

April 11, 2018

Dear Senator (Representative):

It is beyond any reasonable doubt that Russia conducted numerous cyber-attacks on our elections and our democracy in order to interfere with and manipulate the 2016 presidential election. This included the use of false, misleading and fake information distributed on Facebook, Twitter, Google and other platforms.

It is also clear that the Russians did so with expenditures to finance electioneering messages that were illegal or undisclosed, or both.

This resulted in millions of Americans being bombarded with Russia-sponsored ads in 2016, without any way of knowing about the role of foreign interests in running those ads.

The Honest Ads Act (S.1989), bipartisan legislation introduced by Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Mark Warner (D-VA) and John McCain (R-AZ), addresses the essential need for new rules to expose efforts undertaken by foreign interests to sabotage U.S. elections. A companion bipartisan measure (H.R.4077) has been introduced in the House by Representatives Derek Kilmer (D-WA) and Mike Coffman (R-CO).

The bill recognizes that voters have a right to know about foreign sponsors and funders of campaign-related Internet ads.

Our organizations and experts strongly urge you to support the Honest Ads Act and to publicly press for prompt passage of the bill by Congress.

This is not only a campaign finance issue. This is a matter of the utmost importance to our national security, to the integrity of our elections, and to protecting our democracy from sabotage by foreign adversaries.

The Act requires digital platforms to maintain a public file of “qualified political advertisements,” including ads that contain a message relating to any political matter of national importance. The file would contain a digital copy of the advertisement, a description of the audience the advertisement targets, the number of views generated, the dates and times of publication, the rates charged, and the contact information of the purchaser.

The Act also requires broadcasters, cable and satellite television providers, and online platforms to make reasonable efforts to ensure that the qualified political advertisements they disseminate are not purchased by a foreign national, directly or indirectly.

The Act also amends the law’s definition of “electioneering communications” to include paid Internet and digital advertisements. Currently only broadcast television, radio, cable and satellite

communications are included. This will ensure that digital ads that refer to federal candidates in the immediate pre-election period are subject to campaign finance disclosure requirements.

We strongly urge you to recognize the importance of Congress acting on the Honest Ads Act by cosponsoring the legislation, if you have not already done so, and by publicly pressing for prompt passage of the legislation.

If members of Congress are not prepared to do their part to prevent Russia or any other foreign interest from sabotaging future U.S elections, then you and your colleagues will certainly bear your share of responsibility for future illegal intervention by foreign interests in U.S. elections.

Signers include:

American Oversight
Brennan Center for Justice
Bryan Jones
Campaign Legal Center
Center for Digital Democracy
Center for Responsive Politics
Coalition to Preserve, Protect and Defend
Common Cause
CREW
Demand Progress Action
Democracy 21
Demos
End Citizens United
Equal Justice Society
Every Voice
Free Speech for People
Issue One
Joshua A. Geltzer, former National Security Council Senior Director for Counterterrorism
Kathleen Clark
League of Women Voters
Norman Eisen, chief White House ethics lawyer, 2009-2011
People For the American Way
Public Citizen
Public Knowledge
Represent.Us
Sarah Chayes
Sunlight Foundation