



## **Supreme Court Decision Endorses Corporate Manipulation of Election Outcomes**

The recent US Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United V. Federal Election Commission* is a crushing blow to representative democracy. The League of Women Voters of New Jersey works to advance the principal that people – not corporations - have the right and duty to participate in their government by speaking up, asking questions and voting. People also have the right and duty to hold elected officials accountable for their actions.

The Supreme Court seems to disagree. The tragic decision to declare corporations “persons” with free speech rights allows corporations to pour massive amounts of money into endorsing or opposing candidates and gives special interests, lobbyists, and big money a tighter grip on democracy. The Supreme Court has made it legal, and easier, for corporations to bribe candidates, and has taken significant power away from voters.

If a corporation thinks candidates won’t serve their interests, it can now legally blast the public with ads attacking that candidate. And if a candidate makes promises to a corporation or has already acted for its benefit, he or she will be rewarded with endorsement ads. It won’t matter if the candidate serves the best interest of the public – we are no longer a factor...until Election Day.

Few citizens have the means to buy ad time, but we can and must push back. The Supreme Court has overturned decades of campaign finance laws that were designed to protect our democracy from the pernicious influence of money, but citizens still have a voice and the ultimate weapon, their vote. This decision makes it that much more important for *real* “persons” to speak up loudly and clearly, especially at the ballot box.

Yes, this requires a huge commitment on the part of every voter, but it is possible. We must be more vigilant in fulfilling our civic duties by asking questions, checking every fact in every ad, following the trail of money from corporations to candidates, attending candidate forums and debates, and voting for candidates who serve the public and not corporations. New Jersey doesn’t need another avenue for corruption, and it is up to each and every one of us to hold our officials accountable.

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