

**Statement of
Chairman Elijah E. Cummings
Committee on Oversight and Reform**

H.R. 1063, the Presidential Library Donation Reform Act of 2019

February 11, 2019

I introduced the Presidential Library Donation Reform Act of 2019 to make the process of raising money to build presidential libraries more transparent. I thank Representative Mark Meadows for joining me in sponsoring this legislation.

Right now, a president—while still in office—can raise an unlimited amount of money for a presidential library from private donations, and the identities of all the donors can remain secret. It is time to enact this bipartisan legislation to require the disclosure of donor information.

Presidential libraries are built using private funds accepted through a private, non-profit organization. The costs of building modern presidential libraries can be in the hundreds of millions of dollars. The George W. Bush Presidential Center, for example, cost an estimated \$250 million to build, and President Bush raised several hundred million dollars to build the facility.

President Obama has also raised hundreds of millions of dollars for his presidential library. President Obama has voluntarily disclosed the names of donors who have given \$200 or more. While I applaud President Obama's efforts at transparency, we cannot rely on every president to voluntarily disclose donor information.

This bipartisan legislation would require the disclosure of information about every donor who gives \$200 or more for a presidential library and establish penalties for false reporting and non-compliance. This bill would make these vital changes to the law to deter inappropriate behavior.

Former Republican Representative John Duncan of Tennessee first sponsored a bill to improve the process for building presidential libraries 19 years ago. Representative Duncan also sponsored the same legislation we are considering today with me last Congress. The bill had bipartisan support and passed the House last Congress without opposition. It is past time for us to enact this bipartisan reform and shed light on an otherwise opaque system.