

# INTRODUCTION

**“Who are to be the electors of the federal representatives?  
Not the rich, more than the poor;  
not the learned, more than the ignorant;  
not the haughty heirs of distinguished names,  
more than the humble sons of obscure and unpropitious fortune.  
The electors are to be the great body of  
The People of the United States...”**

— JAMES MADISON, 1788

**On January 21, 2010, the U.S. Supreme Court** ruled in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* that the First Amendment gives corporations the right to spend unlimited amounts of money to influence elections through “independent expenditures” – money spent by groups separate from actual campaigns to oppose or support a candidate. The ruling was based on the faulty notion that spending on elections is the same as speech. Even more amazingly, the Court said that corporate “speakers” should have the same First Amendment rights as human beings when it comes to election spending.

A circuit court’s ruling based on *Citizens United, SpeechNow.org v. FEC*, made it possible for wealthy individuals to give unlimited amounts as well, as long as the funds are not given directly to candidates themselves. The result has been a tsunami of cash funding negative advertising and other election-related activities, drowning out the voices of all but corporations and the few hundred wealthy individuals who make the majority of contributions.

Corporations are not people. They do not breathe, eat, or sleep. They can’t dance, fall in love, or raise children. They do not fight in wars or develop cancer. They do not vote. Yet, now they threaten to trample our democracy by claiming constitutional protections that were intended only for people. The ruling must be overturned. The only way to overturn a Supreme Court ruling based on the Constitution is for the Court to reverse itself (unlikely), or to pass a constitutional amendment.

A constitutional amendment must pass by two-thirds majority of each Chamber of Congress and be ratified by three-quarters of the states. We have amended the Constitution 27 times in our nation’s history, including the Bill of Rights. The 26th Amendment gave people between 18 and 21 the right to vote. Young people led the movement to make sure they couldn’t be sent to war before they could vote.

The public overwhelmingly opposes the *Citizens United* decision. The 99% are with us. Just as those who championed women’s and civil rights before us, we have to organize to win this fight. Campus resolutions will add to the growing momentum for an amendment. We at Public Citizen have been organizing nationwide with much success on the state and local level.

This booklet is designed to guide you and your campaign to pass a student government resolution calling for a constitutional amendment to overturn *Citizens United*. We encourage you to stay in touch with us. We want to help you in every way we can and look forward to hearing about your successes.

