

# PassMass Amendment

## FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) (2017) Dark Money

• **Why is this ballot (and its corresponding statehouse bill) initiative important?** This ballot initiative and bill are part of PassMassAmendment's ongoing efforts to end the corrupting influence of corporations and big money in the political process. This proposed law addresses a huge loophole in the current system: Undisclosed donors can hide their identities by contributing to a front group, who is listed as the donor instead. This means that when we see a political ad, for instance, we do not know who is really funding that ad. We don't really know who is trying to shape public opinion nor do we know their real motives.

This loophole makes it easy for foreign entities -- nationals, governments and corporations -- to donate to these front groups, despite this being a violation of federal law. It allows for one source of the staggering influx of "Dark Money" into the political process. We feel that total disclosure of all donations used for any political expenditures should be the law.

**What is Dark Money?** Dark Money is money that comes from unidentified, and often, large moneyed unidentifiable donors, that is used to influence the political process. These donors, and the amounts they donate, are hidden by using methods available to 501(c) groups, SuperPACs, and Limited Liability Companies (LLCs). Although these methods are not always legal, enforcement of existing laws, e.g. by the FEC and the IRS, is weak at best. We can do better by using state law.

**Why is Dark Money a problem?** Jane Mayer writes in her must-read history, *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right*, "as critics had warned, more and more of the money flooding into elections was spent by secretive nonprofit organizations that claimed the right to conceal their donors' identities. Rich activists such as Scaife and the Kochs had already paved the way to weaponize philanthropy. Now they and other allied donors gave what came to be called dark money to nonprofit 'social welfare' groups that claimed the right to spend on elections without disclosing their donors. As a result, the American political system became awash in unlimited, untraceable cash" (2016, p. 228-229).

In other words, it's not just a matter of a few "fat cats" and corporations spending their riches to influence individual politicians. The dark money "machine" is much more sophisticated and complex, operates largely out of sight, and acts as a de facto political party devoted to the enrichment of just a few hundred people!

**Would Citizens United overrule our ballot initiative?** Not likely. Believe it or not, the requirement to disclose funding sources is compatible with Citizens United! The Citizens United decision actually upheld the disclosure rules of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002.

**How can I help?** PassMassAmendment is a totally grassroots, all-volunteer organization that runs on people power. We really need your help to gather signatures and help inform folks of our efforts. Each signature gathered puts added pressure on the legislature to act!

Please help us [gather signatures](#) and, while you're at it, contact your state legislators to support the bill that corresponds to our ballot initiative, [H3559](#), and ask friends and family to do the same. Check out [our other bills](#) as well!

- **Why petition, if you have Legislative Bills in the Statehouse?** Because we have enough experience to know that if we don't continue to build a network of petitioners, that this will never happen. AND because our legislative sponsors (see the list at the website) tell us that it helps them help us to get this to the floor, if the signatures increase.
- **Where can people find petitions?** At the website there is a button for the current locations
- **Can people download a petition form to help petition, sign themselves, and/or get a few of their friends to sign?** Absolutely! Please see [www.PassMassAmendment.org](http://www.PassMassAmendment.org)
- **How to help:**
  - Sign up for our email list - Action Alerts will follow
  - Contact your Legislators - Ask them to endorse PassMassAmendment
  - This is a true Grassroots effort - Volunteer your time. [PassMassAmendment@gmail.com](mailto:PassMassAmendment@gmail.com) 978 808 7173
  - Donate. This is being run on a bare bones budget. No one gets paid - But we need money for printing and office supplies