

For immediate release

Date: 12/14/21

Contact: press@freespeechforpeople.org

REP. JAMIE RASKIN INTRODUCES BILL TO BAN MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS FROM SPENDING MONEY IN U.S. ELECTIONS

The bill would prohibit spending by foreign-influenced corporations to candidates, parties, or committees (including super PACs), closing a loophole created by the Supreme Court's 2010 decision in Citizens United v. FEC.

WASHINGTON, D.C. (December 14, 2021) – Congressman Jamie Raskin today introduced a bill to bar multinational corporations like Amazon, Meta (formerly Facebook), Uber, and Airbnb from spending money to influence U.S. elections.

The bill would prohibit corporations with partial foreign ownership from contributing to candidates, parties, or committees (including super PACs) or from engaging in their own direct election spending. Partial foreign ownership is defined as any business that meets one of the following conditions:

- A foreign owner holds, owns, controls, or has beneficial ownership of one percent or more of the business;
- Multiple foreign owners hold, own, control, or have beneficial ownership of five percent or more of the business;
- A foreign owner participates directly or indirectly in the business entity's decision making process with respect to political activities;

The Supreme Court's January 2010 decision in *Citizens United v. FEC* sanctioned political spending by corporate entities as political speech protected by the First Amendment on the claim that corporations are "associations of citizens." As many major corporations are owned in substantial part by foreign shareholders, they can now circumvent federal law which explicitly prohibits foreign nationals from making any political expenditures in U.S. elections.

Across the country, multinational corporations have used their money to influence the outcome of elections and to advance political agendas in their favor. Amazon, for example, contributed \$1.5 million to Seattle's Chamber of Commerce super PAC to sway City Council elections in 2019. In January 2020, the Seattle City Council voted unanimously to institute the limits put forward in the Raskin bill, thereby banning future electoral influence by Amazon.

The Seattle ordinance and the bill introduced by Raskin are based on model legislation drafted by Free Speech For People, a leading organization in the country challenging foreign-influenced corporations from interfering in our elections. Similar legislation is under consideration in Hawaii, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, and Oregon.

“This bill will address a major loophole created by the Supreme Court’s *Citizens United* decision, a loophole that the five Justices in the majority in that ruling never envisioned,” says Ron Fein, the Legal Director of Free Speech For People. “The American people understand that foreign influence, through any form, has no place in our elections. Concealing such influence via corporate spending presents serious harm to our democracy. We applaud Representative Raskin for introducing this landmark bill to help protect the integrity of our elections.”

“Foreign-influenced corporations spend millions of dollars in our elections,” says Alexandra Flores-Quilty, the Campaign Director of Free Speech For People. “Their dollars overwhelm the voices and votes of Americans. This poses a critical threat to the integrity of our elections and democracy. Congressman Raskin’s legislation will help put elections back into the hands of voters by banning foreign-influenced corporations from political spending.”

“We applaud Congressman Raskin for introducing this critical legislation in the defense of our democracy and the fundamental principles of American self-government,” says John Bonifaz, the Co-Founder and President of Free Speech For People. “This legislation will ensure that corporations with significant foreign investment will no longer be able to spend their general treasury funds to influence our elections and to drown out the voices of voters across this country. The people, not multinational corporations, shall govern. We urge Members of Congress to stand with democracy and pass this bill.”

###