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From League of Women Voters® of Boulder County

Subject Subject: Money in Politics: What to Watch This Fall !

Campaign Finance Reform Blast

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Money in Politics

This fall we have many issues to track. Spending by Super PACs and other political groups is already reaching record proportions. Hard-to-track money from one nonprofit group is coming into Colorado. The proposed House Appropriations bill carries riders that would make curbing the influence of money in politics drastically more difficult.

This blast continues our series of emails on Money in Politics. As always, please tell your friends to sign up [here](#).

Money Watch – Fall 2017

Elections are coming this fall, and, even though this is an “off-year,” money is moving in anticipation of the 2018 midterm elections. And, influence follows money. Here are some items that will bear watching in the coming months. Be ready to investigate, write letters, make phone calls, and inform the public.

Outside Spending Up – Overall

Outside groups [have spent nearly \\$48 million](#) as of 24 August 2017. That figure is more than double the \$20.7 million the groups spent at this point during the 2016 presidential elections. In the last midterm cycle, they had spent \$18 million at this point in 2014.

According to [OpenSecrets.org](#), Super PACs, which can raise and spend unlimited contributions, contributed \$22.3 million – nearly doubling the \$11.8 million they had spent at this point in 2014.

Politically active nonprofits, including 501(c)4 social welfare organizations and 501(c)6 trade associations, have spent \$7.4 million, nearly four times as much as they did in 2014. These organizations do not disclose their donors.

In Colorado

The [Bradley Foundation](#), a nonprofit organization that has had

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great success in Wisconsin is spending money in Colorado to improve the chances for conservative candidates and to attack teachers' unions.

Beginning last year, the Bradley Foundation gave \$575,000 to five groups in Colorado, according to the [Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#): "One group uses the money to recruit and train conservative activists and candidates while two others (Independence Institute and Steamboat Institute) have the stated goal ['to defund teachers' unions.'](#) "

On the National Scene – Regulations in Peril

As of now, the proposed House Appropriations Bill contains [three riders](#) that would bar federal agencies from enforcing campaign finance laws.

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and the Federal Elections Commission (FEC) would all be affected.

Currently, trade associations are governed by rules that limit how they can solicit money from the employees of their member companies. The draft of the [Financial Services and General Government Appropriations](#) bill includes a rider that would prohibit the FEC from using any of the appropriated funds to enforce trade association PAC-fundraising rules. Trade associations would benefit from a vastly expanded pool of potential donors.

The SEC-related rider would prohibit the SEC from requiring that companies disclose to their stockholders their political contributions or trade association dues.

Also included are provisions that:

- Eliminate the Election Assistance Commission
- Restrict the IRS's ability to enforce the rule against political activity of religious organizations
- Prohibit the IRS from regulating the political activity of 501(c)4 social welfare organizations

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[Done](#)