

ConnPIRG

Standing Up To Powerful Interests

Written Testimony of Abraham Scarr, Director
Connecticut Public Interest Research Group (ConnPIRG)

In support of

Proposed H.J No. 3: Resolution Memorializing Congress to Propose an Amendment to the United States Constitution to Reverse the United States Supreme Court's Decision Known as Citizen's United

Chairperson Musto, Chairperson Jutila and Members of the Committee: My name is Abe Scarr and I am the Director of the Connecticut Public Interest Research Group (ConnPIRG). Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony today in support of House Joint Resolution No. 3: Resolution Memorializing Congress to Propose an Amendment to the United States Constitution to Reverse the United States Supreme Court's Decision Known as Citizen's United

Special interest money has long had a corrosive effect on our democracy, but in 2010, the Supreme Court's Citizens United decision unleashed a new era of unprecedented spending by a handful of millionaires and corporations on our elections. This was clearest in the most recent election, the first presidential election since the decision.

ConnPIRG produced multiple reports that document the impacts of Citizen's United on the 2012 election. Through our "Billion-Dollar Democracy" report, we analyzed Federal Elections Commission data to quantify what the vast majority of Americans already understand: political power in America is concentrated in the hands of a wealthy few which threatens our democracy and the promise of a government that is of, by, and for the people.

We found that the new campaign environment favors:

- special interests over the public interest
- anonymous donors over a well-informed electorate and voters seeking accountability
- incumbents over challengers and grassroots candidates
- wealthy donors over everyday citizens

To give just one example of our last finding: it took just 32 large donors giving to Super PACs to match every single dollar that small donors gave to both Mitt Romney and Barack Obama combined. That's 32 mega-donors matching over 3.7 million small donors.

Read "Billion-Dollar Democracy" here: <http://bit.ly/Wah17c>

There are many things we can and should do in the short term to combat the corrosive influence of special interests on our elections. The General Assembly has the opportunity to take action, for example, by passing Proposed Senate Bill 5, which would increase transparency in campaign contributions. At the same time, Connecticut should join the growing list of states calling for a constitutional amendment to overturn Citizen's Untied.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testify in support of this resolution.

Abe Scarr
860-983-4473
abe@connpirg.org