



December 13, 2016

FREE SPEECH FOR PEOPLE STATEMENT ON PRESIDENT-ELECT TRUMP, BIGOTRY, AND AUTHORITARIANISM

Free Speech For People was formed almost seven years ago on the day of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Citizens United v. FEC*, a decision that helped unleash the era of big-money politics as we know it today. This year's election has demonstrated widespread public concern with the corrupting and unequal political influence of big money in politics. In state and local elections, voters overwhelmingly supported measures to reduce the influence of big money. For example, in California and Washington State, voters passed statewide measures calling for a constitutional amendment to overturn *Citizens United*, and in Wisconsin, seventeen cities, towns, counties, and villages voted, by margins as high as 91 percent, to join this call as well. In South Dakota, voters passed a ballot measure to reduce corruption by limiting campaign contributions and by creating a voter-driven public campaign financing system. And of course, in the presidential race, concern with corruption and big-money influence in Washington, D.C., was a key motivating factor for voters throughout the primary and general elections.

At the same time, the election and its aftermath have given rise to disturbing statements, events, and trends of bigotry and creeping authoritarianism. This is not a partisan matter. As an organization, Free Speech For People is scrupulously trans-partisan: We recognize that Americans of good faith disagree on a wide range of issues, and that the vast majority of voters—Republicans, Democrats, and independents—support reforms to get big money out of politics, even if they disagree on many of the particular policies that a government free of big-money influence should enact. And we proudly work with Republicans, Democrats, and independents alike in both our constitutional amendment work and our legal advocacy. Through our [Across the Aisle](#) report, we have highlighted leading Republican voices in the fight to overturn *Citizens United*. Through our legal advocacy in the [case that could end super PACs](#), we have assembled a bipartisan legal team, and a bipartisan group of Republican and Democrat officials and candidates, to challenge super PAC donor influence in both the Democrat and Republican parties. And through our public education, we have never hesitated to criticize the influence of big money in both parties.

But our core values are now uniquely tested by this moment. The principles that Thomas Jefferson voiced in the Declaration of Independence—"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness,"—underlie our mission. When we say that corporations are not people, it is because we believe that people, first and foremost, are entitled to dignity and [political equality](#) under our constitutional system.

This principle lies at the foundation of our work. We believe that [money in politics is a civil rights issue](#)—but only one of many critically important civil rights issues of our time. We fight corporations claiming "freedom of speech" to [avoid compliance with food labeling](#)

[requirements](#) because we believe that the Constitution’s guarantee of freedom of speech is essential for self-government and the dignity and autonomy of people. We fight corporations invoking “corporate religious exemptions” to [avoid compliance with employee benefits laws](#) because we believe that the Constitution’s guarantee of freedom of religion is essential for people of all religions. We fight corporations invoking the Constitution’s guarantee of “equal protection of the laws” to [avoid compliance with minimum wage laws](#) because we believe that equal protection is a mandate for equal dignity before the law of all people.

In our organization, we are committed to hiring and employing individuals qualified for positions based on their education, training, experience, and personal qualifications without regard to race, color, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sex, sexual orientation, age, national origin, disability, veteran status, or any other category protected by federal, state or local laws. And we do not tolerate harassment.

We are impelled to speak now because these core values are threatened. Our republic cannot thrive when Americans live in fear of persecution or autocracy. Unfortunately, the President-elect, Donald Trump, and some of his advisors have directly or indirectly made or promoted statements and policies that inspire exactly that fear—and we do not believe it is partisan to say so.

The preamble to the Constitution provides that “We the People of the United States” establish the Constitution “in Order to form a more perfect Union.” We cannot achieve a more perfect Union if powerful government officials of any political party endorse, or refuse to condemn, hatred against the people in and of this country. Many leaders of the Republican Party—even some who have not yet joined us in our work to get big money out of politics—have spoken up against this hatred, and we commend them. We, in turn, stand with all people who have been the target of hateful statements.

We call upon the President-elect and all public officials to completely and totally repudiate all elements of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, gender expression, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, national origin, disability, veteran status, or any other protected group status, and all forms of authoritarian governance that threaten the constitutional rights of all Americans.