

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 5, 2012

0277

Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Genachowski,

We want to express our full support of the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) proposed rule to have broadcast stations make political files publicly available online and we urge you to implement these proposed rule changes as soon as possible. With campaign season in full swing and new Super PACs springing up weekly, the public must have access to information about who is funding these ads.


Currently, broadcast stations are required to make the public inspection file, including the political file regarding campaign ads, available to the public in paper form only. Taking the additional step of having these documents available online would create transparency in a time of increasing campaign-finance secrecy. The information in these files should be available in an online, searchable database, and disclosures should include information about the people and organizations that purchase political advertisements.

With the 2012 election season already underway, citizens have a right to know who is purchasing public airtime to support or oppose candidates. More people rely on TV stations for information than any other medium, making transparency in advertising critically important. However, the creators of campaign ads often hide behind confusing organizational names that do not provide adequate information about who is actually paying for the ads, or worse, can actually mislead the public about the identity or purpose of the advertisement. This problem is compounded by the Citizens United decision and the proliferation of Super PACs. The online posting of information in broadcast stations' political file cannot wait until months after the election; citizens deserve to know who is responsible for funding these advertisements today.

When formulating the final rule, we urge you to take into consideration the comments of broadcasters and do everything possible to find a cost-effective and efficient method for publishing this information online, especially for small- and medium-sized stations.

We urge the FCC to act swiftly and decisively to make the entire public inspection file readily available to the public, by posting the information in an online, searchable database. The contents of the political file must be included, since that information is necessary for the public to know the truth behind who is funding campaign ads. While acting quickly to establish the new rules, we ask that the FCC make every effort to limit the administrative burden to broadcasters. The public files need to be taken out of the file cabinet and moved onto the Internet to ensure that the public has easy access to this information.

Sincerely,



MARTIN HEINRICH
Member of Congress



DAVID CICILLINE
Member of Congress



ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
Member of Congress



RUSS CARNAHAN
Member of Congress



GERRY CONNOLLY
Member of Congress



JOHN OLVER
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EARL BLUMENAUER
Member of Congress



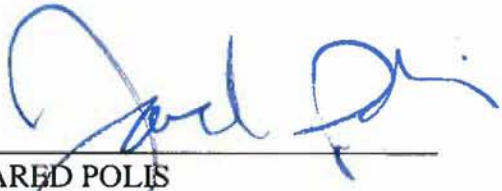
GARY ACKERMAN
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JIM MORAN
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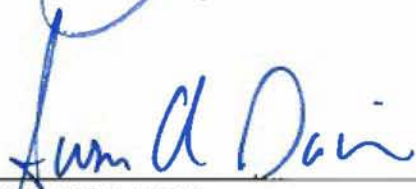
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