

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 22, 2016

Mr. Fred Birnbaum  
Vice President  
Idaho Freedom Foundation  
2404 Bank Drive, Suite 314  
Boise, ID 83705

Dear Mr. Birnbaum,

Thank you for your correspondence of July 12, 2016. Rather than bringing greater awareness to your perceived grievances, your letter proves our point that there is a network of organizations bound together by common funding, shared staff, and false messages.

The “web” of climate change denial is designed to be so big and sophisticated, made up of countless parts, that the public is fooled into thinking it is not a single, special interest-funded front. Many of your groups were not known to us before your letter, nor were they mentioned in our debate on the Senate floor, which is further evidence of the scale, opacity and coordination of the “web of denial.”

Because your organizations do not regularly disclose where your donations come from, we cannot know for sure how deep and wide the web of denial truly is. Here is what we do know: by simply looking at public information, we see that all but one of your organizations are part of the State Policy Network (SPN). SPN has received nearly \$20 million from identity-scrubbing, Koch-funded Donors Trust and Donors Capital, as well as money directly from Koch family foundations. SPN serves as an identity launderer as well, passing along large sums of money to several of the groups on your letter, including over \$400,000 to the James Madison Institute, over \$300,000 to the Mackinac Center, and \$290,000 to the Idaho Freedom Foundation. According to Climate Investigations Center research, your groups have received over \$92 million from the Koch family, Donors Trust, Donors Capital, and ExxonMobil. And that's just what investigators can figure out.

In your letter, you claim: “our civil society organizations represent many, many millions of Americans and a wide array of perspectives and interests” simply engaging in “healthy and respectful political dialogue” leading to “well-informed, well-debated public policies.” If this is the truth, there is a simple thing you can do to prove us wrong: disclose all of your donors. Even the ones that launder their donations to you through screens. If your “civil society organizations” truly do represent “many, many millions of Americans” rather than the “many, many millions” of dollars of the Koch brothers and a few others intent on preserving their bottom lines, this is a point entirely within your control to demonstrate.

We believe the “delicate balance of our democracy” demands as much. As Senators, we stand on our record and are held to account for our positions every six years. Contributions to our campaigns are disclosed and available for the public to see. Unfortunately, your organizations

are not similarly accountable or transparent. Many of your supporters insist on anonymity, yet they rely on you to advocate for their causes like terminating health insurance for millions, ending restrictions on limitless emissions of toxic pollution in air and water, and gutting programs that make up our country's social safety net. You may claim to represent a broad range of interests from around the country, but the public does not know who pays your bills and directs your message. If the positions you take are in fact held by "many, many millions of Americans," is it not in your interest to make all this information public?

You say in your letter that free speech and debate are more important now than ever. We could not agree more. We would just like to know whom it is we are debating. Freedom of speech does not prevent us from speaking out when your organizations, as well-funded agents of hidden principals with massive conflict of interest, subject our constituents to an organized campaign to deceive and mislead them about the scientific consensus surrounding climate change.

Sincerely,



Harry Reid  
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



Barbara Boxer  
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



Al Franken  
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

cc:

Grover Norquist, Americans for Tax Reform  
Lisa B. Nelson, American Legislative Exchange Council  
John A Charles, Jr., Cascade Policy Institute  
David Rothbard, Committee for a Constructive Tomorrow  
Kent Lassman, Competitive Enterprise Institute  
Nicole Neily, Franklin Center for Government and Policy Integrity  
Benita Dodd, Georgia Public Policy Foundation  
Joseph Bast, The Heartland Institute  
Bridgett Wagner, The Heritage Foundation  
Fred Birnbaum, Idaho Freedom Foundation  
J. Robert McClure III, James Madison Institute  
Brett Healy, The John K. MacIver Institute for Public Policy  
Kory Swanson, John Locke Foundation  
Dave Trabert, Kansas Policy Institute  
Jason Hayes, Mackinac Center for Public Policy  
Brent Mead, Montana Policy Institute  
Sharon J. Rossie, Nevada Policy Research Institute  
Sally Pipes, Pacific Research Institute  
Kevin Kane, Pelican Institute for Public Policy  
Paul J. Gessing, Rio Grande Foundation  
Lynn Taylor, Virginia Institute for Public Policy  
Carol Platt Liebau, Yankee Institute for Public Policy