#### IV. TITLE V OF BCRA IS UNCONSTITUTIONAL.

# A. By Imposing Onerous Recordkeeping And Disclosure Obligations On Broadcasters, Section 504 Of BCRA Is Unconstitutional.

As we noted in our opening brief, *see* McConnell Br. 97-100, section 504 of BCRA imposes burdensome and vague recordkeeping and disclosure requirements on broadcast licensees — requirements that are unconnected to any legitimate governmental objective. Defendants make no effort to come to grips with the vagueness inherent in section 504, which requires recordkeeping and disclosure whenever a would-be advertiser requests broadcast time for advertisements that discuss "matters of national importance."

Instead, defendants justify section 504 on the ground that it "provides public access to important information about political broadcasts" and is necessary because "[e]vidence suggests that voters currently have difficulty identifying the true sponsors of issue ads." Br. 218. Defendants claim that this "lack of disclosure creates greater opportunities for political corruption."  $Id.^{33}$  Much of what section 504 requires, however, is wholly unrelated to these alleged objectives. Section 504 does not, as defendants claim, merely require the disclosure of the identity of speakers. Instead, in addition to unconstitutionally compelling "disclosure of

Rather than deal head-on with the meaning of such a cryptic and ambiguous standard as "matters of national importance," defendants merely compare the phrase to language in other existing disclosure requirements on broadcast licensees in the Communications Act and the FCC's implementing regulations. See Br. 222. Notably, to our knowledge, no court has considered vagueness or overbreadth challenges to these provisions. At least one court has even recognized the constitutional uncertainty of compelling broadcasters to investigate the true sponsors of political speech under current FCC regulations. See Loveday v. FCC, 707 F.2d 1443, 1457-59 (D.C. Cir. 1983).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> On the one hand, defendants claim that the burdensome new requirements of sections 305 and 504 are necessary to promote full disclosure and to combat fraud and corruption. *See id.* at 211-13. Yet, at the same time, defendants cast doubt on the need for new disclosure requirements when they claim that sections 305 and 504 are in fact similar in both language and substance to existing requirements. *See id.* at 221-22.

affiliation with groups engaged in advocacy," McConnell Br. 99 (citing NAACP v. Alabama, 357 U.S. 449, 462 (1958)), section 504 also requires broadcasters to disclose the date and time on which communications are aired; the rate charged; the class of time purchased; and the issues to which the communications "refer." Moreover, section 504 requires broadcasters to maintain and disclose detailed information about requests for advertising time which are refused, as well as those which are granted. Defendants make no attempt to explain how any of this information is remotely relevant to the purported purposes of section 504.

Although defendants would have this Court believe that the requirements of section 504 are harmless and even run-of-the-mill, those requirements are in fact wide-ranging and unprecedented in their intrusiveness. They plainly trample on the First Amendment rights of broadcasters and political speakers alike.

#### **CONCLUSION**

For the foregoing reasons, the above-cited provisions of BCRA should be declared unconstitutional.

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November 20, 2002

## IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

### SENATOR MITCH McCONNELL, et al., Plaintiffs.

٧.

Civ. No. 02-0582 (CKK, KLH, RKL)

### FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION, et al., Defendants.

#### **CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that, on November 20, 2002, I served true and correct copies of the foregoing (1)Consolidated Opposition Brief for Plaintiffs in Response to Defendants' Motion for Judgment and (2) Supplemental Appendix to the Opposition Brief of the National Rifle Association and the National Rifle Association Political Victory Fund on the following by electronic mail and hard copy by overnight delivery or by facsimile:

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