working conditions; Protect our coal miners

Special interest group/Opposition: Coal Association or coal industry

Negative result/consequence: Make our mines less safe

Desired outcome/Mutually desired outcome: Clean water; Healthy environment

Special interest group/Opposition: Coal Association or coal industry

Negative result/consequence: Dump more toxic pollutants into our rivers and streams

Desired outcome/Mutually desired outcome: Programs that support children and families

Special interest group/Opposition: Corporations or something more specific

Negative result/consequence: To avoid paying their fair share of taxes

Desired outcome/Mutually desired outcome: Fair courts; Justice/legal system that works for all of us

Special interest group/Opposition: Citizens Against Lawsuit Abuse

Negative result/consequence: Companies can't be held responsible when their products harm consumers; won't have to fulfill their obligation to injured workers

Key Words and Phrases from Discussion on Secret Money in WV Elections Impacts Us:

How do we turn negatives into positives and link to issues such as protecting the environment, labor/wage issues, access to health care and social services, reproductive justice, voter participation/civic engagement?

- whose money matters?
- who matters?
- do legislator's care?
- whose vote is it?
- does my voice matter?
- no money, no voice?

Similar to the price we pay framework:

When _____ makes a large political contribution/lobbies the legislature (be specific when possible) we pay the price with/by _____.

health
wealth
quality of life
our environment

democracy
participation
oppression
depression

suppression
inequality
truth,
accuracy

WITHOUT DISCLOSURE...

- what we don't know just as important as what we do know
- frustrating to not know who is buying whom
- wading through pudding to find out the information that is disclosed
- hard to get information to voters about candidates
- cynical citizens turn out less to vote
- people feel like voting doesn't matter
- voter misinformation

NEGATIVE CAMPAIGN ADS

...discourage people from running
...limits voter education and
...limits people's access to candidates because they are afraid to speak in public
...diminishes actual issues