

## Supreme Court & Corporate Power - Important!

February 5, 2010

Dear Friends,

As you presumably know, in January the Supreme Court issued an outrageous decision that held for-profit corporations have a First Amendment right to spend unlimited amounts of money from their treasuries to influence election outcomes.

The biggest corporations - the same ones we all fight on a daily basis - will now be able to almost literally buy elections by drowning out the peoples' voices with the billions of dollars they have at their disposal.

Public Citizen and our allies have launched a campaign for a constitutional amendment to overturn this decision, by establishing that corporations do not have the First Amendment rights (except for freedom of the press). The First Amendment was intended to protect the political and expressive interests of real, live humans, not artificial entity corporations. Our campaign aims to re-establish this modest principle.

I'm writing to ask you do two things to help fight grow fight:

1. Sign our petition calling for such an amendment, which you can do by clicking here: <[www.dontgetrolled.org](http://www.dontgetrolled.org)>.
2. Please ask at least 10 friends, colleagues or family members -- and preferably many more -- to do the same thing.

\* If you're Facebook inclined, join the campaign here as well: <http://tinyurl.com/yd45zu2>

There's a lot of background information on the Supreme Court case (known as Citizens United) at our site <[www.dontgetrolled.org](http://www.dontgetrolled.org)>.

The short story of what happened is: The Court decided to turn a case that had involved a narrow, relatively technical question about campaign finance law into an opportunity to massively expand corporate rights. It asked that the case be re-argued to consider matters that parties to the case had not considered to be at issue. The court in a 5-4 ruling then proceeded to overturn key campaign finance cases; but more generally to hold that, under the First Amendment, corporations with some minor exceptions have to be treated the same as people.

The very broad and aggressive decision does not leave much space for maneuver. Public Citizen is escalating our effort to win public financing of federal elections -- which would at least give candidates a base of decent funding to offset whatever corporations choose to spend. And we are working on some other legislative approaches that would mitigate the damage, including a proposal that an affirmative majority of shareholders must approve any corporate electoral-related expenditure.

But there's no way to escape the damage from this decision unless it is

Communications Workers of America Local 4250  
3055 Glenwood-Dyer Road, Lynwood, Illinois 60411  
Elizabeth R. VanDerWoude, President (708) 757-4065 (Office)  
[evp4250@sbcglobal.net](mailto:evp4250@sbcglobal.net) (E-Mail)  
<http://www.cwlocal4250.org> (Website)

reversed -- hence the need for a constitutional amendment.

It doesn't take much imagining to figure out how this decision will play out. There's going to be a lot more corporate money in the electoral process. A lot of it will be laundered through front groups who will run attack ads on candidates hostile to corporate interests. Elected officials across the board will think twice about challenging the business agenda. Those individuals who stand up against corporations will face the prospect of huge funding against them in the next election -- this will be most serious at the state and local level for politicians whose actions hurt particular companies (the developer who wanted a building permit, the mining company denied authorization to proceed with a project, the retailer who wanted a tax abatement, etc). As a result, it is going to be much harder to move a progressive agenda on any issue affecting corporations -- whether the issue is healthcare, climate change, reining in Wall Street, protecting worker rights, stopping consumer ripoffs, promoting a just trade policy, etc etc.

We did not at Public Citizen lightly take on the idea of a constitutional amendment. But this decision is so bad, and its consequences likely to be so broadly felt, that a constitutional fix is in order. The amendment approach also lets us address head-on a very dangerous trend of the Supreme Court providing more and more constitutional rights to corporations, including especially First Amendment rights. We don't have any illusions that winning a constitutional amendment is easy or done quickly. But we think this campaign is right on the merits; we've already seen it catch fire in the few days since the Court's decision; and we are committed for the long term.

The first major hurdle facing a constitutional amendment campaign is to show that it has real support. That's why the simple act of signing a petition is in this case very significant. Significant, but easy. It'll be the first step in what will be a huge campaign to fight back corporate power over our lives and our democracy. Just click here and add your name: <[www.dontgetrolled.org](http://www.dontgetrolled.org)>.

Thanks!  
In Solidarity,  
- James

=====

James Ploeser - Senior Organizer  
Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch  
[jploeser@citizen.org](mailto:jploeser@citizen.org) + [www.tradewatch.org](http://www.tradewatch.org)  
+ 202.454.5111 (office) 202.547.7392 (fax)  
+ 202.253.9274 (mobile)

++ Join the WTO Turnaround Campaign at [www.wtoturnaround.org](http://www.wtoturnaround.org)  
++ Check out our Blog at [www.EyesOnTrade.org](http://www.EyesOnTrade.org)

Communications Workers of America Local 4250  
3055 Glenwood-Dyer Road, Lynwood, Illinois 60411  
Elizabeth R. VanDerWoude, President (708) 757-4065 (Office)  
[evp4250@sbcglobal.net](mailto:evp4250@sbcglobal.net) (E-Mail)  
<http://www.cwalocal4250.org> (Website)