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Take another look at Taft-Blackwell bill

Greg Coleridge's Dec. 6 letter headlined "Campaign bill shouldn't benefit corporations" was disheartening and contained inaccurate information regarding a comprehensive set of campaign finance reforms that Gov. Bob Taft and I proposed earlier this year. The Taft-Blackwell campaign finance reform measure will greatly expand disclosure in Ohio's political process. Unfortunately, Coleridge got it wrong when he claimed that the bill will "legalize, for the first time in nearly 100 years, direct corporate contributions for 'electioneering communications.'"

Corporations are currently able to influence the political process by secretly contributing unrestricted amounts to issue advocacy groups, organizations that purport to educate voters with so-called issue ads that neither expressly advocate for or against the election of a candidate. Many times, however, ads with a clear point of view and an obvious political message cross the line between issue advocacy and electioneering. The Taft-Blackwell proposal forces disclosure when they air 60 days before an election.

Requiring disclosure of all monies given to fund these ads would allow voters to be fully informed when making their decisions in the ballot booth.

The measure has additional provisions to bring corporate and labor union giving under control and into the light of day. It requires disclosure of all monies given to fund party operating accounts, and it adopts an amendment allowed by the new federal campaign finance law that provides parameters for corporate and labor union giving.

Contrary to Coleridge's assertions, the measure is not an undemocratic piece of legislation. It's just the opposite. The Taft-Blackwell campaign finance reform bill is an intelligent proposal that works to protect the public interest - not by banning or limiting speech, but by revealing who is doing the speaking.

*-J Kenneth Blackwell
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Columbus*