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Washington, DC 20463

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AGENDA ITEM

For Meeting of 07-22-10

MEMORANDUM

SUBMITTED LATE

TO: The Commission

FROM: Thomasenia P. Duncan *pch*
General Counsel

Rosemary C. Smith *RES*
Associate General Counsel

Robert M. Knop *RMK*
Assistant General Counsel

David C. Adkins *[Signature]*
Attorney

Subject: AO 2010-09 (Club for Growth, Inc.) – Drafts

Attached are proposed drafts of the subject advisory opinion. We have been asked to place these drafts on the agenda for July 22, 2010.

Attachment

1 ADVISORY OPINION 2010-09

2

3 Carol A. Laham, Esq.

4

D. Mark Renaud, Esq.

5

Wiley Rein LLP

6

1776 K Street, N.W.

7

Washington, DC 20006

8

9

Dear Ms. Laham and Mr. Renaud:

DRAFT

10 We are responding to your advisory opinion request on behalf of Club for
11 Growth, Inc. (the “Club”) concerning the application of the Federal Election Campaign
12 Act of 1971, as amended (the “Act”), and Commission regulations to its plans to
13 establish, administer, and pay the solicitation costs of a new independent expenditure-
14 only political committee (the “Committee”). The Committee plans to make only
15 independent expenditures, and to solicit unlimited contributions solely from individuals
16 in the general public, including contributions given for specific independent expenditures.
17 The Committee does not intend to coordinate its communications or expenditures with
18 any candidate, candidate committee, or political party committee.

19 Based on the representations in the request and the analysis below, the
20 Commission concludes that the Club may establish and administer the Committee, and
21 the Committee may solicit and accept unlimited contributions from individuals in the
22 general public, including contributions given for specific independent expenditures.

23 ***Background***

24 The facts presented in this advisory opinion are based on your letter received on
25 May 21, 2010.

26 The Club is an incorporated non-profit social welfare organization exempt from
27 Federal taxes under section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code. It has a separate

1 segregated fund (“SSF”), Club for Growth PAC (“Club PAC”). The Club plans to
2 establish, administer, and pay the solicitation costs of the Committee, which would be
3 organized as a tax-exempt organization under section 527 of the Internal Revenue Code
4 and would be incorporated under the laws of the District of Columbia. The Club intends
5 to register the Committee with the Commission, and the Committee will file regular
6 reports and independent expenditure reports.¹ The President of the Club will serve as the
7 Treasurer of the Committee.²

8 The Committee intends to make only independent expenditures, which will
9 include all the disclaimers and notices required by the Act and Commission regulations.
10 It plans to solicit contributions solely from individuals that may be unlimited in amount
11 and solicited or given for specific independent expenditures. The Club states that such
12 solicitations will also include all disclaimers and notices required by the Act and
13 Commission regulations. The costs of the solicitations would be paid by the Club if
14 permissible, or otherwise would be paid by the Committee.

15 The Committee will not accept contributions from any political committee
16 (including any separate segregated fund, authorized committee, or political party
17 committee), candidate, labor organization, foreign national, government contractor, or
18 corporation, except that the Club will pay for some or all of the Committee’s
19 establishment, administrative, and solicitation costs.

¹ The Commission notes that this advisory opinion implicates issues that will be the subject of forthcoming rulemakings in light of the *Citizens United*, *EMILY’s List*, and *SpeechNow* decisions. The results of that rulemaking may require the Commission to update its registration and reporting forms to facilitate public disclosure. In the meantime, the Committee may include a letter with its Form 1 Statement of Organization clarifying that it intends to accept unlimited contributions for the purpose of making independent expenditures. See Attachment A. Electronic filers may include such a letter as a Form 99.

² Currently, the President of the Club serves as Treasurer of Club PAC. Statement of Organization, Club for Growth PAC (Apr. 14, 2009), available at: www.fec.gov (last visited Jul. 16, 2010).

1 The Club states that the Committee will not, itself, make any contributions or
2 transfer any funds to any political committee if the amount of a contribution to the
3 recipient committee is governed by the Act, nor will the Committee make any
4 coordinated communications or coordinate any expenditures with any candidate,
5 authorized committee, political party committee, or agent of such persons. Finally, the
6 Committee will not accept contributions from Club PAC, nor will it make any
7 contributions or transfer any funds to Club PAC.

8 ***Questions Presented***

- 9 1. *If the Club pays the Committee's establishment, administrative, and solicitation*
10 *expenses, may the Committee solicit and accept contributions from the general*
11 *public?*
12
13 2. *If the Club pays the Committee's establishment, administrative, and solicitation*
14 *expenses, may the Committee solicit and accept funds earmarked for specific*
15 *independent expenditures?*
16
17 3. *Are the answers to Questions 1 or 2 different if the Committee pays all of its own*
18 *establishment, administrative, and solicitation expenses?*
19

20 ***Legal Analysis and Conclusions***

- 21 1. *If the Club pays the Committee's establishment, administrative, and solicitation*
22 *expenses, may the Committee solicit and accept contributions from the general*
23 *public?*
24

25 Yes, based on the representations in the request and consistent with the analysis
26 below, the Committee may solicit and accept contributions from the general public.

27 The United States Supreme Court recently held that corporations may make
28 unlimited independent expenditures using corporate treasury funds. *Citizens United v.*
29 *FEC*, 558 U.S. ___, 130 S. Ct. 876 (2010).³ In addition, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the

³ Even before *Citizens United*, incorporated membership organizations like the Club could spend unlimited amounts from their general treasury on the administrative and overhead costs associated with a separate

1 District of Columbia Circuit recently held that “the contribution limits of 2 U.S.C.
2 441a(a)(1)(C) and 441a(a)(3) are unconstitutional as applied to individuals’ contributions
3 to SpeechNow,” an independent expenditure group.⁴ *SpeechNow v. FEC*, 599 F.3d 686,
4 689 (D.C. Cir. 2010); *see also EMILY’s List v. FEC*, 581 F. 3d 1, 10 (D.C. Cir. 2009) (“ .
5 . individual citizens may spend money without limit (apart from the limit on their own
6 contributions to candidates or parties) in support of the election of particular
7 candidates”). The decision in *SpeechNow* was predicated on the Supreme Court’s
8 holding in *Citizens United* “that independent expenditures, including those made by
9 corporations, do not give rise to corruption or the appearance of corruption.” *Citizens*
10 *United*, 130 S. Ct. at 909; *see SpeechNow*, 599 F.3d at 693.

11 The court made clear, though, that it was “only decid[ing] these questions as
12 applied to contributions to SpeechNow, an independent expenditure-only group.”
13 *SpeechNow*, 599 F.3d at 696. Its holding did not affect limits on direct contributions to
14 candidates or political party committees, including in-kind contributions in the form of
15 coordinated communications” *Id.* In addition, the court held that the “reporting
16 requirements of 2 U.S.C. 432, 433, and 434(a) and the organizational requirements of 2
17 U.S.C. 431(4) and 431(8) can constitutionally be applied to SpeechNow.” *Id.* at 689.

18 Relying on these two cases, the Club asks whether it may solicit and accept
19 contributions from the general public if the Club pays the Committee’s establishment,

segregated fund, even if that SSF made independent expenditures. *See* 2 U.S.C. § 441b(b)(2)(C) (exempting corporate payment of administrative and fundraising costs from definitions of contribution and expenditure); 11 CFR114.1(a)(2)(iii) (same).

⁴ On May 27, 2010, in accordance with the circuit court’s order, the United States District Court of the District of Columbia entered an order that the Act’s contribution limits (2 U.S.C. 441a(a)(1)(C) and 441a(a)(3)) and implementing regulations could not be constitutionally applied against SpeechNow or the individuals who contribute to it.

1 administrative and solicitation expenses. In *Citizens United*, the Supreme Court held
2 that independent corporate political spending cannot be limited. Therefore, a corporation
3 may establish and administer a political committee that makes only independent
4 expenditures. Moreover, because the Committee, like SpeechNow, intends to make only
5 independent expenditures, there is no basis to impose contribution limits on the
6 Committee.⁵

7 As noted above, the President of the Club, who currently serves as Club PAC's
8 Treasurer, will also serve as the Treasurer of the Committee. Because a corporation,
9 through its restricted class events⁶ or its SSF, may lawfully coordinate with Federal
10 candidates and party committees under certain circumstances, the overlap of duties could
11 potentially compromise the independence of communications made by the Committee.
12 However, the Club represents that the Committee will not engage in coordinated activity,
13 and will comply with the requirements of 11 CFR 109.21(d).⁷ Specifically, the
14 Commission assumes that candidates or authorized committees will not request or
15 suggest communications to agents of the Committee, nor will candidates or their agents
16 assent to communications suggested by the Committee or any of its agents. See 11 CFR
17 109.21(d)(1). Candidates or authorized committees will not be materially involved in
18 communications made by the Committee and will not substantially discuss
19 communications or the candidate's plans, projects, activities, or needs with the

⁵ See *SpeechNow*, 599 F.3d at 693 (the court's holding was predicated on the "independence of independent expenditures").

⁶ See 11 CFR 114.2(c).

⁷ The request states that the Committee "will not, per the regulations of the FEC or applicable Federal law, coordinate any communications or other expenditure with any candidate, candidate committee, political party committee, or their agents." Request at 2. Moreover, the Committee will not accept contributions from Club PAC, nor will it make any contributions or transfer any funds to Club PAC. *Id.*

1 Committee or its agents. *See* 11 CFR 109.21(d)(2) - (3). In sum, the Commission
2 assumes that the President will manage the Corporation and his responsibilities as
3 Treasurer of the Committee and Club PAC without causing the Committee to engage in
4 coordinated activities.⁸ Therefore, based on the representations in the request and the
5 analysis above, the Committee may solicit and accept unlimited contributions from the
6 general public even if the Club pays the Committee's establishment, administrative and
7 solicitation expenses.

8 2. *If the Club pays the Committee's establishment, administrative, and solicitation*
9 *expenses, may the Committee solicit and accept funds earmarked for specific*
10 *independent expenditures?*

11
12 Yes, consistent with the analysis in Question 1, the Committee may solicit and
13 accept funds earmarked for specific independent expenditures.

14 The Commission's current regulation at 11 CFR 110.1(h) limits a person that has
15 already contributed to a specific candidate from also contributing to an unauthorized
16 political committee if the contributor "give[s] with the knowledge that a substantial
17 portion will be contributed to, or expended on behalf of, that candidate for the same
18 election." Section 110.1(h) "governs the circumstances under which contributions to a
19 candidate and his or her authorized campaign committee(s) must be aggregated with
20 contributions to other political committees for the purposes of the contribution limits of §
21 110.1." Explanation and Justification, Contribution and Expenditure Limitations and

⁸ Although the firewall provided for in the Commission's regulations is not mandatory, establishing such effective prophylactic measures would be one sufficient way to address potential concerns with respect to the conduct standards of the Commission's coordination rule. *See* 11 CFR 109.21(h) (Safe harbor for establishment and use of a firewall); *see also* MUR 5506 (EMILY's List), First General Counsel's Report at 5-8 (concluding that there was no reason to believe that the organization made excessive contributions in the form of coordinated communications, based in large part on the organization's establishment of "firewall" measures).

1 Prohibitions, 52 F R 760, 765 (Jan. 9, 1987). In other words, the Commission's
2 earmarking regulation is designed to prevent the circumvention of contribution limits.

3 However, the Club has represented that the Committee will not, itself, make any
4 contributions or transfer any funds to any political committee if the amount of a
5 contribution to the recipient committee is governed by the Act, nor will the Committee
6 make any coordinated communications or coordinate any expenditures with any
7 candidate, authorized committee, political party committee, or agent of such persons.

8 Thus, because there is no possibility of circumvention of any contribution limit, section
9 110.1(h) and its rationale do not apply to the Committee's solicitations or any
10 contributions it receives that are earmarked for specific independent expenditures.

11 3. *Do the answers to Questions 1 or 2 change if the Committee pays its own*
12 *establishment, administrative, and solicitation expenses?*

13
14 No, the answers to Questions 1 and 2 do not change if the Committee pays its
15 own establishment, administrative, and solicitation expenses.

16 The Club's proposed payment of the Committee's establishment, administrative,
17 and solicitation expenses are not exempt from the definition of "contribution" or
18 "expenditure" because the Committee is not an SSF.⁹ Therefore, any establishment,
19 administrative, or solicitation expenses paid by the Club must be reported by the
20 Committee as contributions from the Club.¹⁰ Alternatively, the proposed political
21 committee may pay its own establishment, administrative, and solicitation expenses.

⁹ Under the Act and Commission regulations, a corporation may use its general treasury funds to pay the costs of establishing, administering, or soliciting contributions to its SSF, without a resultant contribution or expenditure. *See* 2 U.S.C. 441b(b)(2)(C); *see also* 2 U.S.C. 431(8)(B)(vi).

¹⁰ *See* 2 U.S.C. 431(8), 434(b); 11 CFR 104.3(a).

1 The Commission expresses no opinion regarding the possible applicability of any
2 Federal or State tax laws or other laws to the matters presented in your request, as those
3 issues are outside its jurisdiction.

4 This response constitutes an advisory opinion concerning the application of the
5 Act and Commission regulations to the specific transaction or activity set forth in your
6 request. *See* 2 U.S.C. 437f. The Commission emphasizes that, if there is a change in any
7 of the facts or assumptions presented, and such facts or assumptions are material to a
8 conclusion presented in this advisory opinion, then the requestor may not rely on that
9 conclusion as support for its proposed activity. Any person involved in any specific
10 transaction or activity which is indistinguishable in all its material aspects from the
11 transaction or activity with respect to which this advisory opinion is rendered may rely on
12 this advisory opinion. *See* 2 U.S.C. 437f(c)(1)(B). Please note that the analysis or
13 conclusions in this advisory opinion may be affected by subsequent developments in the
14 law including, but not limited to, statutes, regulations, advisory opinions, and case law.

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On behalf of the Commission,

Matthew S. Petersen
Chairman

[COMMITTEE NAME]

[DATE]

Federal Election Commission
999 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20463

Re: Form 1, Statement of Organization—Unlimited Contributions

To Whom It May Concern:

This committee intends to make independent expenditures, and consistent with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit decision in *SpeechNow v. FEC*, it therefore intends to raise funds in unlimited amounts. This committee will not use those funds to make contributions, whether direct, in-kind, or via coordinated communications, to federal candidates or committees.

Respectfully submitted,

Treasurer _____

1 ADVISORY OPINION 2010-09

2
3 Carol A. Laham, Esq.
4 D. Mark Renaud, Esq.
5 Wiley Rein LLP
6 1776 K Street, N.W.
7 Washington, DC 20006

DRAFT B

8
9 Dear Ms. Laham and Mr. Renaud:

10 We are responding to your advisory opinion request on behalf of Club for
11 Growth, an incorporated non-profit social welfare organization exempt from Federal
12 taxes under section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code (the “Corporation”),
13 concerning the application of the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, as amended
14 (the “Act”), and Commission regulations to the Corporation’s plans to establish,
15 administer, and financially support a new political committee (the “Committee”). The
16 Corporation has represented that it plans (a) for the Committee to make only independent
17 expenditures and (b) for the Committee to solicit and accept contributions only from
18 individuals in the general public, including contributions given for specific independent
19 expenditures.¹

20 The principal rationale underlying your request for an advisory opinion is that
21 “the campaign finance regime administered by the FEC has changed” as a result of the
22 recent decision by the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit in
23 *SpeechNow.org v. FEC*, 599 F.3d 686 (D.C. Cir. 2010) (en banc) (“*SpeechNow*”).

24 In *SpeechNow*, the court held that the Act’s contribution limits were
25 unconstitutional as applied to funds from individuals received by SpeechNow.org, a

¹ Under the Act, an “independent expenditure” is an expenditure by a person that expressly advocates the election or defeat of a clearly identified candidate and that is not made in concert or cooperation with or at the request or suggestion of the candidate, the candidate’s authorized political committee, a political party committee or the agents of any of the foregoing. 2 U.S.C. § 431(17).

1 political committee that (1) only makes independent expenditures; (2) is not connected to
2 any corporation; and (3) is not affiliated with any other political committee. In
3 *SpeechNow*, the court granted SpeechNow.org’s as-applied challenge to the Act’s
4 contribution limits precisely because SpeechNow.org only makes independent
5 expenditures and therefore the Act’s contribution limits advanced no “anti-corruption
6 interest.” The holding in the *SpeechNow* decision was expressly limited to the “as-
7 applied” challenge brought before the court by an entity that (a) is not connected to any
8 corporation and (b) operates wholly independently of all other political committees, and
9 the court’s decision does not have force beyond the facts presented by SpeechNow.org to
10 the court.²

11 The Committee, as proposed by the Corporation, would be materially
12 distinguishable from SpeechNow.org because (a) the Committee would be connected to
13 the Corporation³ and (b) the Committee would be affiliated with Club for Growth PAC,
14 the Corporation’s already existing separate segregated fund (“SSF”) that itself makes
15 contributions to Federal candidates. Nevertheless, the Corporation is asking the
16 Commission to issue an advisory opinion that would apply the holding in *SpeechNow* to
17 the Committee and its activities.

18 Because of its connections to the Corporation and to Club for Growth PAC, and
19 because the Corporation plans to have its President, who already currently serves as

² “We should be clear . . . that we only decide these questions [regarding the constitutionality of the Act] as applied to contributions to SpeechNow, an independent expenditure-only group.” *SpeechNow*, 599 F.3d at 696; “In an as-applied challenge, there is a narrow focus on the particular plaintiff’s behavior and whether the statute is constitutional as applied to her.” *Roulette v. City of Seattle*, 97 F.3d 300 (9th Cir. 1996) (citing *Broadrick v. Oklahoma*, 413 U.S. 601, 612, 93 S.Ct. 2908 (1973)).

³ In fact, the Corporation represent that the President of the Corporation will also serve as the Committee’s Treasurer. See Advisory Opinion Request at 2.

1 Treasurer of the Club for Growth PAC,⁴ also serve as Treasurer of the proposed
2 Committee, the Committee and its activities would be materially distinguishable from
3 SpeechNow.org precisely in a way that would not insulate the Committee and its
4 activities from the possibility of corruption, or the appearance of corruption, in the same
5 way that SpeechNow.org was insulated from these concerns.

6 Accordingly, the Commission concludes that the Corporation's proposal would
7 require the Commission to broaden the reach of the DC Circuit Court's holding in
8 *SpeechNow* to the Committee and therefore would require modification of the
9 applicability of the Commission's regulations, which can only be properly achieved
10 though a notice-and-comment rulemaking conducted pursuant to the requirements of the
11 Administrative Procedure Act ("APA"), 5 U.S.C. 551 *et seq.*⁵ Specifically, the APA
12 requires that the Commission publish a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in the Federal
13 Register and that "interested persons" be afforded "an opportunity to participate in the
14 rulemaking through submission of written data, views, or arguments" in response to such
15 a Notice. 5 U.S.C. 553(b)-(c).

16 The Commission's advisory opinion process is one in which the Commission
17 interprets existing law and is limited to requests "concerning the application of th[e] Act .
18 . . or a rule or regulation prescribed by the Commission" and therefore cannot be used to

⁴ See www.clubforgrowth.org/aboutus/?id=96 (Chris Chacola serves as President and Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation); <http://query.nictusa.com/pdf/913/29991940913/29991940913.pdf#navpanes=0> (Club for Growth PAC's Statement of Organization filed with the Commission lists Chris Chacola as the Treasurer) (both last visited July 16, 2010).

⁵ "The APA's general rulemaking section, 5 U.S.C. § 553, sets down certain procedural requirements with which agencies must comply in promulgating legislative rules: there must be publication of a notice of proposed rulemaking; opportunity for public comment on the proposal; and publication of a final rule accompanied by a statement of the rule's basis and purpose." *Utility Solid Waste Group v. EPA*, 236 F.3d 749, 752 (D.C. Cir. 2001). See generally Jeffrey S. Lubbers, A Guide to Federal Agency Rulemaking (American Bar Association, 4th ed. 2006).

1 modify the Commission's regulations. 2 U.S.C. 437f(a); 11 CFR 112.1. *See also* 2
2 U.S.C. 437f(b) ("Any rule of law not stated in th[e] Act must be initially proposed by the
3 Commission only as a rule or regulation pursuant to procedures established in [2 U.S.C.
4 438(d)].⁶ No opinion of an advisory nature may be issued by the Commission or any of
5 its employees except in accordance with the provisions of this section.").

6 Although the Commission concludes that, after considering all the facts, the better
7 course of action at this time is to not broaden the reach of the DC Circuit Court's holding
8 in *SpeechNow* to the Committee through the advisory opinion process, these issues can,
9 and will be, appropriately considered in the Commission's upcoming rulemaking
10 proceedings.⁷ Additionally, the Corporation may use the Commission's procedures for
11 filing a petition for rulemaking to seek modifications of the Commission's regulations.
12 *See* 11 CFR 200.2.

13 ***Background***

14 The facts presented in this advisory opinion are based on your letter received on
15 May 21, 2010.

16 As indicated above, the Corporation is an incorporated non-profit social welfare
17 organization exempt from Federal taxes under section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue
18 Code. The Corporation has already established, and currently supports and controls an
19 SSF, Club for Growth PAC, which makes contributions to Federal candidates, as well as

⁶ Although 2 U.S.C. 438(d) was invalidated as a result of the Supreme Court's decision in *INS v. Chadha*, 462 U.S. 919 (1983), the subsequently enacted Congressional Review Act, 5 U.S.C. 801 *et seq.*, requires the Commission to submit similar reports to Congress prior to promulgating any new or revised regulations.

⁷ The Commission has posted a proposed rulemaking schedule, which contemplates completion of the Commission's *EMILY's List* and *SpeechNow* rulemakings by the end of the calendar year (available at <http://www.fec.gov/agenda/2010/mtgdoc1020.pdf>).

1 independent expenditures.⁸ The Corporation now plans to establish, administer, and
2 financially support the proposed Committee, a second “connected” political committee,
3 which would be organized as a tax-exempt organization under section 527 of the Internal
4 Revenue Code and would be incorporated under the laws of the District of Columbia.
5 The President of the Corporation currently serves as the Treasurer of Club for Growth
6 PAC and would also serve as the Treasurer of the Committee.⁹ The Corporation intends
7 to have the Committee register with the Commission, and the Corporation represents that
8 the Committee will file regular reports and independent expenditure reports as required
9 by law.

10 Although Club for Growth PAC currently makes contributions to Federal
11 candidates, the Corporation represents that the Committee will only make independent
12 expenditures, which will include all the disclaimers and notices required by the Act and
13 Commission regulations. The Corporation indicates that it plans for the Committee to
14 solicit and accept contributions only from individuals, which may be unlimited in
15 amount, and which may be solicited or given for specific independent expenditures.
16 Such solicitations will also include all disclaimers and notices required by the Act and
17 Commission regulations. The costs of the solicitations would be paid by the Corporation
18 if permissible, or otherwise would be paid by the Committee.

19 The Corporation represents that the Committee will not accept contributions from
20 any political committee (including Club for Growth PAC or any other SSF, authorized
21 committee, or political party committee), candidate, labor organization, foreign national,

⁸ Information related to Club for Growth PAC’s contributions and expenditures is available through the
FEC Disclosure Database at www.fec.gov/finance/disclosure/imaging_info.shtml.

⁹ See notes 3-4, above,

1 government contractor, or corporation, except that the Corporation will pay for some or
2 all of the Committee's establishment, administrative, and solicitation costs.

3 The Committee will not, itself, make any contributions or transfer any funds to
4 any political committee if the amount of a contribution to the recipient committee is
5 governed by the Act, nor will the Committee make any coordinated communications or
6 coordinate any expenditures with any candidate, authorized committee, political party
7 committee, or agent of such persons.

8 ***Legal Background***

9 On March 26, 2010, the United States Court of Appeals for the District of
10 Columbia Circuit issued its opinion in *SpeechNow. Id.* As discussed above, the court
11 held that the Act's contribution limits were unconstitutional as applied to contributions
12 from individuals given to, and received by, SpeechNow.org, a nonconnected political
13 committee making only independent expenditures, because the Act's contribution limits,
14 as applied to SpeechNow.org, advanced no "anti-corruption interest."¹⁰ *Id.* at 696; *see*
15 *also Citizens United v. FEC*, 130 S. Ct. 876, 909 (2010) (finding that "independent
16 expenditures . . . do not give rise to corruption or the appearance of corruption"). The
17 court made clear, however, that it was "only decid[ing] these questions as applied to
18 SpeechNow, an independent expenditure-only group."¹¹ *SpeechNow*, 599 F.3d at 696.

¹⁰ The court also upheld the Act's "organizational and reporting requirements" as applied to SpeechNow.org. Upon meeting the applicable thresholds, the group would be required to register with the Commission as a political committee and abide by the disclosure and reporting requirements applicable to political committees. *SpeechNow*, 599 F.3d at 696-98.

¹¹ On May 27, 2010, in compliance with the D.C. Circuit's opinion, the United States District Court of the District of Columbia issued an order that the Act's contribution limits (2 U.S.C. 441a(a)(1)(C) and 441a(a)(3)) and implementing regulations could not be constitutionally applied against SpeechNow.org or those who contribute to it. On June 11, 2010, the Commission filed a Motion to Alter or Amend the Judgment to reflect that the organizational, administrative, and reporting provisions of the Act are constitutional as applied to the plaintiffs. The Commission's motion remains pending. These, as well as

1 Any issues regarding contributions to candidates, for example, were not before the court
2 and therefore were not reached in the *SpeechNow* opinion. *See id.* Likewise, the
3 *SpeechNow* opinion did not reach the issue of contributions to independent expenditure-
4 only groups made by persons other than individuals. *See id.*

5 Unlike the proposed Committee, SpeechNow.org has no “connected” corporation.
6 *Memorandum and Findings in SpeechNow.org v. FEC*, Civ. No. 08-0248 (2009 WL
7 3101036) (D.D.C. Sept. 28, 2009) at 20 (“If SpeechNow were deemed to be a political
8 committee, it would be classified as a ‘non-connected’ committee,” citing Scott Dep. at
9 17:14-18:2) (*hereinafter* “Findings”). Under its bylaws, SpeechNow.org could accept
10 donations solely from individuals and could not “accept, directly or indirectly, any
11 donations *or anything of value* from business corporations, labor organizations, national
12 banks, federal government contractors, foreign nationals, political parties, or political
13 committees. *Id.* at 5 (emphasis added). Its bylaws further require SpeechNow.org to
14 operate wholly independently of all political committees. *Id.* at 6. Accordingly,
15 SpeechNow.org was required to pay its establishment, administrative, and solicitation
16 costs from the contributions it received from individuals.

17 These Findings are in sharp contrast to the representations made by the
18 Corporation regarding the planned Committee. Specifically, the planned Committee will
19 (a) be “connected” to the Corporation and (b) will be affiliated with Club for Growth
20 PAC, a political committee established, supported and controlled by the Corporation that
21 makes contributions directly to candidates.

other documents related to the *SpeechNow* litigation, are available at
www.fec.gov/law/litigation/speechnow.shtml. The Solicitor General is not petitioning the Supreme Court
to review the court’s decision, but SpeechNow.org has requested and received an extension of time to file a
Petition for a Writ of Certiorari on the questions addressing registration, disclosure, and reporting.

1 **Questions Presented**

- 2 1. *May the Committee solicit and accept donations from the general public if the*
3 *Corporation pays the costs of the solicitations?*
4
5 2. *May the Committee solicit and accept funds for specific independent expenditures*
6 *if the Corporation pays for the costs of the solicitations?*
7
8 3. *Are the answers to Questions 1 or 2 different if the Committee pays all of its own*
9 *establishment, administrative, and solicitation expenses?*
10

11 **Legal Analysis and Conclusions**

12 As indicated above, SpeechNow.org was organized (indeed, is required by its own
13 bylaws) to operate wholly independently of any candidate or other political committees,
14 including political party committees. *Findings* at 6. Its operations are funded solely by
15 contributions from individuals; it could not – per its bylaws – accept “directly or
16 indirectly, any donation or anything of value” from, among others, corporations. *Id.* at 5.
17 Further, SpeechNow.org is prohibited under its bylaws from making “contributions or
18 donations of any kind directly or indirectly to any FEC-regulated candidate or political
19 committee” *Id.* at 6.

20 The Committee, unlike SpeechNow.org, will not operate independently. Instead,
21 the Corporation – serving as the Committee’s connected organization – will establish and
22 administer the Committee, *see* 11 CFR 100.6(a), and the Committee will receive financial
23 support (payment of its establishment, administrative, and solicitation expenses) from the
24 Corporation – thereby providing a significant corporate subsidy to the Committee.

25 The Corporation, like any connected organization, will enjoy the inherent right to
26 control the Committee. *See* 11 CFR 114.5(d); *see also* *Pipefitters Local Union No. 562 v.*
27 *U.S.*, 407 U.S. 385, 426 (1972) (“In these circumstances, it is difficult to conceive how a

1 valid political fund can be meaningfully ‘separate’ from the sponsoring union in any way
2 other than ‘segregated.’”), *Bread Political Action Committee v. Federal Election*
3 *Commission*, 635 F.2d 621, 624, n.3 (7th Cir. 1980) (en banc), *rev’d on jurisdictional*
4 *grounds*, 455 U.S. 577 (1982) (stating that “separate segregated funds are simply political
5 arms of the parent organizations”). Moreover, the Committee will be affiliated with the
6 Corporation’s SSF, Club for Growth PAC, which regularly makes contributions to
7 Federal candidates as well as contributions to other political committees, and may receive
8 contributions from persons other than individuals.¹²

9 SpeechNow.org was established to aggregate the contributions of individuals for
10 the purpose of making independent expenditures independently. The Committee, by
11 contrast, proposes engaging in this activity, with the aid of a corporate subsidy, while
12 controlled by a corporation, that also establishes, administers, and financially supports a
13 separate, contribution-making political committee.

14 The Commission concludes that the Committee, as well as its activities, are
15 materially different from SpeechNow.org and its activities and it would not be
16 appropriate for the Commission to broaden the reach of the jurisdiction of the *SpeechNow*
17 court, and the scope of its decision, especially when the court itself made clear that its
18 holding was limited to the as-applied challenge before it.

19 Accordingly, the Commission concludes that it will not issue an advisory opinion
20 broadening the reach of the holding in *SpeechNow* to the Committee and its proposed

¹² According to Commission regulations, “[a]ll committees (including a separate segregated fund . . .) established, maintained or controlled by the same corporation . . . are affiliated.” 11 CFR 100.5(g)(2); *see also* 11 CFR 102.6(a) (“Transfers of funds may be made without limit on amount between affiliated committees . . .”).

1 activities and therefore the answers that follow are based on the Act and Commission
2 regulations as they currently exist. *See* 2 U.S.C. 437f(b). However, as indicated above,
3 these issues can, and will, be appropriately considered in the Commission's upcoming
4 rulemakings.

5 *1. May the Committee solicit and accept donations from the general public if the*
6 *Corporation pays the costs of the solicitations?*
7

8 The Commission concludes that the Corporation's proposal to fund the
9 Committee's solicitations is prohibited by the Act and Commission regulations. As set
10 forth in the request, the Corporation will serve as the Committee's connected
11 organization thereby making it an SSF of the Corporation. *See* 2 U.S.C. 431(7), 11 CFR
12 100.6. As an SSF, the Committee may solicit voluntary contributions at any time only
13 from its "restricted class," which consists of the connected corporation's executive and
14 administrative personnel, its stockholders, and the families of such persons. 2 U.S.C.
15 441b(b)(4)(A)(i), 11 CFR 114.1(c) and 114.5(g)(1); *see also* 2 U.S.C. 441b(b)(4)(B), 11
16 CFR 114.6 (prescribing conditions under which other employees may be solicited twice
17 yearly in writing).

18 Therefore the Commission concludes that neither the Corporation nor the
19 Committee – as the Corporation's SSF – may solicit contributions for its independent
20 expenditures (or any other purpose) from the general public.

21 *2. May the Committee solicit and accept funds for specific independent expenditures*
22 *if the Corporation pays the costs of the solicitations?*
23

24 Section 110.1(h) of the Commission regulations states that a person may
25 contribute both to a candidate (or his or her authorized committee) and a political
26 committee which has supported or anticipates supporting that same candidate only if

1 (among other things) that person “does not give with the knowledge that a substantial
2 portion will be contributed to, or expended on behalf of, that candidate for the same
3 election.” 11 CFR 110.1(h). *See also* Advisory Opinion 1984-02 (Gramm).

4 Accordingly, if the Committee solicits contributions to fund specific independent
5 expenditures that benefit clearly identified Federal candidates, the amount of any
6 contribution would be attributable to a contributor's maximum allowable contribution to
7 that same candidate. *See* 11 CFR 110.1(h).

8 For the reasons set forth above, the Commission concludes that a rulemaking
9 proceeding, properly conducted pursuant to the APA,¹³ is required in order to broaden the
10 reach of the holding in *SpeechNow* to the Corporation’s plans to have the Committee
11 accept contributions for specific independent expenditures that expressly advocate the
12 election or defeat of a clearly identified Federal candidate without regard for a
13 contributor’s previous contributions to that same Federal candidate.

14 3. *Do the answers to Questions 1 or 2 change if the proposed political committee*
15 *pays its own establishment, administrative, and solicitation expenses?*
16

17 No. Even if the Corporation does not use its own treasury funds to finance the
18 Committee’s establishment, administrative, and solicitation expenses, the Corporation
19 would still be the Committee’s connected organization and, thus, would still control the
20 Committee. Accordingly, the Commission concludes that even if the Corporation does
21 not finance the Committee’s expenses, as a connected organization, the Committee would
22 still be materially different from *SpeechNow.org* and the Commission will not broaden
23 the reach of the holding in *SpeechNow* to the Committee in an advisory opinion.

¹³ *See* note 5, above.

1 This response constitutes an advisory opinion concerning the application of the
2 Act and Commission regulations to the specific transaction or activity set forth in your
3 request. *See* 2 U.S.C. 437f. The Commission emphasizes that, if there is a change in any
4 of the facts or assumptions presented, and such facts or assumptions are material to a
5 conclusion presented in this advisory opinion, then the requestor may not rely on that
6 conclusion as support for its proposed activity. Any person involved in any specific
7 transaction or activity which is indistinguishable in all its material aspects from the
8 transaction or activity with respect to which this advisory opinion is rendered may rely on
9 this advisory opinion. *See* 2 U.S.C. 437f(c)(1)(B). Please note that the analysis or
10 conclusions in this advisory opinion may be affected by subsequent developments in the
11 law including, but not limited to, statutes, regulations, advisory opinions, and case law.
12 The cited advisory opinion is available on the Commission's Web site at
13 <http://saos.nictusa.com/saos/searchao>.

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On behalf of the Commission,

Matthew S. Petersen
Chairman