

March 30, 2017

**TESTIMONY OF OSKE BUCKLEY, DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION AND
FINANCE FOR FREE SPEECH FOR PEOPLE, BEFORE THE
TEXAS LEGISLATURE HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE
ON STATE & FEDERAL POWER & RESPONSIBILITY**

In Support Of:

H.C.R. 34, A resolution urging Congress to propose and submit to the states for ratification an amendment to the U.S. Constitution overturning the Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*.

Dear Chair Drew Darby, Vice-Chair Andrew S. Murr, and Members of the House Select Committee on State & Federal Power & Responsibility:

My name is Oske Buckley and I reside in Austin. I appreciate the opportunity to submit this written testimony on behalf of Free Speech For People in support of H.C.R. 34, a resolution urging Congress to propose and submit to the states for ratification an amendment to the U.S. Constitution overturning the Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*. I am the Director of Administration and Finance at Free Speech For People, a national nonpartisan nonprofit organization working to get big money out of politics and restore democracy to the people. Free Speech For People was launched on the day of the *Citizens United v. FEC* decision and we have worked since to defend the fundamental principles of our democracy and self-government: of, by, and for the people. We carry out this work by serving as a leading force in building the movement for a 28th amendment to the Constitution to overturn *Citizens United* and in advancing in the courts a new jurisprudence on money in politics.

With every increasingly expensive election, at the local and national level, we continue to witness the detrimental effect of money in politics on our political process. This includes creating a vast political inequality in our democracy by allowing big money interests and the wealthy few to drown out the voices of everyday people, providing corporations with greater influence in our democracy than people, and building an untenable barrier to entry for marginalized people seeking to serve in public office.

Getting big money out of politics is an issue that unites people across party lines, across the country, and across Texas. A December 2015 study conducted by the Pew Research Center reveals that 75% of Democrats and Republicans believe money has a greater influence on politics than ever before¹. A 2011 nationwide voter survey conducted by Hart Research Associates found that a majority of Republicans (68%), Independents (82%), and Democrats (87%) surveyed support a constitutional

¹ <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/12/07/as-more-money-flows-into-campaigns-americans-worry-about-its-influence/>

amendment to overturn *Citizens United*, with four in every five Americans in favor of an amendment². And, a June 2015 study conducted by the New York Times notes that 84% of Americans believe money has too much influence in political campaigns³. Everyday people cannot compete with corporate treasuries and the bank accounts of the wealthy few and are being excluded and disengaged from the political process as a result.

In addition, overturning *Citizens United* is critical for supporting the civic engagement of women, people of color, and young people, who have less access to donor networks and are disproportionately impacted by the high cost of viably participating in the political process.⁴ A new and growing body of empirical research demonstrates that eliminating big money in politics advances political equality, including encouraging economic mobility⁵, racial equity⁶, and a representative government, while fostering a true democracy that works for all.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to pass H.C.R. 34 and join the 18 states and over 725 cities and towns⁷ on record calling for an amendment to overturn *Citizens United*. Passing H.C.R. 34 can help turn the tide on the deluge of big money in politics and affirm Texas as a leader in the movement to ensure all people have an equal vote and equal voice in our democracy.

² https://freespeechforpeople.org/wp-content/uploads/archive/FSFP_Nationwide_Voter_Survey-1.pdf

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/06/02/us/politics/money-in-politics-poll.html>

⁴ <https://www.acslaw.org/acsblog/putting-political-equality-before-the-courts-in-campaign-finance-cases>

⁵ <http://www.demos.org/stacked-deck-how-dominance-politics-affluent-business-undermines-economic-mobility-america>

⁶ http://scholarship.law.gwu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1932&context=faculty_publications

⁷ <http://united4thepeople.org/state-and-local-support-2/>