

February 25, 2019

The Honorable Ron Johnson
The Honorable Gary Peters
U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

Dear Chairman Johnson and Ranking Member Peters:

We, the undersigned organizations, urge the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs to favorably report the Presidential Library Donation Reform Act (PLDRA), H.R. 1063, which passed the House of Representatives on February 11. The bipartisan legislation will increase transparency around fundraising for presidential libraries and expose potential conflicts of interest or misconduct.

The PLDRA requires presidential library fundraising entities to submit quarterly reports disclosing the sources and amounts of donations over \$200 to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). NARA will publish these reports in an online database within 30 days of the filing. These provisions will move fundraising efforts out of the shadows and facilitate proper oversight and accountability.

The PLDRA will shed light on when presidential library donations act as a vehicle for private interests to buy presidential pardons or otherwise assert improper influence over the oval office. The current system of voluntary disclosure is insufficient. Most presidential libraries have unverified data, incomplete information, out of date information, or no information at all.

The current legal framework repeatedly has led to problems. Any person or legal entity (including foreign countries) can donate an unlimited amount of secret funds to a presidential library *while the president is still in office*. In 2008 a businessman close to Pres. George W. Bush was caught trading access to administration staff for a \$250,000 library donation. In 2001, Pres. Bill Clinton was accused of trading a pardon of fugitive financier Marc Rich in exchange for a \$450,000 library donation. In 1993, Pres. George H.W. Bush received a \$100,000 library donation after he granted a pardon to the son of a major Texas oil family who had committed bank fraud. There are additional examples.

The bipartisan PLDRA, first introduced in 2001 by Rep. John Duncan (R-TN), co-sponsored in the House this Congress by Reps. Elijah Cummings (D-MD), Mark Meadows (R-NC), and Van Taylor (R-TX), passed the House of Representatives in virtually identical form in the 114th, 115th, and 116th Congresses. We hope the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee will favorably report the legislation and send the message that corruption has no place in our political system.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this further. Please contact Daniel Schuman, policy director, Demand Progress, at 240-237-3930 or Daniel@DemandProgress.org.

Sincerely,

Center for Responsive Politics
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington
Clean Elections Texas
Demand Progress
End Citizens United Action Fund
Government Accountability Project
Government Information Watch
Issue One
National Coalition for History
Poligon Education Fund
Project On Government Oversight
Society of Professional Journalists