



Get the Big Money out of Politics!

Put an end to the corruption in our election system

Our nation was founded on the principle that “We, the People” are to govern ourselves as a democratic republic.

However, the Supreme Court has given constitutional rights meant only for individuals to artificial entities such as corporations, unions and super PACs, and has ruled that money spent to influence the political process cannot be limited. As a result, our government today serves powerful special interests, foreign and domestic, instead of the American people.

Therefore, a necessary step toward genuine self-governance is to amend the Constitution to make clear that:

- The rights protected in the Constitution are those of individual human beings only
- The spending of money is not speech, and political spending can be limited to allow all Americans to participate in the democratic process

Legalized Bribery

The flood of money pouring into politics is drowning our democracy and corrupting our political system. Billionaires and corporate fat cats are spending billions of dollars to influence

our elected officials. In return, they get more tax loopholes and laws that favor their businesses. It’s **crony capitalism** at its worst. This is **legalized bribery**, and the voices of everyday citizens are not being heard. It’s Fee Speech, not Free Speech and clearly not what our Founding Fathers intended.

This is a **non-partisan** issue. According to polls, over 90% of Americans are very concerned about the corruption in Washington and want something done about it. This is about **political justice**. How can our politicians represent us, when they’re paid millions to represent someone else?

Building the Democracy Reform Movement

We find ourselves in a long-term struggle to save our republic from dominance by moneyed special interests. Large corporate interests have attempted to influence governments for centuries, but the concerted effort in recent decades has been very successful. Income inequality has reached levels similar to the Gilded Age. Reclaiming our republic requires a **reform movement similar in size to the women’s suffrage and civil rights movements**.

This movement has already grown tremendously since the *Citizens United* decision in 2010. More than **5 million people** have signed petitions expressing their strong opposition to *Citizens United*. Over **820 communities** across the U.S. have already passed resolutions calling for a constitutional amendment, including over **160 governments in Wisconsin** and **20 state legislatures**. Once enough states press Congress on this, they will be forced to act.

What is the goal?

The goal is to reclaim our republic by permitting limits on how much money can be contributed and spent in American elections. To do this we must amend the U.S. Constitution to make it clear that only human beings have Constitutional rights - not corporations, unions and other artificial entities, and that money is not political speech under the First Amendment.

How did this get to be such a problem?

The Supreme Court has been slowly yielding to corporate pressure for over 130 years. In 1886, a loophole in the 14th amendment was exploited, which resulted in the legal fiction that corporations had human rights. In 1976, the Court ruled that money is equivalent to free speech. In the 2010 case, *Citizens United*, the Supreme Court struck down the McCain/Feingold law, which has resulted in unlimited campaign spending. These are three cases, but there are many more.

What is corporate personhood?

Under current law, corporations have inalienable human rights like free speech and privacy. This has wide-ranging implications – for example, the right to free speech means that corporations (e.g. Super PACs) may spend unlimited amounts of money on political campaigns. The right to privacy means that regulators are not allowed to make surprise inspections on factories. Of course, the **people** who work for, run, and own corporations are entitled to the rights of free speech and privacy – but a corporation is not a person. It is a legal invention for making money, and the most egregious abuses of corporate power are made possible by the idea that they have human rights.

What's wrong with corporations?

Nothing! Corporations are an essential part of our economy. But large corporations and wealthy individuals command resources vastly exceeding those of ordinary citizens. Therefore, unregulated political contributions and spending becomes grossly unbalanced. The voices of ordinary citizens are drowned out, our interests are sacrificed, our representation lost.

What about unions?

Unions are a type of a corporation and as such, the *Citizens United* decision removed any limits on their political contributions. Union contributions will be subject to limits again once an amendment overturning *Citizens United* is adopted.

What about lobbying?

Lobbying is free speech protected by the First Amendment. It can serve a useful educational function in our democracy. It's perfectly fine for lobbyists to meet with politicians, but there shouldn't be any money exchanging hands, nor any favors. The Supreme Court has twisted our Constitution to favor the Donor Class. The Framers of our Constitution considered political corruption a key threat and we need to restore their original intentions.

What can I do to help?

Tell your state legislators and candidates to support bills AJR 11 / SJR 9 which call for a statewide vote to measure public support for overturning *Citizens United*. For more information, search 'citizens united wisconsin'