



Democracy 21 Endorses Bill Introduced Today by Senator Mark Udall to Repair the Presidential Public Financing System

Statement by Democracy 21 President Fred Wertheimer

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Democracy 21 strongly endorses the legislation introduced today by Senator Mark Udall (D-CO) to repair and modernize the presidential public financing system.

Companion legislation has been introduced in the House by Representatives David Price (D-NC), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) and Walter Jones (R-NC).

Democracy 21 applauds Senator Udall for his important national leadership on fixing the presidential financing system. Similarly, Democracy 21 applauds Representatives Price, Van Hollen and Jones for their important national leadership on repairing the presidential financing system.

The voluntary presidential public financing system worked for the country for more than two decades and was used by almost all of the presidential candidates in both parties to finance their campaigns.

The dramatic growth in the costs of running a presidential campaign, the failure of Congress to modernize the system and the *Citizens United* decision resulted in the breakdown of the presidential system and the need to make it a viable option for candidates again. This need is as great today as it was following the Watergate scandals.

The same elements that corrupted government decisions and officeholders in the Watergate scandals – unlimited contributions, secret money and corporate funds – are now back with a vengeance in our elections with the new campaign finance system created by the *Citizens United* decision.

The legislation introduced today by Senator Udall will create an important new role for average citizens in financing presidential elections by matching smaller contributions with public funds at

a 4 to 1 ration. Millions of citizens making small donations are needed to counter the corrupting influence-money that is flooding our presidential and congressional elections.

Hundreds of millions of dollars in secret contributions, for example, are expected to flow into the 2012 national elections.

Crossroads GPS, a group claiming tax-exempt status as a 501(c)(4) “social welfare” organization, whose overriding purpose is to influence elections, has received 23 contributions of \$1 million or more each (totaling \$67 million) from donors whose identities are secret from the American people.

The Chamber of Commerce is expected to spend \$100 million on the 2012 national elections, while keeping secret the identities of the corporations or individuals financing the expenditures.

The top 50 donors to super PACs have given nearly \$100 million or 63 percent of the total money given to all super PACs so far in this election cycle, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

This includes 32 billionaires who have given contributions ranging from \$50,000 to \$10 million to Restore Our Future, the super PAC run by close political associates of Mitt Romney and whose only purpose is to support Romney’s presidential campaign.

Bundlers are another means for an individual to walk around the candidate contribution limits of \$2,500 per donor by getting credit for providing large, unlimited total amounts to a candidate. This has the same potential impact as if the bundlers gave the unlimited amounts of money from their own pockets.

Mitt Romney, to date, has refused to disclose his bundlers to the American people, but President Obama has and it is not a pretty picture. No doubt, Romney’s bundlers would paint a similar picture if we knew them. The Obama campaign has 117 bundlers, who have each raised \$500,000 or more, and an additional 141 bundlers, who have each raised \$200,000 to \$500,000.

The Watergate scandals showed that unlimited contributions, secret contributions and corporate campaign funds lead to corruption and scandal.

An effective presidential public financing system, by itself, will not get rid of these corrupting funds, but it will provide a counter to influence-seeking money, allow candidates to run for president without being dependent on these funds and restore citizens to a pivotal role in the financing of our presidential elections.

A major national movement will begin next year to reform the nation’s campaign finance laws in the wake of the scandalous and corrupting campaign finance practices of the 2012 elections.

The legislation to fix the presidential public financing system introduced by Senator Udall and Representatives Price, Van Hollen and Jones will be at the forefront of these efforts.