

Testimony of Christine Piazza in Support of:

S.J. 33: RESOLUTION PETITIONING THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO CONVENE AN ARTICLE V CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION TO OVERTURN THE UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT'S DECISION IN CITIZENS UNITED V. FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION.

GAE Committee Public Hearing

In the Gilded Age which he named, a well-known Connecticut resident once wrote, “Suppose you were an idiot, and suppose you were a member of Congress; but I repeat myself.” Many modern Connecticut residents might not disagree with this jibe, since, according to a Quinnipiac poll this August, a vast majority of American voters are “Dissatisfied, Angry, and Distrustful” when asked about their federal Congress (“American Voters”). No wonder—it can’t pass even most modest, commonsense reforms, such as the DISCLOSE Act.

However, Americans don’t simply blame the IQ of their federal representatives; rather, they understand that there are many well-intentioned federal politicians who, naturally, want to get elected. However, for a successful campaign, they must raise an average of \$10 million for a Senate seat and \$1.4 million for admission to the House. It is also crucial that they out-raise their opponents; 93 % of the time in the House and 94% in the Senate, according to political commentator Cenk Uygur, the winner of our democratic process is whoever one has more money (Uygur). That’s why even the most well-intentioned politicians spend ½ to ¾ of their time fundraising—and why it’s necessary to rely heavily on so-called “uncoordinated” spending of Super PACs which, unlike funds raised directly by the candidate, have no legally mandated limits or disclosure (*Pay-2-Play*). However, this spending is in many cases synonymous with the candidate’s campaign, as (for example) in Scott Walker’s gubernatorial campaign, his campaign manager asked that donations be given to a so-called “uncoordinated” 501(c)(4) (Caplan). It is often the case that this money comes from out-of-state individuals [citation needed?]. As former Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens wrote in his book *Six Amendments*, “It is unwise to allow persons who are not qualified to vote—whether they be corporations or non-resident individuals—to have a potentially greater power to affect the outcome of elections than eligible voters have” (Stevens). It’s unwise because politicians, naturally, represent those who did the most to send them to office—and unfortunately, this is no longer the voters but the donors. Our federal government no longer fits Madison’s definition of a representative government—a government dependent upon the people alone. Sometimes I worry about my future; not because of the myriad problems—an educational crisis, recovery from an economic crisis—that our country faces, but because we no longer seem to have a functioning democracy that has always carried our country through difficulties.

Under ordinary circumstances, passing appropriate legislation solves problems of a political nature. However, any legislation seeking to limit the outside spending has been prohibited by the Supreme Court; therefore, if the corrupting influence of unlimited outside donations is to be overcome, *Citizens United* must first be overruled. It seems highly unlikely that the Court itself will overturn its decision in the near future, and there is only one higher authority than the Court: the Constitution itself. Clearly, then, the Constitution must be amended in order to preserve our Founders' vision of equality and freedom, of a government in which all citizens have equal power to choose the laws that govern their lives. Unfortunately, asking Congress itself to propose such an amendment would be as irrational as asking a despot to resign. Democracy will not be fixed in Washington. However, this very problem—a Congress unresponsive to the people—was foreseen by the Founding Father Representative Mason from Pennsylvania when he argued it, "would be improper to require the consent of the Natl. Legislature, because they may abuse their power, and refuse their consent on that very account" (quod. in Russell). Welcome to 2016. The other founders immediately recognized the sense of Mason's argument, and provided an alternate method of proposing an amendment, through a source they knew would always remain much closer to the people: the state legislatures. Thus, the only way to curb the corrupting influence of outside spending is for Connecticut to join other states in calling for a limited Amendment Convention to have a conversation about and propose a solution, which must then be ratified by $\frac{3}{4}$ of state legislatures. Reclaiming a representative democracy, aka a functioning government, is not the most important issue—but it must be the first issue, because without a sane national government, little else can be achieved. For our own sake and for the sake of the nation and the ideals that we all love, Connecticut must act.

Works Cited

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