



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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**Senator Feinstein's Effort to Pass
Senate Campaign Electronic Filing Bill
Blocked for Third Time**

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), Chairman of the Rules and Administration Committee, today attempted to move common sense legislation that would require Senate campaign finance reports to be filed electronically. And for the third time this year, the effort was blocked by a Republican Senator.

Senator Feinstein spoke on the Senate floor this afternoon in support of S. 223, and asked for unanimous consent to pass the legislation. However, Senator John Ensign (R-Nev.) objected to the motion.

This electronic filing bill is sponsored by Senators Russ Feingold (D-Wis.) and Thad Cochran (R-Miss.), and is co-sponsored by 39 other Senators, including Senator Feinstein. The Senate Rules Committee approved the legislation on March 28, 2007.

The legislation would require Senate campaign finance reports to be filed electronically, rather than in paper format. Currently, House candidates, Presidential candidates, political action committees and party committees are all required to file electronically. But Senators, Senate candidates and party committees are exempt.

The Senate campaign filing system in place today requires paper copies of disclosure reports to be filed with the Senate Office of Public Records, which scans them to make a digital copy and sends the copy to the Federal Elections Committee (FEC) on a dedicated communications line. The FEC then prints the report and sends it to a vendor in Fredericksburg, Virginia, where the information is keyed in by hand and then transferred back to the FEC database – at cost of approximately \$250,000 annually to taxpayers.

The following is a statement from Senator Feinstein:

"This is a simple, direct bill with respect to transparency. It is an idea whose time has long come. Everybody else does it. So, it is very hard for me to understand who could oppose this and what their reason for opposing it could be.

At our hearing on March 14 and at our mark-up on March 28, it was clear that there was no public opposition to this proposal. I believe it is time for the Senate to act.

The bill is entitled, 'Senate Campaign Disclosure Parity Act.' It is sponsored by Senator Feingold, who sits behind me in this chamber, Senator Cochran, and 39 other Senators.

It would require that Senate campaign finance reports be filed electronically, rather than in paper format.

Currently, House candidates, Presidential candidates, political action committees and party committees are all required to file electronically.

But Senators, Senate candidates, authorized campaign committees and the Democratic and Republican Senatorial Campaign Committees are exempt.

So, we operate separately from everybody else.

Now, is this practical? The answer is no. It is cumbersome. Paper copies of disclosure reports are filed with the Senate Office of Public Records. They scan them. They make an electronic copy and they send the copy to the FEC on a dedicated communications line.

The FEC then prints the report and sends it to a vendor in Fredericksburg, Virginia, where the information is keyed in by hand and then transferred back to the FEC database – at cost of approximately \$250,000 to taxpayers.

Now, of course, during this convoluted period there is no transparency. Therefore, the reports are not available for public scrutiny.

It's long past time to bring the Senate into the modern era and to recognize that transparency is a part of the political process. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me in ensuring timely access and disclosure of campaign finance activities to the public."

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