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**PUBLIC INTEREST GROUPS AND INDEPENDENT BUSINESS  
ADVOCATES CONDEMN SUPREME COURT'S RULING ON  
CORPORATE MONEY IN ELECTIONS**

**CALL FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT  
TO OVERTURN COURT DECISION**

**"Free Speech Rights Are For People, Not Corporations"**

WASHINGTON, DC – A coalition of public interest organizations and independent business advocates strongly condemned today's ruling by the US Supreme Court allowing unlimited corporate money in US elections and announced that it is launching a campaign to amend the United States Constitution to overturn the ruling. The groups, Voter Action, Public Citizen, the Center for Corporate Policy, and the American Independent Business Alliance, say the Court's ruling in *Citizens United v. FEC* poses a serious and direct threat to democracy. They aim, through their constitutional amendment campaign, to correct the judiciary's creation of corporate rights under the First Amendment over the past three decades. Immediately following the Court's ruling, the groups unveiled a new website – [www.freespeechforpeople.org](http://www.freespeechforpeople.org) – devoted to this campaign.

"Free speech rights are for people, not corporations," says John Bonifaz, Voter Action's legal director. "In wrongly assigning First Amendment protections to corporations, the Supreme Court has now unleashed a torrent of corporate money in our political process unmatched by any campaign expenditure totals in US history. This campaign to amend the Constitution will seek to restore the First Amendment to its original purpose."

The public interest groups say that, since the late 1970s, a divided Supreme Court has transformed the First Amendment into a powerful tool for corporations seeking to evade democratic control and sidestep sound public welfare measures. For the first two centuries of the American republic, the groups argue, corporations did not have First Amendment rights to limit the reach of democratically-enacted regulations.

"The corporate rights movement has reached its extreme conclusion in today's Supreme Court ruling," says Jeffrey Clements, general counsel to [www.freespeechforpeople.org](http://www.freespeechforpeople.org) and a consultant to Voter Action. "In recent years, corporations have misused the First Amendment to evade and invalidate democratically-enacted reforms, from elections to healthcare, from financial reform to climate change and environmental protection, and more. Today's ruling, reversing longstanding precedent which prohibits corporate expenditures in elections, now requires a constitutional amendment response to protect our democracy."

In support of their new campaign, the groups point to prior amendments to the US Constitution which were enacted to correct egregiously wrong decisions of the US Supreme Court directly impacting the democratic process, including the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment prohibiting discrimination in voting based on race and the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, prohibiting discrimination in voting based on gender.

"The Court has invented the idea that corporations have First Amendment rights to influence election outcomes out of whole cloth," says Robert Weissman, president of Public Citizen.

"There is surely no originalist interpretation to support this outcome, since the Court created the rights only in recent decades. Nor can the outcome be justified in light of the underlying purpose and spirit of the First Amendment. Corporations are state-created entities, not real people. They do not have expressive interests like humans; and, unlike humans, they are uniquely motivated by a singular focus on their economic bottom line. Corporate spending on elections defeats rather than advances the democratic thrust of the First Amendment."

"With this decision, the Court has abandoned its usual practice of adjudicating non-constitutional claims before constitutional ones, a radical departure that indicates how far the Roberts Court may be willing to go in order to serve the powerful 'business civil liberties' agenda," says Charlie Cray, director of the Center for Corporate Policy. "While the immediate effect is likely to be a surge in corporate cash in election campaigns, this could also signal the beginning of a sustained attack on the rights and ability of everyday people to govern the behavior of corporations, which, if successful, could effectively eviscerate what's left of American democracy."

"American citizens have repeatedly amended the Constitution to defend democracy when the Supreme Court acts in collusion with democracy's enemies, whether they are slavemasters, states imposing poll taxes on voters, or the opponents of woman suffrage," says Jamin Raskin, professor of constitutional law and the First Amendment at American University's Washington College of Law. "Today, the Court has enthroned corporations, permitting them not only all kinds of special economic rights but now, amazingly, moving to grant them the same political rights as the people. This is a moment of high danger for democracy so we must act quickly to spell out in the Constitution what the people have always understood: that corporations do not enjoy the political and free speech rights that belong to the people of the United States."

For more information on the constitutional amendment campaign, see [www.freespeechforpeople.org](http://www.freespeechforpeople.org).