



March 5, 2019

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of Associated Builders and Contractors, a national construction industry trade association with 69 chapters representing more than 21,000 members, I write today in strong opposition to H.R. 1, the For the People Act of 2019. This enormous 570-page bill represents an attack on free speech and would cripple the business structure of nonprofit associations like ABC. **ABC urges all members of the House of Representatives to vote against H.R. 1 and will consider this a “KEY VOTE” for our scorecard on the 116th Congress.**

H.R. 1 is a misguided attempt to reform our elections and campaign finance law. In practice, the bill would discourage Americans from exercising their First Amendment right to free speech, politicize the agencies tasked with protecting our elections and expose hardworking ABC members to harassment, intimidation and retribution even when they do not participate in the political process.

Our 21,000 members join ABC for a variety of reasons, but they are all united under the merit shop philosophy of delivering work safely, ethically, and profitably for the betterment of their communities. If enacted, H.R. 1 would be particularly harmful to member-driven associations like ABC.

Contained in the bill is a provision that would redefine “coordinated” speech with political candidates as anything that supports or opposes a candidate, refers to a candidate or can be deemed to promote a candidate. Any coordinated speech would be banned if groups like ABC produced the material. Many of our members join ABC because they would like to follow the votes of their elected officials but are busy day-to-day running their businesses. If ABC is prevented from publicizing where candidates and lawmakers stand on issues important to the construction industry, our members may become disengaged from the political process.

H.R. 1 would also expand disclosure requirements, even for purposes that are not related to political speech. If the personal information of our members is made publicly searchable, our companies could face harassment from activist groups that do not agree with ABC’s mission. For ABC members that choose to support our political efforts, there are already strict disclosure requirements under federal election law. To open our entire membership up to the same requirements would be a violation of their privacy rights and discourage many companies from continuing their membership. Many of our contractors are all too familiar with violence and intimidation tactics from certain groups, and H.R. 1 could lead to more of it, even for companies that joined ABC for nonpolitical reasons.

Finally, one of the most harmful results of H.R. 1 would be to dismantle the grassroots efforts of nonprofits and groups like ABC. Americans who decide to engage in the political process and hold their elected officials responsible for their actions should be encouraged, not discouraged. The right to petition our government is one of our most sacred constitutional rights, and no American should have to second-guess whether to express themselves.

In conclusion, we stand in strong opposition to H.R. 1 for the damage it would do to our association, our members and free speech. We will continue to fight all efforts that try to silence ABC and our members. **ABC urges you to vote NO on H.R. 1 and will consider it a “KEY VOTE” for our scorecard on the 116th Congress.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Swearingen', written in a cursive style.

Kristen Swearingen
Vice President of Legislative & Political Affairs