



February 5, 2025

Chair & Senator Jim Carlson
Senate Elections Committee
c/o Beth Fraser, Committee Administrator
Room 1200, Minnesota Senate Building
95 University Ave W
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Re: Testimony in Support of SF 569, Resolution Requesting Congress to Overturn the United States Supreme Court Citizens United v. FEC

Dear Chair Carlson and Members of the Senate Elections Committee,

The League of Women Voters of Minnesota is proud to be nonpartisan, neither supporting nor opposing candidates or political parties at any level of government, but always working on vital issues of concern to members and the public. Together, we envision a democracy where the voice of each person is heard equally, that provides for maximum participation by citizens in the electoral process, and that protects representative democracy from being distorted by large-dollar, outside spending in state and local election campaigns.

LWV Minnesota supports SF 9, SF 569, Resolution Requesting Congress to Overturn the United States Supreme Court Citizens United v. FEC:

The League of Women Voters supports financing of political campaigns that enhances political equality of all citizens, and preventing representative democracy from being distorted by big spending by wealthy individuals, special interests, and large companies.

The 2010 U.S. Supreme Court decision of Citizens United v FEC determined that organizations and corporations are associations of people and, as such, have protected First Amendment rights that enable them to spend virtually unlimited sums to influence elections and policy making in their business and personal interests. The decision also concluded that money is "speech" and therefore cannot be constrained for the purposes of political campaign financing.

This decision is counter to the views of the country's founders and has unleashed a tidal wave of private and corporate funding of political and issue campaigns that has influenced elections and diluted the voices of individual voters. One historian reviewing the Citizens United decision in 2010 noted that the founders 'saw corporations as corrupting influences on both the

economy at large and on government – that’s why they described the East India Company as imperium in imperio, a sort of “state within a state.” This wasn’t an outcome they were looking to replicate.’ (Brian Murphy quoted in “What the Founding Fathers Really Thought About Corporations”, J. Fox, Harvard Business Review, April 1, 2010)

The potential consequences anticipated by the country’s founders have arguably been realized in the most recent federal election. Extremely wealthy individuals, cloaked in the secrecy of nonprofit “dark money” organizations, businesses, and associations, spent over a trillion dollars to influence the outcome of federal elections. In some cases, individuals and organizations appear to have effectively purchased access and influence to determine national policy.

There is arguably no more urgent matter in reinforcing the foundations of democracy than ensuring that every individual’s voice is heard equally, and no one can distort or subvert democracy by virtue of their wealth. Determining that corporations and associations are not “persons” for the purposes of election campaigns is critical to supporting these principles.

LWV Minnesota urges you to vote YES on SF 569.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Huffman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Paul Huffman, Election and Redistricting Policy Coordinator
League of Women Voters of Minnesota

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