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CAMPAIGN REFORM GROUPS AND MISSOURI VOTERS FILE FEC COMPLAINT AGAINST ASHCROFT'S SENATE CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE AND SPIRIT OF AMERICA PAC

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

DONATION OF FUNDRAISING LIST AT ISSUE

WASHINGTON, DC – A coalition of campaign finance reform organizations and Missouri voters filed a complaint today before the Federal Election Commission (FEC) alleging that Attorney General John D. Ashcroft's 2000 campaign committee for the U.S. Senate violated federal campaign finance law. The complaint also charges that the Spirit of America PAC, a political action committee created by Ashcroft, committed similar violations.

"John Ashcroft's 2000 Senate campaign committee and the Spirit of America PAC engaged in direct and serious violations of federal campaign finance law," says Scott Harshbarger, president and CEO of Common Cause, one of the complainants. "The FEC should fully investigate these matters and impose appropriate sanctions for these 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. 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). At the time of the Spirit of America PAC's contribution of its fundraising list, the political action committee had already donated \$10,000 to Ashcroft's campaign.

The complaint alleges that the donated fundraising list was an in-kind contribution "of substantial market value" to Ashcroft's Senate campaign, and that, therefore, the PAC and the campaign violated the contribution limits under federal law. The complaint also alleges that the 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 states 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 the United States Attorney General.

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.

In addition to Common Cause, others filing this complaint include the Alliance for Democracy, a national grassroots reform group, the National Voting Rights Institute, a national organization specializing in campaign finance litigation, and individual Missouri voters.