

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 17, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader
S221 US Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid:

We write to request that you immediately instruct the appropriate Senate committee chairs to open investigations and hold public hearings concerning the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN).

Last week, 11 ACORN employees in Miami were arrested and charged with voter fraud. Meanwhile, undercover journalists released a series of videos showing ACORN employees giving advice on falsifying legal documents and evading tax, prostitution, immigration, and child exploitation laws. These events are only the latest chapters in ACORN's long and troubled legal history.

Various federal responses to these events have already occurred. The Census Bureau announced that it had severed all ties with ACORN. The President's spokesman called ACORN's activities "unacceptable." And as you know, on Monday the Senate voted 83-7 to prohibit ACORN from receiving any federal housing and transportation funds. See S.Amdt. 2355 to H.R. 3288 (Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2010). This overwhelming bipartisan vote was an important victory for preventing taxpayer dollars from flowing to entities with a known history of criminal activity.

Federal actions so far are welcome, but not sufficient. In particular, Monday's vote should not be the Senate's last word on ACORN. In light of the emerging consensus that the federal government should sever all ties with ACORN, it is crucial that Congress definitively determine the extent to which ACORN's questionable activities are funded at taxpayer expense.

Severing ties with ACORN and its criminal activities requires that Congress first determine (1) the full extent of those criminal activities and (2) the sources of all federal funds that ACORN and affiliated groups receive, directly or indirectly.

Fully divesting taxpayer money from ACORN's questionable activities will not be a simple task. As NPR reported in a blog post entitled "ACORN's Money Tree has Many Branches," ACORN has a "giant web" of "dozens of affiliated entities, from a home-buying assistance corporation to community radio stations to liberal research and training institutes." That post concluded by observing that "ACORN's network is complex, and money often transfers from one affiliate to another, making it hard for outsiders to keep track of it all."

American taxpayers must be able to trust that their money is being spent responsibly, and is not being used to fund criminal enterprises. As Senate Majority Leader, we hope that you will

deploy all of the resources at your disposal to restore that trust. Therefore, we respectfully request that you instruct the chairs of all appropriate committees to hold public hearings to determine the extent of ACORN's wrongdoing and to end all direct and indirect federal funding of ACORN and its affiliates.

Sincerely,

Dan Vitter

Mike Crapo

Jim Running

John Garamendi

Richard B. Lugar

Jeff Flake

Chris Alexander

Key Bailey Hutson

Kevin Winter

John Kyl

Jim DeMint

Lesly Cawthon

Ron Roubin

Pat Roberts

Mark McClellan

John Enig
Dan Rostenkowski

Susan Collins

Pat Boord

Mike Johannese

Bob

Chuck Grassley

Tommy

John Saracino

John Miller

John Thomas

John Cooney