

“LIBRARY” RHYMES WITH “BRIBERY,” TED STEVENS EDITION

The story of Stephen Payne—who just got canned from his DHS Advisory Committee position because he was selling access in exchange for donations to the Bush Library—makes it clear what a cesspool of political corruption secret and unlimited donations to Presidential libraries can be.

Which is why it is utterly unsurprising that Ted Stevens, a standout in corruption even in Alaska, has placed a hold on a bill designed to make the donations to Presidential libraries transparent.

The argument for keeping the names of donors secret is that some admirers might not want their generosity on public display. But a presidential library is no ordinary charity. It is built with private money and turned over to the National Archives to operate. If requiring disclosure might deter a generous patron with a penchant for anonymity from giving, so be it.

There ought to be a law. Actually, there would be one if it weren't for Republican Sen. Ted Stevens of Alaska. A measure requiring disclosure of library donations – during a presidency and for four years afterward – has twice passed the House. But Stevens blocked the measure in March, arguing that it was unfair to "change the rules" on Bush – even as library officials claim they haven't really started fundraising.

I mean, I can totally understand how, to a guy like Ted Stevens, asking the President to refrain from selling our foreign policy to the highest bidder would seem like "changing the

rules."

Which is why I'm glad the Blue America-endorsed Mark Begich, the guy running to replace Stevens, is making it a campaign issue.

The American people deserve to know who is giving money to politicians at all levels of government, but especially the presidency. It's time for Senator Stevens to stop blocking legislation that would require fundraising for presidential libraries be done out in the open. This move – on legislation that has already passed the House – is yet another instance where Stevens is choosing secrecy over transparency. He should lift his hold and let the light of day into back into Washington.

It's hard to embarrass a guy like Ted Stevens. But I'm all in favor of piling on the charges of corruption against Mr. Toobz.