

Virginia Kase Solomón on the DISCLOSE Act

Transcript:

Sen. Klobuchar: “Next up, Mrs. Virginia Kase Solomón.”

Kase Solomón: “Chairwoman Klobuchar, Ranking Member Haggerty and members of the Senate Committee on rules and administration, thank you so much for the opportunity to testify today on the DISCLOSE Act. The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization that was founded over 100 years ago by leaders of the women's suffrage movement. We are an issue-focused, activist, and grassroots organization that believes voters must play a critical role in our democracy. Since 1920, the League has worked to deliver on our mission to empower voters and defend democracy. Today, the League has a presence in nearly every community across the country, with more than 750 chapters spread across 50 states and the District of Columbia. The League has supported the DISCLOSE Act for more than a decade because we believe that our democracy is strengthened when Americans are encouraged to engage in civic participation. We believe Americans deserve to know who is trying to influence their vote. As an organization, the League has fought for nearly five decades to combat the influences of money on politics. Our work reflects our ongoing priority to promote open and honest elections and maximize participation in the political process. Voters have the right to know who is making large campaign contributions to influence elections and when contributions are made, we believe that must be done with transparency. The DISCLOSE Act accomplishes this fundamental purpose by requiring expenditures and donations of \$10,000 and above to be reported. Every day, the League works to inform voters about the issues they care about by providing critical voter services to the public. In the last two years, almost 6.5 million users came to VOTE411.org, the League's award-winning nonpartisan website for election information that voters need. The site provides registration tools, candidate guides and resources about what they need to take with them when they go to vote. As an organization, we work to simplify the voting process for voters to make their individual voting plans. These actions make the voting process understandable and accessible, which breaks down barriers to participation. However, it should not fall to organizations such as the League to provide information and ensure transparency in our elections. The law should require public disclosure when it comes to dark money groups seeking to influence elections. Transparency is a baseline requirement for a healthy democracy. According to a nationwide study conducted by the Campaign Legal Center, about 60% of voters believe that major changes are needed to our country's campaign finance system. The majority of voters surveyed also believe that the money spent by special interest groups has a direct impact on their personal lives. We have seen that without transparency, candidates and election officials fall into the trap of valuing donors and their priorities above the needs of voters and everyday citizens. Such de-prioritization of voters only breeds distrust in the Republic and those who need it. There should be little question that this runs counter the spirit of our democracy, and a government of, by, and for the people. Dark money spans the political spectrum and is used by both Democrats and Republicans to boost candidates. In fact, in 2020, a majority of outside funding was spent to promote Democratic candidates. Open Secrets, the nation's premier research group tracking money in US politics, estimates that \$1 million of dark money was spent in the 2020 elections. Shell companies, outside groups, and political nonprofits funneled millions of dollars to Super PACs, which helps hide individual sources of donations. Secret campaign money, no matter the party, promotes unbridled power and has no place in American democracy. It undermines the role of the voter and corrupts the election process. The League will continue to fight to ensure that voters can make decisions free from influence of dark money and

special interest groups. We strongly support the DISCLOSE Act and urge this committee to take up this legislation and advance it to the full Senate for a vote as quickly as possible. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify on this important legislation. And I look forward to taking your questions.”

Sen. Klobuchar: “Thank you very much.”