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July 12, 2017

The Honorable Neil Combee  
209 House Office Building  
402 South Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300

The Honorable Mike La Rosa  
317 House Office Building  
402 South Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300

Dear Representatives Combee and La Rosa,

As State Chairs of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), we are writing you today to ask that you immediately publicly disclose all members of the Florida legislature who are attending ALEC's annual conference being held in Denver, Colorado from July 19-21. Additionally, we ask that you release to the public any information or data regarding who is paying for legislators' travel, lodging, and registration fees related to this conference. Constituents have a right to know which members of the Florida legislature are attending these meetings to develop and push ALEC's and its corporate members' agenda. They also have a right to know who is paying legislators' way. It is in the public interest that this information be disclosed to the public.

As you know, ALEC's model bills affect many issues important to the people of Florida. ALEC's agenda deals with healthcare, workers' rights, public education, energy and the environment, tax and budget, media access, and constitutional rights among other things.

ALEC routinely demonstrates a contempt for transparency. Over the years ALEC has secretly raised millions of dollars from private corporations to pay for legislators to travel to ALEC's conferences. When corporations aren't the ones paying, it is normally the taxpayers who pick up the tab. ALEC is a corporate lobbying group masquerading as a 501(c)(3) public charity. As such, ALEC puts taxpayers on the hook for its operations and corporate lobbying. Because it avails itself of charitable status with the IRS, ALEC's corporate members and funders are able to deduct their contributions to ALEC on their corporate tax returns. This has resulted in Common Cause filing a whistleblower complaint against ALEC charging the organization with tax fraud, along with three supplemental submissions providing even more evidence that ALEC is, in fact, a vehicle for taxpayer-subsidized corporate lobbying.

Common Cause is a nonpartisan, nonprofit advocacy organization founded in 1970 by John Gardner as a vehicle for citizens to make their voices heard in the political process and to hold their elected leaders accountable to the public interest. Common Cause Florida is committed to honest, open and accountable government, as well as encouraging citizen participation in democracy.

Despite ALEC's influence over public policy and the fact that the Denver conference will bring hundreds of lawmakers and lobbyists together to work together on creating model legislation, ALEC's conference is largely off limits to the public and press.

Transparency and accountability are a cornerstone of American democracy. We believe that as elected officials, it is your duty to be transparent with the people of Florida. At the very least, voters deserve to know who is participating in this conference and who is paying for them to attend.

Sincerely,



Liza McClenaghan  
State Chair  
Common Cause Florida

cc:

The Honorable Richard Corcoran, Speaker of the House  
The Honorable Ray Rodrigues, House Majority Leader  
The Honorable Janet Cruz, House Democratic Leader  
The Honorable Joe Negron, President of Senate  
The Honorable Wilton Simpson, Senate Majority Leader  
The Honorable Oscar Braynon II, Senate Minority Leader