



**“This nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”
– Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address**

RECLAIMING A PEOPLE’S DEMOCRACY

Background

In 2010, the Supreme Court ruling in *Citizens United v. FEC* fundamentally changed the way we moderate campaign financing at the state and federal level. The ruling, which equates financial contributions with free speech, removed the few constraints on outside campaign spending and created an environment in which Super PACs, unions, corporations, and the extremely wealthy dwarf the contributions of average citizens – dramatically skewing the relationship between political candidates and voters. Not only did this decision open the floodgates for more money in our elections, but election spending has become increasingly difficult to track back to its source and the influence of out-of-state interests in local & state elections has significantly grown.

As a result, today, when Americans are asked if they believe big money has a corrupting and undue influence on our political process, the answer is consistently a resounding yes.

Public perception of corruption and distrust in elected officials is at an all time high, and may pose the biggest threat to a functioning democracy we have ever faced.

“Our nation is facing a crisis of liberty if we do not control campaign expenditures. We must prove that elective office is not for sale.” Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater

Moving Past *Citizens United*

To restore faith in our democracy and the voice of all citizens in our elections – the solution is to overturn *Citizens United* with a Constitutional Amendment. This necessary action is not taken lightly, and is not an easy undertaking. If we are to restore our ability to place reasonable limits on campaign financing, we need to pass an amendment through 2/3 of Congress and 3/4 of the states. While this is a daunting goal, 16 states have already moved forward by passing state resolutions calling for the amendment since 2010.

State level resolutions have largely been successful due to the grassroots effort and outcry of local voters, and a show of support from city level resolutions passed by city councils across the country. So far, over 500 cities have demonstrated their support to restore our ability to limit election spending through a Constitutional Amendment.

The Importance of Iowa

With the first caucus in the nation and as a swing state with numerous local elections susceptible to outside influence, Iowa needs to demonstrate leadership on this issue more than most. It is essential that we demonstrate our commitment to the core values in our democracy by passing local and statewide resolutions prior to the 2014 elections, while also shedding light on election spending by strengthening campaign finance disclosure laws.



THE REAL IMPACT OF CITIZENS UNITED

Public Opinion & Voter Confidence

Since 2010, public polls have shown:

- At least 77% of voters believe that corporations have more control of our political system than average citizens do.¹
- Of adults polled, 79% would support a law that puts a limit on the amount of money candidates can raise and spend on their political campaigns.²
- A solid 60% majority of voters say that the middle class will not catch a break in this economy until we reduce the influence of lobbyists, big banks, and big donors on our government.³
- The Supreme Court's decision in the *Citizens United* case is opposed by 85% of Democrats, 76% of Independents, and 81% of Republicans.⁴
- Near consensus, 80% of voters say there is too much big money spent in elections today.³
- Overall, 69% of voters agree new rules that let corporations, unions and people give unlimited money to Super PACs will lead to corruption.⁵
- Over 25% of adults say they are less likely to vote because big donors and Super PACs have so much influence.⁵

Increase in Political Spending

Since 2010, election spending has dramatically increased and transparency has decreased:

Federally:

- The top 32 Super PAC donors matched the \$313 million that President Obama and Mitt Romney raised from all 3.7 million small donors to their campaigns.⁶
- Election spending reached \$6 billion for federal races alone - \$700 million more than the previous "most expensive election" in history.⁷
- Of outside spending, 31% was "dark money," coming from organizations that are not required to disclose original sources.⁶

In Iowa:

- Super PACs spent nearly \$2.6 million on Iowa federal elections in 2012 -
 - 36.6% of that spending came from undisclosed sources.⁶
 - 96% of that spending came from groups federally registered outside of Iowa.⁶
- President Obama and Mitt Romney spent over \$74.5 million on TV ads in Iowa alone.⁸
- In 2012, the average state Senate race cost \$141,000 and the average state House race cost \$62,000.⁹
- Total spending on local state legislative races in Iowa surpassed \$39.5million.⁹

¹Hart Research Associates Survey. 2011. http://freespeechforpeople.org/sites/default/files/me10129b_public.pdf

²Gallup Poll. June 2013. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/163208/half-support-publicly-financed-federal-campaigns.aspx>

³Public Campaign Action Fund Survey. January 2012. <http://campaignmoney.org/files/DemCorpPCAFmemoFINAL.pdf>

⁴Washington Post-ABC poll. February 2010. http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2010-02-16/politics/36773318_1_corporations-unions-new-limits

⁵Brennon Center for Justice Survey. April 2012. <http://www.brennancenter.org/analysis/national-survey-super-pacs-corruption-and-democracy>

⁶Iowa PIRG & DEMOS. "Billion Dollar Democracy." January 2013. <http://www.iowapirg.org/reports/iap/billion-dollar-democracy>

⁷Hudson, John. The Atlantic Wire. "The Most Expensive Election in History by the Numbers." Nov. 2012.

⁸Des Moines Register. "Television ad spending in Iowa." Nov. 2012. <http://data.desmoinesregister.com/dmr/iowa-elections/ad-spending/>

⁹Iowa 2012. Follow the Money. http://www.followthemoney.org/database/state_overview.phtml?y=2012&s=IA