



- **David Boaz** Executive VP, Cato Institute :

There are good arguments for disclosure, especially with regard to contributions to candidates: Let the voters see who might be influencing a candidate. Of course, there are lots of people who have influence without being major donors - mayors and governors, leaders of voting blocs and interest groups, editors and publishers. Maybe they should all be identified, too.

The case for disclosure is even weaker when it comes to supporters and opponents of initiatives. In that case there is no officeholder to influence. Once the law is passed, it's the law. And we do know that there have been instances of bullying and intimidation based on donor disclosure. In the past both the NAACP and the Socialist Workers Party have petitioned to protect their donors from publicity and resulting abuse. Many businessmen shied away from supporting term-limits efforts to avoid offending incumbent officeholders. A couple of decades ago, people didn't want to be known as contributors to gay-rights causes; these days, it may be worse to be known as an opponent of gay rights. In either case, disclosure has a chilling effect on political involvement.

The problems with disclosure may be greater today because of the increased polarization of politics and the role of the internet in both encouraging polarization and making it easy to identify and expose donors. Disclosure is a complex issue, but we should not ignore the chilling effect it can have on political engagement.