

"Citizen's United" should be overturned - HJ 3- March 18, 2013



CONNECTICUT
STATE COUNCIL

SERVICE EMPLOYEES
INTERNATIONAL UNION
CTW, CLC

Co-Chairs Senator Musto and Representative Jutila, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify in favor of HJ 3: **RESOLUTION MEMORIALIZING CONGRESS TO PROPOSE AN AMENDMENT TO THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION TO REVERSE THE UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT'S DECISION KNOWN AS CITIZENS UNITED.** My name is Paul Filson and I am Director of the Service Employees International Union Connecticut State Council. SEIU represents over 65,000 members in Connecticut.

The Supreme Court of the United States made a grave error in its 5-4 decision allowing unrestricted independent expenditures in political campaigns. The main error is equating money with speech. In doing so it allows very wealthy corporations and individuals to monopolize the dissemination apparatus ie television, radio, print and mail advertising of political messaging. Under "Citizen's United" it is perfectly legal for a corporation or a PAC to buy up every minute of advertising time thus blocking out opposing views.

The Supreme Court threw out 100 years of common sense regulations that recognized that extreme wealth should not be allowed to monopolize elections. A robust democracy is dependent upon a fair exchange of ideas and the ability of those ideas to reach the electorate. Money does not guarantee election victory, but it absolutely restricts elections to highly funded candidates. A good example can be seen in Connecticut.

The recent US senatorial election between Republican Linda McMahon and Democrat Chris Murphy saw McMahon spend \$50 million to compete in an election VS. Murphy's \$10 million. Murphy won despite being outspent 5 to 1, but most analysts agree that McMahon was, by far, the less qualified candidate. Republicans chose her mostly because of her cash. With Citizens United wealthy candidates will be more and more likely chosen to run. Murphy's \$10 million is also a lot of money and his ability to raise large amounts of money also factored into his ability to win.

Worse is the new proliferation of so called "independent expenditures." While most candidates would prefer to absolutely control the messaging of their own campaigns it is rare for candidates to worry about massive amounts of money being spent on their behalf by so called independent entities. These entities can be anything from corporations, to wealthy individuals, to labor unions, to PACs, to other money collecting funds. The 2012 elections saw ridiculous amounts of money spent by all these entities in their efforts to influence elections.

Congress and the President must change the Constitution making these "independent expenditures" illegal or at least controllable. Without a change to Citizen's United U.S. elections will become more and more like auctions. Only wealthy individuals or individuals backed by wealth will be capable of running in, and winning elections. That is not the democracy the founders of our nation envisioned. In fact, it is not democracy at all.

Written
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