



Audits asked of 2 GOP Groups

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WASHINGTON—Two political action committees formed by House Majority Leader Tom DeLay to push Republican causes have failed to disclose required information about their finances, national watchdog groups said in a complaint filed Monday with the Internal Revenue Service.

Public Citizen and Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington asked the IRS to conduct an audit of Texans for a Republican Majority and Americans for a Republican Majority, and require the committees to disclose information about their contributions.

Both PACs are Section 527 organizations, named for the portion of the IRS Code that authorizes them.

They are allowed to collect unlimited amounts of "soft money" donations from corporate donors and individuals, but Public Citizen and CREW contend the committees have "either recently failed to file any financial disclosure statements or filed incomplete statements with the IRS in direct violation of the law."

Soft money refers to political funding that may be used to push causes or issues, but not to directly advocate election of individual candidates.

DeLay political aide and Texans for a Republican Majority Director Jim Ellis said the PACs have complied with the law. He dismissed the complaint as an attack on conservatives.

"Their real target is Tom DeLay," Ellis said. "It's a political attack and they need to do better research."

Ellis added that DeLay should not be named in the complaint because he no longer controls the committees.

The watchdog groups contend that DeLay remains associated with the committees through his appointments of Ellis and other political allies to key positions in the committees.

Texans for a Republican Majority was founded by DeLay, R-Sugar Land, to help Republicans in their successful bid to gain control of the Texas House in last year's elections. The GOP previously had attained a majority in the Senate.

The committee raised \$1.5 million in its effort.

This year DeLay pushed the GOP-controlled Legislature to redraw state congressional districts to increase the number of Republicans in the Texas delegation to the U.S. House of Representatives.

A Travis County grand jury is investigating possible violations of state campaign laws by Texans for a Republican Majority and the Texas Association of Business during the election. Both groups deny wrongdoing.

Americans for a Republican Majority, chaired and founded by DeLay, is a federal political action committee that raises money to assist Republican candidates running for Congress. According to its Web site, the committee wants to raise more than \$1 million for the 2004 election cycle to help increase the number of Republicans in the U.S. House.

Under the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002, those groups are not required to disclose certain information on state political contributions and expenditures.

Public Citizen President Joan Claybrook said the public has a right to know who is contributing the money.

"It appears that they are deliberately hiding their corporate sources of money because they want to stay out of the public eye," Claybrook said.