



One Bromfield Street, Third Floor
Boston, Massachusetts 02108
Phone: (617) 368-9100
Fax: (617) 368-9101
Email: nvri@nvri.org
Website: www.nvri.org

PRESS RELEASE
MARCH 19, 2002

Contact: Amy Bunch (301) 593-2870

**CAMPAIGN REFORM GROUP AND MISSOURI VOTERS TO FILE SUIT
AGAINST FEC CHARGING VIOLATIONS
BY ASHCROFT 2000 AND SPIRIT OF AMERICA PAC**

**COMPLAINT ALLEGES THAT ASHCROFT'S COMMITTEES VIOLATED FEDERAL
CAMPAIGN FINANCE LAW**

PLAINTIFFS SEEK FEC ENFORCEMENT OF THE LAW

DONATION OF FUNDRAISING LIST AT ISSUE

WASHINGTON, DC – A national campaign finance reform organization and two Missouri voters will file a lawsuit in federal court in Washington on Tuesday against the Federal Election Commission alleging that United States Attorney General John Ashcroft's campaign committee for the US Senate in 2000 and a political action committee he created committed serious violations of federal campaign finance law in the 2000 election. The complaint will seek FEC enforcement against Ashcroft 2000 and the Spirit of America PAC for the violations.

The allegations center on the disclosure, first reported on February 1, 2001, by *The Washington Post*, that the Spirit of America PAC had contributed a fundraising list of 100,000 donors to Ashcroft's 2000 Senate campaign in Missouri, which has a minimum estimated value of \$100,000. Federal campaign finance law prohibits political action committees from making campaign contributions to federal candidates that exceed the value of \$10,000 in an election cycle (primary and general election included).

The complaint will allege that the donated fundraising list was an in-kind contribution to Ashcroft's Senate campaign that far exceeded the federal campaign contribution limit. The complaint will also allege that the Spirit of America PAC and the campaign violated federal campaign disclosure laws by failing to report the contribution to the FEC.

The Washington Post article cited FEC reports in 2000 revealing that Ashcroft's Senate campaign made more than \$116,000 by renting out the Spirit of America PAC's fundraising list to others. The article also stated that the PAC developed the list between 1997 and 1999, "at a cost of more than \$2 million." The article appeared on the day of the U.S. Senate's confirmation vote on Ashcroft to be United States Attorney General.

(more)

The plaintiffs in the case, the Alliance for Democracy and two Missouri voters, filed an administrative complaint before the FEC on March 8, 2001, along with two other national campaign reform groups, Common Cause and the National Voting Rights Institute. The administrative complaint sought FEC enforcement in the matter. The FEC has yet to take any action on that complaint. The lawsuit to be filed Tuesday seeks a federal court order against the FEC mandating agency action enforcing the law against Ashcroft's committees.

"Further delay in this matter is unacceptable," says Lisa Danetz, a staff attorney with the Boston-based National Voting Rights Institute and lead counsel for the plaintiffs. "No one is above the law," adds Danetz, "including the sitting United States Attorney General." The National Voting Rights Institute specializes in campaign finance litigation across the country.

If the FEC determines that Ashcroft's campaign and PAC violated federal campaign finance law, it has the power to impose civil penalties for such violations. It also may choose to forward the matter to the U.S. Justice Department for the initiation of a criminal investigation.