

Statement of Tiffany Muller
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A Hearing On S.1, the For the People Act
Senate Rules and Administration Committee
March 24th, 2021

Chairwoman Klobuchar, Ranking Member Blunt, and distinguished members of the Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss S.1, the For the People Act.

I would like to thank Senator Merkley for introducing this bill with Chairwoman Klobuchar and leading the effort in the Senate. I would also thank Senator Schumer for recognizing the grave urgency to pass this bill and designating it “S. 1.”

Finally, I would like to thank the other witnesses participating today, many of whom--like my colleagues Fred Wertheimer and Trevor Potter--have given decades of service on these issues.

My name is Tiffany Muller. I'm the President of End Citizens United//Let America Vote Action Fund. We are dedicated to fighting the biggest threats to the foundation of our democracy: unlimited and undisclosed money in politics and voter suppression.

I'm pleased to be here to represent our 4 million members nationwide. They are regular people in every state across the country. Teachers, nurses, first responders, small business owners, and more who make this country run.

And like too many other Americans, they believe their votes don't matter and their voices aren't heard. And too often, they're right.

The For the People Act can change that. It ensures people - not just the powerful - are the foundation of our democracy.

Americans know that all of the money in politics has led to corruption, and that ultimately, it's not only impacting their own bottom lines, but their lives and the lives of their families.

They know corporate interests and big donors have access and influence they don't. They have seen the impact of a broken Washington firsthand.

Here's how the corruption of our democracy has impacted real people in this country:

- Big Pharma has spent hundreds of millions of dollars on campaign contributions and lobbying since 1990.¹ And it was rewarded with a \$76 billion dollar corporate tax cut.² But drug prices didn't go down for our members - or anyone else - even during this pandemic. In fact almost one out of every 3 Americans quit taking medicine they need because they couldn't afford it.³
- Another example. About 90% of Americans support background checks for all gun sales.⁴ It's not controversial. Yet, even in the face of horrific mass shootings - in malls, at concerts, in schools and places of worship - Congress has been unable to act. The NRA has spent nearly \$130 million in outside money since 2000 and has blocked even the smallest progress.⁵
- We can look at the response to this horrible pandemic. After an initial bipartisan effort to pass early relief, it took over 9 months to allow a vote on much needed additional assistance for American families. The delay was largely caused by corporations demanding special carve outs giving them immunity.⁶

Money in politics has always been a problem, but the magnitude has exploded since the 2010 *Citizens United* decision.

In the twenty years before that decision, there was \$749 million in outside spending on political issues; in the ten years since, that has skyrocketed to \$7.3 billion.⁷ This flood of

¹ "Pharmaceuticals / Health Products," Center for Responsive Politics, available at <https://www.opensecrets.org/industries/indus.php?cycle=All&ind=h04>.

² Americans for Tax Fairness, *Bad Medicine: How GOP Tax Cuts Are Enriching Drug Companies, Leaving Workers & Patients Behind*, April 26, 2018, available at <https://americansfortaxfairness.org/issue/pharma-leaving-workers-patients-behind/>.

³ Kaiser Family Foundation, *Poll: Nearly 1 in 4 Americans Taking Prescription Drugs Say It's Difficult to Afford Their Medicines, including Larger Shares Among Those with Health Issues, with Low Incomes and Nearing Medicare Age*, March 1, 2019, available at <https://www.kff.org/health-costs/press-release/poll-nearly-1-in-4-americans-taking-prescription-drugs-say-its-difficult-to-afford-medicines-including-larger-shares-with-low-incomes/>.

⁴ Tom Kertscher, *90 percent of Americans "support universal background checks" for gun purchases*, PolitiFact, Oct. 3, 2017, available at <https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2017/oct/03/chris-abele/do-90-americans-support-background-checks-all-gun-/>

⁵ "National Rifle Assn," Center for Responsive Politics, available at <https://www.opensecrets.org/orgs/national-rifle-assn/summary?toprecipcycle=2020&contribcycle=2020&lobcycle=2020&outspendcycle=2020&id=d000000082&topnumcycle=A>.

⁶ Eli Rosenberg *et al.*, *Senate stimulus negotiators try to reach deal on whether companies can be sued over virus outbreaks*, Wash. Post, Dec. 8, 2020, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/12/08/stimulus-negotiations-liability-shield/>.

⁷ "Total Outside Spending by Election Cycle, Excluding Party Committees," Center for Responsive Politics, available at https://www.opensecrets.org/outsidespending/cycle_tots.php.

outside dollars has been driven by a handful of wealthy Americans, who often have different priorities than everyone else.⁸

And the amount of dark money is increasing at a dangerous rate, only a quarter of outside spending is fully disclosed.⁹

The American people deserve to know who is trying to influence their vote and their representatives in government.

Not only are these dark money forces preventing progress on important policy issues, but they have launched an assault on the right to vote with an intensity not seen since the Jim Crow era.

In the run up to the 2020 election, dark money groups funded dozens of lawsuits across the country, attempting to disenfranchise millions of Americans.¹⁰

After the election, they spent millions more to spread the “Big Lie” about fraud and that the election had been stolen.¹¹

Now, they are funding an unprecedented attack on voting rights at the state level. *The New York Times* recently reported that dark money groups are driving this strategy because they believe it’s the only way to protect their interests.¹²

This all underscores the urgent need to pass the For the People Act - and to pass it quickly.

The individual elements of this bill work together to take on corruption, hold government accountable, and put the power into the hands of regular Americans.

⁸ Michelle Ye Hee Lee, *Eleven donors have plowed \$1 billion into super PACs since they were created*, Wash. Post, Oct. 26, 2018, available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/eleven-donors-plowed-1-billion-into-super-pacs-since-2010/2018/10/26/31a07510-d70a-11e8-aeb7-ddcad4a0a54e_story.html.

⁹ “*Outside Spending by Disclosure, Excluding Party Committees*,” Center for Responsive Politics, available at <https://www.opensecrets.org/outsidespending/disclosure.php>.

¹⁰ Brian Slodysko and Thomas Beaumont, *Wealthy donors pour millions into fight over mail-in voting*, Associated Press, July 27, 2020, available at <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/wealthy-donors-pour-millions-fight-mail-voting-72002986>.

¹¹ Brian Schwartz, *Dark-money GOP fund funneled millions of dollars to groups that pushed voter fraud claims*, CNBC, Jan. 13, 2021, available at <https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/13/dark-money-gop-fund-funneled-millions-groups-that-pushed-voter-fraud-claims.html>.

¹² Jeremy W. Peters, *In Restricting Early Voting, the Right Sees a New ‘Center of Gravity’*, N.Y. Times, March 19, 2021, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/19/us/politics/republicans-trump-voting-rights.html>.

These are popular, common sense measures to reduce the influence of money in politics, crackdown on corruption in both parties, ensure accurate elections, and protect voting rights.

They will benefit everyone, regardless of their political affiliation. That's why 83% of Americans – including nearly three-fourths of Republicans – want to see the For the People Act signed into law.¹³

Thank you for having this hearing today on this critical bill. I look forward to your questions.

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¹³ Global Strategy Group and ALG Research, *NEW POLL: For the People Act is Popular with Voters*, March 15, 2021, available at <https://endcitizensunited.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/ECU-For-the-People-Act-Matching-Funds-Memo-F03.15.21.pdf>.