



For Immediate Release

More Than 26,500 Citizens Sign South Dakota Open and Clean Government Petition

SIoux FALLS, SD, March 20, 2008 – Highlighting Sunshine in Government Week, South Dakotans for Open and Clean Government announced today they are submitting more than 26,500 signatures to the Secretary of State to place an initiated measure on the November ballot that prohibits taxpayer funded lobbying and expands governmental transparency for state government contracts.

“We are gratified by the tremendous support this measure has received from South Dakota voters,” said Jim Anderson, board member from Sioux Falls. “As we traveled the state collecting signatures and explaining this proposed ballot measure, we were struck by how many South Dakotans agreed with this common sense proposal.”

The initiated measure will change South Dakota law in four ways:

- Taxpayer funds could not be used to lobby or campaign for partisan political agendas, including increased taxes.
- Legislators and their staff would be unable to use their legislative positions to secure a "golden-parachute", state-contracted job.
- The "pay to play" system -- where contracts are traded for campaign donations -- would be outlawed.
- A simple, searchable website with information on all state contracts over \$500 (excluding employment contracts), would be launched so citizens can know how their money is being spent.

Tonchi Weaver, board member from Rapid City, said, “We’ve been getting an overwhelming reaction to this proposal from people who sign our petitions. Probably the thing that I found most amazing is that a lot of people see our initiative as a progressive idea. I see it definitely as a conservative idea, so I think that kind of proves it’s an American idea. This initiative will shine a light on the cozy relationship between elected officials, lobbyists, and contractors, and restrict personal gain from public service.”

Charles Droz, board member from Miller, said, “This initiated measure was proposed so government would be more efficient and more accountable. Elected officials can still work together, testify before legislative committees, and lobby the legislature. The measure will stop bureaucrats from abusing your tax dollars by hiring high-priced lobbyists to do their legislative work.”

“The status quo in Pierre puts South Dakotans at a disadvantage in knowing how their money is spent,” said Dena Espenscheid, campaign spokesperson. “It is fitting that we are submitting the signatures during National Sunshine Week so we can put sunshine back into the political process and open it up for the taxpayers to see what is really going on in state government.”

Espenscheid continued, “These 26,536 signatures are evidence that the taxpayers wish to be heard. They want the access and accountability that the South Dakota Open and Clean Government Act brings.”

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