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The Senate
State of Iowa
Eighty-fourth General Assembly
STATEHOUSE
Des Moines, IA 50319

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April 22, 2011

Mr. David Miles
President, Board of Regents
11260 Aurora Avenue
Urbandale, IA 50322

Dear Mr. Miles:

I write today with serious questions, reservations, and concerns about an item the Regents published as an upcoming agenda item for your next meeting on April 27-28. Specifically, Agenda Item 3l pertains to designating the Harkin Institute for Public Policy at Iowa State University.

(see
http://www.regents.iowa.gov/Meetings/DocketMemos/11Memos/April2011/0411_ITEM03l.pdf)

The inclusion of this proposed institute raises serious questions about transparency within the Regents system and also prompts very alarming ethical challenges.

First, it is clear this proposal has been discussed at length internally within the Regents and at Iowa State University, yet the people of Iowa and their representatives in the Iowa Legislature and Office of the Governor have been left completely in the dark about the proposal.

Second, naming an institute for a sitting elected official at a public institution raises very serious ethical and legal concerns. Senator Harkin is a current elected official and designating a functionary at a state institution bearing his name clearly presents a serious, unfair, and questionable political advantage to an official that seeks political approval and favor from the Iowa electorate.

Further, while the agenda item notes that private donations will be secured for the institute, I have serious questions about whether individuals and corporations with business before the U.S. Senate and Senator Harkin specifically will be asked for amounts well in excess of federally-regulated amounts that candidates are able to solicit and receive.