

Dear Ms. Gyger and Secretary Gessler,

I am writing to oppose the revised draft proposed CPF rules that were reviewed during a hearing on December 15, 2011. Colorado Progressive Coalition is a grassroots community organization that regularly runs large voter engagement programs and ballot initiative campaigns. We work to empower voters and encourage Colorado's citizens to participate in our democracy. We strive to help create the kind of democracy where every voter has faith in the system and believes that her or his vote counts. It is through this lens and on behalf of our 30,000 members across the state that we oppose this rule.

If adopted, this proposed rule would open the floodgates of corporate election funding in Colorado. The 30% threshold that applies to issue committees will allow corporate interests to spend millions of dollars pushing ballot initiatives in Colorado – millions of dollars that will be undisclosed and untraceable. Democracy works best when those spending money to influence elections can be held accountable. This proposed rule would remove that accountability from Colorado politics. This is not the kind of democracy that should be encouraged. The voters of Colorado deserve to have a democracy where their voices can be heard, not drowned out by out of state special interests and corporations. The proposed 30% threshold will allow corporations and organizations with larger budgets to spend more before they are required to file an issue committee. It is even conceivable that an entity with a very large budget could finance an entire issue campaign without ever having to create an issue committee, thus would never be required to file a single report.

Every election season we knock on thousands of doors and have thousands of conversations with voters. A common thread that we encounter year after year is that voters overwhelmingly want more transparency in how campaigns are financed, not less. Voters as a whole feel more empowered and can make more informed decision about how to vote when they understand how campaigns are being financed and where the money to push ballot initiatives is coming from. This proposed rule takes away power from Colorado citizens and hands it to corporations and well funded special interests. Colorado allows its citizens an extraordinary amount of access to the ballot. Because of the way the ballot initiative process works in Colorado, many important issues that affect the lives of our members are decided through this process. There's too much at stake to allow the process to be given over to corporate interests. The people of Colorado deserve a transparent process and this rule does not allow for that.

We oppose this rule because it will allow special interests and corporations to have unprecedented access to Colorado's elections. The 30% threshold is simply too high of a trigger. It might be more appropriate to set a reasonable dollar amount or lower the percentage of spending allowed before an issue committee must be formed. Adopting this rule in its current form will be a setback to the fair and transparent elections that I know we all want.

Sincerely,
Hillary Jorgensen
Colorado Progressive Coalition