

NEWS RELEASE

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Bullock, Peterson Join Forces to Shine Light on Dark Money *Governor, Senator Introduce Bi-Partisan TRACE Act*

HELENA – Governor Steve Bullock and Senator Jim Peterson (R – Buffalo) today announced that they are working together to pass comprehensive campaign finance reform to take the dark money that has infiltrated Montana elections in recent years out of the shadows.

At a press conference in the Governors' Office, Bullock and Peterson introduced the Transparency, Reporting and Accountability in Campaigns and Elections (TRACE) Act.

As attorney general, Bullock led the effort to preserve Montana's 100-year-old Corrupt Practices Act, taking the case for the state's citizen democracy all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. His office defended Montana's campaign finance limits and disclosure laws against a wave of lawsuits filed by American Traditions Partnership and other dark money groups.

"An overwhelming majority of Montanans – Democrats and Republicans alike – voted last November to take back their elections from anonymous, out-of-state corporations that hide their money and their motives behind these secretive organizations," Bullock said. "This isn't about winning or losing elections. This is about putting our democracy back in the sunlight where it belongs – back firmly in the hands of 'we the people'. Montana citizens want us to get this done, and working with Sen. Peterson, we have crafted a bill that we're confident will do just that."

Bullock credited former Senate President Peterson as a vocal leader in the legislature, one who has consistently opposed the growing influence of unlimited, secretive campaign spending.

"This legislation is designed to shed sunlight on our system and ensure integrity in the political process," Peterson said.

The bill, which will be sponsored by Sen. Peterson and supported by Gov. Bullock, will include a number of important provisions aimed at ensuring greater transparency and accountability. The TRACE Act:

- shines light on the dark-money groups by clarifying that all communications within 60 days of an election that refer to one or more of the candidates or include their likeness or voice are political communications and the funding for such ads are subject to disclosure.
- brings further sunshine to dark money by providing that an organization's federal tax status does not impact its obligations to comply with state law.
- prohibits direct corporate and union contributions to candidates, but allows voluntary contributions from an employee of a corporation or a member of an organization.
- requires corporations making independent expenditures to report to the state that they've certified the communication and disclose the members of their board of directors and shareholders holding over 10 percent of the company's stock.

- necessitates that all major donors to incidental committees (more than \$2,000 over 24 months) be identified through disclosure.
- ends the shell game of PAC-to-PAC contributions by limiting such transfers to once an election cycle.
- installs modest increases in campaign contribution limits, allowing a candidate for Governor to accept \$2,000 per election cycle from a political committee or individual. The limits will be \$1,000 for a statewide candidate and \$500 for all other candidates. Montana's current limits are being challenged for being unconstitutionally low.
- removes aggregate contribution limits on what a candidate for the legislature can accept from political committees.
- increases the fine for those violating Montana's election laws and instructs the Commissioner of Political Practices to maintain a searchable database of those who have violated the law.

Bullock and Peterson have been working closely on the bipartisan measure in recent weeks. Legislation will be submitted to Legislative Services in the coming days.