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Congress of the United States  
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COMMITTEES:  
WAYS AND MEANS  
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SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

## Protect Union Members Right to Know

March 2, 2005

Dear Colleague:

Last year, the Department of Labor (DOL) unveiled regulations bringing long overdue reform to union financial disclosure requirements under the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA). These regulations sought to ensure that the country's unions will be held to a meaningful standard of financial disclosure, as envisioned under the LMRDA, and that millions of rank-and-file union members will know exactly how their hard-earned dues are spent. ***However, revision of the reporting requirements is only half the battle – the other half is making sure that unions comply with and meet their obligations under the law.***

Sadly, as we have heard in numerous hearings before my Subcommittee on Employer-Employee Relations, this is not currently the case. Recent DOL data has shown that more than 35 percent of unions either filed their required disclosure forms late or did not file them at all! ***Unfortunately, the LMRDA currently offers little in the way of enforcement authority for DOL to crack down on these union leaders who violate the law, and ensure that their legal obligations are met.***

**Tomorrow** I will be reintroducing my three bills to make necessary reforms to the Labor-Management Reform and Disclosure Act (LMRDA). These bills are designed to ***increase union leader accountability to union members and secure the ability of the Secretary of Labor to act on behalf of union members when their leadership is not complying.*** The three bills are:

The ***Union Members' Right-to-Know Act*** clarifies that unions must disclose to union members certain information about their rights, such as member union dues, membership rights, member disciplinary procedures, the election and removal of union officers, and other democratic rights. Many unions have argued that notifying members of their democratic rights ***just once*** satisfies their legal obligation, and that they never have to notify members again, even members who started work long after the notice took place. **The bill requires unions to make these disclosures to members within 90 days of joining a union.**

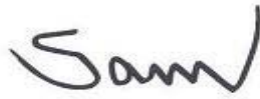
The ***Union Member Information Enforcement Act*** authorizes the Labor Secretary to investigate union member complaints of a union's failure to meet disclosure requirements and bring suit on their behalf to enforce the law. **Under current law, the Labor Department cannot enforce the law on behalf of union members**, thus forcing them to hire their own attorney and challenge the legal expertise available to their union. The high cost of litigation is among the reasons why unions have been able to ignore legal obligations under the LMRDA for more than four decades.

The ***Labor-Management Accountability Act*** for the first time **allows the Labor Secretary to assess civil penalties on unions and employers that either file late, or fail to file at all, financial disclosure reports.** Currently, the Labor

Department has no effective enforcement authority to ensure that union leaders or employers comply with the law and file these reports.

I hope you will join me in supporting and cosponsoring these common-sense good government measures. If you would like to be an original cosponsor, or would like additional information on, any of these bills, please contact Layton Skelly of my staff at 5-4201.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam". The letters are cursive and slightly slanted to the right.

Sam Johnson  
Member of Congress