



PRESS RELEASE

Berkshire Environmental Action Team, Common Cause Massachusetts, Corporate Accountability International, Free Speech For People, Greater Boston Coffee Party, League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, Massachusetts Nurses Association, MASSPIRG, MassVOTE, Public Citizen

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Massachusetts Senate Calls on Congress to Enact Constitutional Amendment Reversing *Citizens United* Decision

In overwhelming bipartisan vote of 35-1, State Senate calls for an amendment to restore democracy

BOSTON – The Massachusetts State Senate today passed a resolution calling on the United State Congress to enact a federal Constitutional Amendment to reverse the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, and restore fair elections and constitutional rights to the people.

The State Senate passed its resolution by an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 35 to 1, with all Republicans joining all but one Democrat in approving it. Attention now turns to the House as the end of the legislative session approaches.

The 2010 *Citizens United* decision overturned decades-old laws restricting corporate expenditures, ruling that they violated the First Amendment’s protection of free speech. The decision dramatically expanded the fabricated “corporate rights” doctrine and has unleashed a flood of corporate money into federal, state, and local elections.

“The *Citizens United* decision dramatically dilutes the voice of every American who does not control a large corporate treasury,” said Sen. Jamie Eldridge, the original sponsor of the bill. “The health of our democracy and the integrity of our political system are at stake, and I am proud of the Senate for passing this resolution today and sending a strong message that our democracy isn’t for sale.”

In the wake of the *Citizens United* decision, campaign spending by outside groups has skyrocketed. In the 2010 election cycle, the first since the Supreme Court decision, outside groups spent nearly \$300 million.

“The fundamental question facing the nation today is whether people or corporations shall govern in America,” said John Bonifaz, the co-founder and director of Free Speech For People, a national campaign launched on the day of the *Citizens United* ruling to press for an Amendment to the Constitution to overturn the ruling and make clear that corporations are not people with constitutional rights. “With the strong bipartisan passage of this resolution, Massachusetts will help to lead the way in restoring American democracy to the people,” Bonifaz said.

Super PACs have emerged as a result of the Supreme Court’s decision, amassing huge amounts of money used for attack ads, such as those aired this past spring during the Republican presidential candidate primaries. Super PACs are expected to spend hundreds of millions of dollars in the 2012 elections, breaking all previous records.

“Big corporations aren’t run by the 99 percent – or even by the 1 percent. Rather, they are run by a super-wealthy 0.01 percent,” said Avi Green, Executive Director of MassVOTE. “Politics should be for all of us – not just the super-wealthy and the big corporations they control. Kudos to the Senate for recognizing this and supporting this resolution.”

“Massachusetts is a step closer to joining the several states and hundreds of communities nationwide who’ve issued similar resolutions,” said Mark Hays, campaign coordinator for Public Citizen’s Democracy Is For People Campaign. “With leadership from the states, we’re demonstrating that amending the Constitution to challenge the corrosive impacts of money in politics is no pipedream, but is a mainstream vision for a democracy that serves the people, not giant corporations.”

Cities and towns across the nation have voted on similar measures. In Massachusetts, 68 communities have voted in favor of a Constitutional Amendment including Boston, Springfield and Worcester. If a similar resolution is passed by the House, Massachusetts will join the state legislatures in California, Hawaii, Maryland, New Mexico, Rhode Island, and Vermont in voicing their states’ opposition to the decision and support for a Constitutional Amendment to address its ramifications.

“We are delighted that the Senate has taken bipartisan action to address this disastrous decision,” said Pam Wilmot, Executive Director of Common Cause Massachusetts. “A campaign for a Constitutional Amendment is no easy task, but the US Supreme Court left us no choice. Only with a constitutional amendment can we address the problem of money in politics that it, with other decisions, has created. Passing this resolution has put Massachusetts on the forefront of that critical effort, which, as the cradle of liberty, is where we should be.”

"We congratulate the Senate on passage of this resolution, and urge the House to do so as well. It is past time to limit the impact of large amounts of money, often from donors whose identity is not public, on our elections," said Eva Valentine, president of the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts.

To learn more, visit: www.commoncause.org, www.FreeSpeechForPeople.org, www.DemocracyIsForPeople.org and www.United4thePeople.org.