



Hearing Summary

HEARING ON REFORMING THE PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY DONATION DISCLOSURE PROCESS

Rep. Henry A. Waxman

Chairman, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

On Wednesday, February 28, 2007, the Committee held an oversight hearing on the need for public disclosure of donations to presidential libraries. Under current law, private organizations established for the purpose of building a presidential library can raise unlimited amounts of money from undisclosed donors while the president remains in office. Witnesses at the hearing included a representative of the National Archives and two representatives of government watchdog organizations.

The Potential for Corruption.

Presidential library fundraising organizations must raise millions of dollars to build and support the libraries. The George H.W. Bush library was reported to cost more than \$80 million to build. The Clinton library and museum cost about \$165 million to build. News reports have indicated that the fundraising goal for President Bush's library is \$500 million. These fundraising efforts are unrestricted. They can begin long before a president leaves office; there are no limits on how much can be raised from a single source; and there is no requirement that donations to these libraries be disclosed publicly. One witness stated that this system could be more open to corruption than the campaign finance system.

The Need for Transparency.

The witnesses urged reform of this system. They supported legislation that would require that presidential libraries disclose the identity of their donors to Congress and the National Archives during their period of most intense fundraising, which is while the President is in office and in the several years after the end of his term.

A Legislative Remedy.

On March 1, 2007, Reps. Waxman, Duncan, Clay, Platts, and Emanuel formally introduced H.R. 1254, the Presidential Libraries Donation Reform Act of 2007. This legislation was approved by the House of Representatives on March 14, 2007, by a vote of 390-34. The legislation has been approved by the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee and is awaiting Senate action.

Additional information, including Chairman Waxman's statement and copies of testimony, is available at www.oversight.house.gov.