

Resolution to Support An Amendment To The Constitution of the United States

Whereas, the Session of Oak Grove Presbyterian Church, Bloomington, MN unanimously endorsed support for an amendment to the constitution to establish that corporations are not persons and money is not speech and urged the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area to request member congregations to consider similar resolutions; and

Whereas, the 222nd General Assembly (2016) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) adopted a resolution that supports the personhood of individual citizens, and opposes laws and rulings that allow corporations and other private enterprises to be accorded the rights due human persons. And supports limits for political contributions by corporations, unions, political action committees, super PACs (“527’s”), and individuals, while eliminating 501.c.4’s and 501.c.6’s (nonprofit social welfare organizations) campaign contributions, and;

Whereas, free and fair elections are essential to democracy; and

Whereas, unlimited corporate spending drowns out the voices of individuals and jeopardizes our democracy; and

Whereas, a 28th amendment to the Constitution is needed to overturn Citizens United and eliminate corporate person hood and money as speech, and;

Whereas, 19 States and over 748 local governments passed resolutions calling for such an amendment to the constitution, and;

Whereas the Bills and Overtures Committee of the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area reviewed, discussed and endorsed this resolution for Presbytery consideration.

Therefore be it resolved, that Presbytery of the Twin Cities endorses legislation that calls for a constitutional amendment to establish that:

1. The Constitutional rights of the United States are the rights of natural persons only. Artificial entities, corporations, companies, and other entities, established by the laws of the United States, or foreign country shall have no constitutional rights, inherent or inalienable privileges and are subject to regulation by the People, through Federal, State, or local law.
2. Establishes that Federal, State and local government shall regulate, limit, or prohibit contributions and expenditures, including a candidate's contributions, to ensure that all citizens, regardless of their economic status, have access to the political process, and that no person gains, as a result of their money, substantially more access or ability to influence the election of any candidate for public office or any ballot measure.
3. Federal, State, and local governments shall require that any contributions and expenditures be publicly disclosed.
4. The judiciary shall not construe the spending of money to influence elections to be speech under the First Amendment.

Be it further resolved that the Presbytery of the Twin Cities encourages member congregations to endorse this resolution.

PCUSA Positions In Support:

ELECTION PROTECTION & INTEGRITY IN CAMPAIGN FINANCE

(Excerpts)

A Resolution adopted by the 222nd General Assembly (2016) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Statement of Concerns for the U.S. Electoral Process:

Respect for the conscience of the individual anchors Presbyterian reverence for the right to vote for everyone. Public service is seen by us as a high calling, and government itself a servant and agent of the people, accountable to all citizens. Politics as public decision-making has an ethical purpose and benefits from laws that prevent corruption by special interests against the common good. Weakening the rights of citizenship for some and unfairly enhancing the power of others distort the practices and legitimacy of democracy.

As a Reformed Christian church, understanding God's covenant to have been opened by Jesus Christ even to "the least of these," the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) seeks to live out and witness to its values of love and justice in the public sphere. Today, both the protection of voting rights and the integrity of our electoral process due to unlimited private spending are matters of concern. This statement and recommendations address these matters that have emerged since the 218th General Assembly (2008) approved, *Lift Every Voice: Democracy, Voting Rights, and Electoral Reform*, with the principles enunciated in that policy and its predecessor, *Reformed Faith and Politics* (1983).

Since January 2010, with the *Citizens United* decision by the Supreme Court, reinforced by the appeals court decision, *SpeechNow* (March 2010) and *McCutcheon* (April 2014), and building on *Buckley v. Valeo* (1976), campaign finance reform and limits to personal and corporate spending have been struck down. At the least, campaign funding from wealthy individuals and interests buys access; the elimination of funding limits on allegedly independent political action committees and technically nonprofit "social welfare organizations" allows for unlimited and often undisclosed political spending, monetizing our democracy and allowing small numbers of donors enormous influence on political discourse, regulatory protections, military spending, etc.

Further, to address these concerns, to increase voting levels, and to decrease dysfunctional polarization in our country, the 222nd General Assembly (2016):

Supports the restoration of meaningful limits for political contributions by corporations, unions, political action committees, superPACs ("527's"), and individuals, while eliminating the capacity of 501.c.4's and 501.c.6's (nonprofit social welfare organizations) to contribute to election campaigns and political referenda.

Endorses proposals for full disclosure of political donations and lobbying costs by corporations and the ability of shareholders to review and refuse to be party to partisan donations, receiving proportionate dividend increases instead.

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/Election-Protection-and-Integrity-in-Campaign-Finance-2016-ACSWP.pdf>

Lift Every Voice: Democracy, Voting Rights, and Electoral Reform Approved by the 218th General Assembly (2008) Of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

(Excerpts)

"With the disturbing dependence of our political representatives on continuous fundraising for their increasingly expensive campaigns, we are concerned about increasing the divisions in wealth and power and the pervasive partisanship and polarization in American politics.

Campaign finance laws need to be seriously considered in light of the increasing influence of special interest money and the rising cost of political campaigning,"

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/2-votingrights-2008.pdf>