

## Unveiling Donor Lists Unpopular

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WASHINGTON — Some of former President Clinton's most ardent foes and supporters have found something they can agree on: Requiring the financial disclosure of donations to presidential libraries is a terrible idea.

Rarely will you find such diverse groups as the Christian Coalition, the American Civil Liberties Union and the Gun Owners of America so united. They all fear that once you require one nonprofit entity to list its financial donors, others eventually will have to do the same.

**Their efforts appear to have stalled the momentum that had built on Capitol Hill for such disclosure.**

"The government gets pretty clever about how it wants to extract information, and, of course, it always has a good reason to intrude on the rights of its citizens," said William J. Olson, legal co-counsel for the Free Speech Coalition, an organization that works to protect First Amendment rights. "Even if it involves someone who is unpopular today, tomorrow it will be somebody else, and this dangerous precedent will exist."

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Olson, the Free Speech Coalition lawyer, said the opposition developed slowly.

**"We didn't know about it until the scope of the bill was expanded," Olson said. "So many bad ideas circulate on Capitol Hill that it's impossible to keep track of them all."**

Olson said the Supreme Court has consistently ruled in favor of nonprofit entities that want to keep donations private. He cited as an example efforts in the South to obtain the names of contributors to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

He said Duncan's bill probably would not prompt lawsuits if it only pertained to presidential libraries. But if the scope of the bill is broadened to include organizations controlled by members of Congress or connected to members of Congress, then lawsuits are assured.

"I can assure you," Olson said, "if it applies more broadly, any number of groups who fully understand the danger of letting the government's nose under this particular tent will not stand idly by and let it happen."

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