



For Immediate Release
 DATE: May 27, 2016
 Contact: Edward Erikson
 Phone: 202-420-9947
 Email: edward.erikson@gmail.com

LOCAL AND NATIONAL DEMOCRACY ADVOCATES URGE GOVERNOR BROWN TO SIGN THE OVERTURN *CITIZENS UNITED* ACT

SACRAMENTO, CA: Today the California Senate passed SB 254 The Overturn *Citizens United* Act in a 26 to 11 vote. The bill now goes to Governor Jerry Brown's desk. SB 254 would place a voter instruction on the November ballot that would ask Californians if their representatives should "use all of their constitutional authority...to overturn *Citizens United v. FEC* and other applicable judicial precedents."

Supporters of the bill gathered in the Senate gallery as the bill's lead author Ben Allen of Santa Monica urged his colleagues to join him in support of the bill:

"*Citizens United* is but one of the many U.S. Supreme Court rulings that have made effective campaign finance reform more difficult. It rolled back the previous ban on corporate spending in federal elections, opening the door to unlimited corporate funds being spent on influencing elections." Said Senator Allen.

"At the core of these decisions is the belief that spending money in an election is a protected form of free speech and those rights extend not only to human beings but to other entities as well, including corporations. I believe most Californians do not share that sentiment and we should give them the opportunity to make their collective voices heard." Said Senator Allen.

Following the vote, supporters of SB 254 submitted to the Governor's office a letter asking Governor Brown to sign the bill into law and let the people vote to overturn *Citizens United*.

"We asked Governor Brown to let democracy work" said Michele Sutter of MOVI, money out voters in. "America needs to have the conversation about how to fix a broken system where those who have everything get more and those with nothing get less. I think that fix will require

a Constitutional amendment. Others disagree, but we need to have the conversation. With the governor's signature we will have that conversation here in California."

QUOTES

"People across the nation are rising up to call for a 28th Amendment to the US Constitution which will end the big money dominance of our elections and the fiction of corporations being treated as people with constitutional rights," says John Bonifaz, the Co-Founder and President of Free Speech For People. "With today's vote in the California State Senate, we are now one step closer to ensuring that the people of California will have their voices heard this November on this critical question of our time. We the people, not corporations and big money interests, shall govern in America."

"Money is not speech, and corporations are not people. Full stop. This is obvious to anyone not on the payroll of an enormous corporate outfit," explained Eddie Kurtz, president and executive director of the California-based Courage Campaign. "As we've seen recently in the People's Report Card of California, Sacramento is drowning in millions of dollars from corporations, leading to more and more legislators voting for the best interest of those corporations, not their constituents. Now is the time to let Californians help lead that movement to overturn Citizens United and formally weigh in on the most vital political issue of our time."

"If our democratic system of representative government is to survive, the deeply damaging *Citizens United* and related rulings must be overturned," said Trent Lange, President of the California Clean Money Campaign. "Billionaires should not have thousands of times more free speech than the average American just because they have so much more money to spend on elections."

"Today's vote moves California closer to reclaiming our democracy and undoing the corrosive impact of *Citizens United*," said Jon Fox, senior democracy campaigner at Friends of the Earth. "It's clear that we must act now to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, and we can't do that while big oil and gas giants like Chevron and Exxon keep pumping money into our politics to block the policies we need to protect the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the safety of our communities."

"The need to limit the influence of extremely wealthy and corporate donors is clearer than ever during this election cycle. At the urging of their constituents, the legislature put Prop 49 on the ballot back in 2014 and now again in 2016. We urge Gov. Brown to sign the Overturn Citizens United Act and let the people vote," said Emily Rusch, Executive Director, CALPIRG.

"Voters across the political spectrum are clamoring for something to be done about the problem of big money in our political system.," said Sylvia Moore, Southern California Organizer for California Common Cause. "Everyone should have an equal voice in our democracy – not just those with access to the biggest pocketbook."

BACKGROUND

Californians were poised to vote on a similar measure in 2014 when the CA Legislature passed SB 1272, The Overturn Citizens United Act" and that bill became law and qualified for the ballot as Proposition 49.

But Californians did not vote on Prop 49 in 2014. The California Supreme Court ordered Prop 49 removed from the ballot while the Court considered the measure's legitimacy. The California Supreme Court had never before in the history of California removed a ballot measure enacted by the CA Legislature.

In January 2016, the CA Supreme Court ultimately ruled 6 to 1 that Proposition 49 was a legitimate exercise of legislative authority, but neglected to order the measure restored to the November 2016 ballot, as the CA Legislature had requested, insisting instead that the legislature pass a new bill.

In her dissent from her colleagues at the time Prop 49 was removed from the ballot, Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakayue cautioned her colleagues against taking the "extraordinary step" that would "disenfranchise voters."

In the October 2015 hearing on the Prop 49 case the Chief Justice responded to the often cited "ballot clutter" argument against the voter instruction measure saying "[W]hat does ballot clutter matter if it leads to substantive law?"

Substantive law is exactly what California's last voter instruction measure led to. It was 1892 and the question posed to the electorate concerned the direct election of Senators. Californians passed that voter instruction and 21 years later the 17th Amendment to the US Constitution was ratified.

California voters are hoping that their representatives in the CA Legislature and Governor Brown give them the opportunity again to instruct their representatives on a matter of grave concern to all Americans.

To arrange interviews, please contact Edward Erikson at Edward.Erikson@gmail.com or call 202-420-9947

Money Out Voters In is a nonpartisan, grassroots organization dedicated to putting the American people in charge of our own government. <http://www.moneyoutvotersin.org/>

Free Speech For People is a national non-partisan campaign pressing for a Constitutional amendment to reclaim our democracy. Learn more at: <http://freespeechforpeople.org/>

Courage Campaign fights for a more progressive California and country. It is powered by more than 900,000 online member activists. Learn more at: <https://www.couragecampaign.org/>

California Common Cause is a non-profit, non-partisan, grassroots advocacy organization that works to strengthen public participation and ensure that public officials and public institutions are accountable and responsive to citizens. <http://www.commoncause.org/states/california/>

California Clean Money Campaign is a non-profit, non-partisan, organization dedicated to achieving an open and accountable government that is responsive to the needs of all Californians. <http://www.caclean.org/>

The California Public Interest Research Group, CALPIRG, is a statewide consumer group that stands up to powerful interests whenever they threaten our health and safety, our financial security, or our right to fully participate in our democratic society. <http://www.calpirg.org/>

Friends of the Earth strives for a more healthy and just world. To accomplish our mission, Friends of the Earth is working at the nexus of environmental protection, economic policy and social justice to fundamentally transform the way our countries and the world value people and the environment through landmark environmental laws, precedent-setting legal victories and groundbreaking reforms of regulatory, corporate and financial institution policies. <http://www.foe.org/>