

June 19, 2012

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Our organizations read with great disappointment the White House's lackluster response to our petition calling on you to nominate new commissioners to the Federal Election Commission (FEC). We went to great effort to garner the signatures necessary for the White House to respond. Given Friday's letter, it is safe to say that the Administration's response was not just disappointing to us, but undoubtedly let down the over 27,000 Americans who joined our call and signed the petition.

After waiting four months, we found your response – delivered after 5:00 p.m. on a Friday evening – uninspiring and uninformative. It offered only vague, generic support for enforcement of our nation's campaign finance laws. Essentially, this tepid response demonstrates that after nearly four years in office, you do not consider fixing the FEC a priority.

Your response indicates that "the Obama Administration is committed to nominating highly qualified individuals to lead the FEC." After three and one half years of your Administration, however, we see little evidence of actual commitment; repeated statements are not a substitute for real action.

We therefore urge you to act immediately to nominate commissioners so that they can be appointed to the FEC at the next congressional recess. Such recess appointments would allow the FEC to function to protect our democracy in this election year.

As repeatedly shown, the FEC is a dysfunctional agency that consistently refuses to enforce federal campaign finance laws enacted to prevent the corruption of federal officeholders and government decisions. Five of the six current commissioners are serving despite expired terms, and three openly flaunt their routine refusal to enforce existing campaign finance laws, even where the FEC's professional staff has called for an investigation. The FEC deserves commissioners who will faithfully enforce existing campaign finance laws and close existing loopholes. But the process of nominating new commissioners begins with you.

During your 2008 presidential campaign, you promised to appoint commissioners committed to enforcing our nation's election laws. With the exception of one unsuccessful attempt in 2009, however, you have failed to nominate anyone to replace any of the five lame duck commissioners. Our petition offered you an opportunity to remind the FEC that taxpayer dollars will pay the salaries only of federal employees who fulfill their responsibilities.

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While reform opponents in Congress certainly are to blame for their stubborn refusal to pass tougher disclosure laws, the national scandal at the FEC is your responsibility to address. The agency will not change until you exercise your executive branch authority to nominate new commissioners. Nominating commissioners based on merit and qualifications may well create conflict with congressional leaders accustomed to choosing commissioners themselves. Given the completely dysfunctional state of the FEC and the enormous damage that has been done to our campaign finance laws, however, this is a fight worth having.

The effort to remake the FEC and restore the enforcement of our campaign finance laws cannot begin until you nominate new commissioners. Our coalition and an overwhelming majority of Americans strongly support your taking this important step on the road to reforming the FEC.

Sincerely,

Americans for Campaign Reform  
Campaign Legal Center  
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington  
Common Cause  
CREDO Action Network  
Democracy 21  
League of Women Voters of the U.S.  
MapLight  
Public Campaign  
Public Citizen  
United Republic  
U.S. PIRG