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A screenwriter penned the dialogue “Follow the money,” as an admonition from “Deep Throat” to reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein in “All The President’s Men,” the Hollywood version of events surrounding the burglary at the Watergate Hotel that ultimately resulted in the resignation of President Richard Nixon.

The phrase may be from a movie, but it now symbolizes far more in our country’s culture – transparency in elections, whether choosing candidates or deciding an issue. We have invested the three decades since Watergate in unceasing political debate over how to inform voters about who seeks to influence the outcome of our elections.

In an effort to increase election transparency, my office on August 2 adopted campaign finance rules impacting contributors to small donor committees and political committees. Following testimony received in a June public hearing we adopted the rules in response to lawsuits challenging the validity of Amendment 27, which Colorado voters approved in 2002, and its campaign spending and reporting requirements. Colorado voters charge the Secretary of State with developing rules to administer and enforce these Constitutional changes. The rules clarify that it is the committees’ task to ensure (as the law requires) that donations do not come from foreign nationals or corporations and the types of organizations that must comply.

For some inexplicable reason, the *Denver Post* seems to believe these rules were designed to target unions. Odd, since nowhere in the rules is the word “union” mentioned.

The rules apply to “membership organizations” of any type and define “member” as an individual who “annually pays dues.” Members of any organization paying dues where all or a portion of the dues is transferred to a small donor committee or a political committee, must provide permission in writing for that transfer. And why is that a bad thing? It seems the mechanism provided in the newly adopted rules gives members more of a voice to determine where their dues go. These new rules actually narrow a loophole in the law and provide further openness and transparency.

The rule applies, however, whether the membership is a labor or union organization, commercial trade association, a professional group, or an organization like the Independence Institute. If the organization transfers its members’ dues for a political purpose, the definition applies. Notice must be provided to members, members must agree and the information on those donors must be reported.

It is odd that in an era where Colorado voters are seeking greater knowledge of who is attempting to influence their votes that the *Denver Post* implies that any organization should be exempt from rules that require open reporting.

Although it’s difficult to find the *Post’s* point in its Tuesday editorial, it appears to make a broad-brush assumption that these rules – published and presented in an open public hearing prior to adoption – are nefariously designed to undermine unions.

One must stretch the rules – and the imagination – beyond common sense to make such an assumption, but apparently the *Denver Post* prefers jumping to irrelevant conclusions.

Amendment 27 applies uniformly to corporate and union small donor committees and political committees. Likewise the rules from this office apply uniformly to corporate and union small donor committees.

As Secretary of State, I uphold my oath and defend Amendment 27. We are defending Amendment 27 in court and through rulemaking. My role is to adopt rules to carry out the voter's intent.

Full and timely disclosure of campaign contributions is in the best interests of all Colorado residents, regardless of who makes those donations.

If the *Post* believes unions should be exempt from reporting requirements imposed on all other membership organizations, it should openly advocate such a position instead of disguising its message in pointless name-calling and baseless innuendo.

Colorado voters have repeatedly emphasized that they want to know who is donating to candidates and issue committees in this state. The campaign finance rules adopted by this office implement that intent and nothing more.