



CFC Press Conference Statement November 10, 2004

OMB Watch has been promoting government accountability and civic participation for over 20 years. We believe nonprofits, like groups that receive donations from federal employees through the Combined Federal Campaign, have a vital place in communities and play a powerful role in reinforcing our democratic principles. We believe CFC's list checking policy is unreasonable and will not make America safer.

When we submitted our application for CFC participation last year we never dreamed that participation would involve an affirmative obligation to check employees or prospective employees against government watch lists. We are a charity, not a law enforcement agency. As a result, last summer when the CFC Director told the press that CFC groups have an affirmative obligation to check various lists, we issued a statement calling for immediate revocation of the new policy.

Since the only information available was through press reports, we wrote to CFC on Sept. 7, 2003 seeking clarification. A copy of the letter is provided in the press packet. It asks a series of practical questions responsible nonprofits need to have answered about the certification requirement.

For example, what is an organization required to do if we find that the name of one of our employees appears on the list? Are we required to notify the CFC? Other government agencies? Will our CFC funding be suspended or canceled upon such a notification – even if there is no certainty that our employee is the same individual?

To date we have received no response to our letter, and CFC has failed to issue any guidance for charities currently preparing applications for the coming year. This places us in an impossible position, leaving litigation as our only recourse.

We continue to call on CFC to withdraw this certification requirement. It violates our first amendment rights and fundamental concepts of fairness. This is not a question of whether nonprofits are patriotic or not, or whether we support the war against terrorism.

The federal government is the appropriate party to investigate terrorist organizations and plots. The charities of America are not qualified and do not have the resources to be police agents. This policy sets a dangerous precedent

Celebrating 20 years: Promoting Government Accountability and Citizen Participation - 1983 - 2003.

1742 Connecticut Ave NW
Washington, DC 20009



tel: 202.234.8494
fax: 202.234.8584



email: ombwatch@ombwatch.org
web: <http://www.ombwatch.org>

and threatens the civil liberties and rights of Americans to join and participate in organizations. What's next: checking our membership lists, our client lists, our donors?

For most Americans, nonprofits are the most effective vehicles for civic participation. We join groups that support causes we believe in and provide vital assistance to people in need. Our combined resources make our individual voices stronger. The chilling impact this policy would have on nonprofits and civic participation would fulfill some of the terrorists' own goal of damaging our society and institutions.