FACT SHEET: 
CITIZENS UNITED V. FEC

“Democracy cannot function effectively when its constituent members believe laws are being bought and sold.”
—Justice John Paul Stevens, 2010

Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission overturned a century of campaign finance law. Already, it is dealing a devastating blow to our democracy. Corporate money flooded the 2010 congressional midterm elections and is inundating the 2012 presidential elections. We must act.

AMERICANS ARE OUTRAGED

• Nearly nine in ten Americans say that big companies (88%) have too much power in Washington, D.C. ¹
• Eight in ten Americans oppose the court’s decision in Citizens United. ² Across the board, Republicans, Democrats, and Independents who have heard about Citizens United believe by a significant margin (almost 4-to-1) that the ruling is having a negative effect. ³
• 83% of Americans (85% of Democrats, 81% of Republicans and 78% of Independents) think there should be limits on how much money corporations can give in elections. ⁴
• 73% of the public agrees that “there would be less corruption if there were limits on how much could be given to Super PACs.” Only 14% disagree. 75% of Republicans and 78% of Democrats agree. ⁵
• 66% of small business owners surveyed view the Citizens United ruling as bad for small business’ ability to compete. Only 9% said it was good for small business. ⁶

SINCE THE COURT’S DECISION, ELECTION EXPENDITURES HAVE SOARED

• Spending by outside groups rose 243% in 2012 over the previous presidential election cycle. ⁷
• Super PACs, which became funnels for outside spending after an appeals court applied Citizens United, collectively spent more than $609 million during the 2012 election cycle. Overall outside spending topped $1.29 billion. ⁸
• In the 2012 election, the largest super PAC spent an astounding $142 million. ⁹
• The 2012 election was the most expensive in history, costing more than $7 billion. ¹⁰
WHY A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT?

- A constitutional amendment is the long-term solution to fully overturn the Court’s decision, restore our rights, and assert once and for all that democracy is for people, not corporations.
- Our elected officials cannot effectively represent the people when they fear that millions of dollars of corporate money will go toward defeating them in the next election.
- A corporation is not a person. It does not vote and should not be able to have such tremendous influence over election outcomes. Neither should the richest individual corporate executives.
- A constitutional amendment is ultimately the only way to finally overcome the profound challenges to our democracy posed by Citizens United and related decisions.

SUPPORT IS GROWING FOR AN AMENDMENT

- So far, more than 2 million signatures have been gathered in support of an amendment. More than 125 members of Congress have declared their support, as has President Barack Obama.
- More than 120 national organizations – groups concerned about civil rights, the environment and climate change, open government and workers’ rights – have joined the call for a constitutional amendment. The organizations include the Sierra Club, U.S. PIRG, Hip Hop Caucus, and more: http://www.united4thepeople.org/orgs.html.
- Nearly 500 communities have passed resolutions calling for a constitutional amendment, from New York City to Los Angeles.
- Fifteen states – California, Connecticut, Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico, Rhode Island, Vermont and West Virginia – and the District of Columbia have called for an amendment. (For an updated list of states that have passed an amendment, email amendment@citizen.org or call us at 202-588-1000.)
SOURCES

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