



# Building a Grassroots Movement to Overturn *Citizens United v Federal Election Commission*



## Action Toolkit

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## **FACT SHEET:**

### **Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission: Questions and Answers**

#### **Q: What was the Citizens United v FEC case about?**

**A:** Citizens United is a conservative organization that accepted some corporate funding to produce a 90-minute movie attacking Hillary Clinton called *Hillary: The Movie*. Citizens United sought to air the production as a video-on-demand movie in the period shortly before the presidential elections. The FEC forbid this, because at that time attack ads funded by outside groups were prohibited by campaign finance rules. Citizen United challenged the ban in court. Originally, the *Citizens United v FEC* case involved a narrow, relatively technical question about campaign finance law: Was a video-on-demand program enough like a TV ad that it should be prohibited from airing shortly before an election?

However, after first hearing argument in the case, the Supreme Court expanded the case to consider a much broader question: Did a century of campaign finance rules violate the First Amendment?

#### **Q: What did the Supreme Court decide in *Citizens United v FEC*?**

**A:** In a 5-4 ruling, the court overturned key campaign finance rules and cases. It held for the first time that corporations have a First Amendment right to spend unlimited amounts from their treasuries to support or oppose candidates for elected office.

#### **Q: So, what's that mean?**

**A:** The ruling means that corporations can spend an unlimited amount of money to support or defeat a particular candidate. As long as they don't coordinate with a candidate's campaign, they can spend as much as they want running ads, making phone calls and knocking on doors to help elect or defeat a candidate for any public office—local, state or federal. The only requirements left intact by the Supreme Court are that corporations must disclose who is paying for the ad, and they cannot make direct contributions to candidates. However, corporations do not have to disclose who made contributions to them to facilitate their political activity.

#### **Q: How did this happen?**

**A:** Forty years ago, the Supreme Court first decided that for-profit corporations should have protections under the First Amendment (beyond the constitutionally recognized guarantees for freedom of press). The court has steadily expanded these rights, impeding government agencies' ability to control tobacco, alcohol and gambling advertising and marketing, invalidating mandatory consumer disclosure rules, and ensuring corporations can spend money to influence ballot initiatives. But until its recent decision, the court has never been so brazen as to suggest

that corporations have a First Amendment right to spend from their treasuries to influence candidate election outcomes.

**Q: What has been likely effect of the decision?**

**A:** We witnessed an unprecedented amount of spending by independent groups funneling corporations and deep-pocketed individuals into electioneering in November 2010. Corporations funneled tens of millions of dollars through organizations with innocuous names like American Crossroads and trade associations like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. These independent groups focused their spending in strategically important races, using their money primarily on vicious attack ads. Most of the corporate money was not disclosed, so we can't even track which companies spent on the 2010 elections. And the increase during the November 2010 election cycle is likely just a taste of what is to come.

All of this corporate spending makes a huge difference. It had a major impact in the 2010 elections, and significantly influenced the makeup of the Congress.

Going forward, elected officials across the board will think twice about challenging the business agenda. Those individuals who stand up against corporations will face the prospect of huge funding against them in the next election—this will be most serious at the state and local level for politicians whose actions hurt particular companies (the developer who wanted a building permit, the mining company denied authorization to proceed with a project, the retailer who wanted a tax abatement, etc).

Simply by *threatening* to spend an enormous amount of money, corporate lobbyists will have unprecedented leverage over elected officials—the actions of our government will be changed radically whether or not big business ends up spending a single dime. As a result, it is going to be much harder to move a public interest agenda on any issue affecting corporations -- whether the issue is healthcare, climate change, reining in Wall Street, protecting worker rights, stopping consumer rip-offs, promoting a just trade policy, and much more.

**Q: Can't Congress overturn or fix the decision?**

**A:** Congress cannot overturn the decision, because the decision is ostensibly based on the constitutional protections of the First Amendment.

The very broad and aggressive decision does not leave Congress much space for maneuver. Public Citizen and People for the American Way are escalating our efforts to win public financing of federal elections—which would at least give candidates a base of decent funding to offset whatever corporations choose to spend. And we are working on other legislative approaches that would mitigate the damage, including disclosure of the sources of political spending and a proposal that an affirmative majority of shareholders must approve any corporate electoral-related expenditure. But there's no way to escape the damage from this decision unless it is reversed—hence the need for a constitutional amendment.

**Q: What would a constitutional amendment do?**

**A:** It would overturn the decision in *Citizens United v FEC*, by establishing that corporations do not have the same First Amendment rights as individuals. The First Amendment was intended to protect the political and expressive interests of real, live humans, and was not intended to confer those same protections to artificial entity corporations. Our campaign aims to re-establish this modest principle

**Q: What does it take to get a constitutional amendment passed?**

**A:** There are a few ways to do it. An amendment must be proposed either by a two-thirds vote of both houses of Congress, or by a constitutional convention convened when the legislatures of two-thirds of the states so request. The amendment must be ratified either by the legislatures of three-quarters of the states, or by conventions in three-quarters of the states, depending on which means of ratification Congress proposes. All of the amendments to the Constitution, of which there are now 27, were proposed by Congress, and all but one were ratified by state legislatures. The convention route has never been used for proposing an amendment and was used only once for ratifying an amendment (the 21st, which eliminated Prohibition).

**Q: Is amending the Constitution politically possible?**

**A:** Yes. Amending the Constitution is supposed to be hard, and no one should be under any delusions about its difficulty. But it's an achievable goal, as the history of the Constitution makes clear. The 23<sup>rd</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> Amendments (D.C. voting rights and setting the age limit to vote at 18 years old, respectively) were passed by Congress and ratified in under a year. Right now, there's enormous anger and anti-corporate sentiment in this country. This amendment, in addition to being the right thing to do, could be a politically useful tool for both parties to show that they're willing to stand up to giant corporations. The key to success will be a strong foundation of grassroots support for the amendment. It's time to get organized!

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### **The Supreme Court ruling on *Citizens United v FEC***

<http://www.citizen.org/documents/citizens-united-v-fec.pdf>

### **Impact on 2010 Elections**

#### **Citizens Blindsided: Secret Corporate Money in the 2010 Elections and America's New Shadow Democracy**

[www.pfaw.org/sites/default/files/citizens-blindsided-11-29-10.pdf](http://www.pfaw.org/sites/default/files/citizens-blindsided-11-29-10.pdf)

#### **Disclosure Eclipse: Nearly Half of Outside Groups Kept Donors Secret in 2010; Top 10 Groups Revealed Sources of Only One in Four Dollars Spent**

[www.citizen.org/eclipsed-disclosure](http://www.citizen.org/eclipsed-disclosure)

#### **After Citizens United: A Look into the Pro-Corporate Players in American Politics**

[www.pfaw.org/media-center/publications/after-citizens-united-look-into-the-pro-corporate-players-american-politic](http://www.pfaw.org/media-center/publications/after-citizens-united-look-into-the-pro-corporate-players-american-politic)

#### **Outside Job: Winning Candidates Enjoyed Advantage in Unregulated Third-Party Spending in 58 of 74 Party-Shifting Contests**

[www.citizen.org/outside-job](http://www.citizen.org/outside-job)

#### **Stealth PACs**

[www.citizen.org/stealthpacs](http://www.citizen.org/stealthpacs)

#### **Public Citizen Webinars**

[www.citizen.org/pressroom/pressroomdirect.cfm?ID=3028](http://www.citizen.org/pressroom/pressroomdirect.cfm?ID=3028)

### **Other Reports**

#### **Rise of the Corporate Court: How the Supreme Court is Putting Business First**

[www.pfaw.org/sites/default/files/rise-of-corporate-court-final\\_0.pdf](http://www.pfaw.org/sites/default/files/rise-of-corporate-court-final_0.pdf)

### **Websites**

#### **Public Citizen**

[www.DontGetRolled.org](http://www.DontGetRolled.org)

#### **Pledge for Democracy**

[www.pledgefordemocracy.org](http://www.pledgefordemocracy.org)

#### **People for the American Way**

[www.pfaw.org/GovernmentByThePeople](http://www.pfaw.org/GovernmentByThePeople)

#### **Free Speech for People**

[www.freespeechforpeople.org](http://www.freespeechforpeople.org)

*What also information or resources would you find helpful? Let us know and we'll try to include them in future updates of this action toolkit!*

# Building a Grassroots Movement to Overturn *Citizens United v. FEC*

## Recommended Local Organizing Activities

There are lots of ways you can help build a nationwide grassroots movement to overturn the disastrous Supreme Court's *Citizens United v. FEC* ruling. In the short term, we need to reach out to as many individuals and groups as possible, educate them about the significance of the ruling, and mobilize them to get involved. In particular, we recommend individuals and local groups start with the following activities to help build public and political support for a constitutional amendment:

- **Organize a local demonstration or media event on the one-year anniversary of the *Citizens United v. FEC* ruling (January 21, 2011).** The one-year anniversary of the now infamous Supreme Court ruling is an excellent media hook and organizing opportunity. The possibilities for locations and types of events are almost limitless. You could demonstrate in front of a corporate chain that poured money into the recent elections, hold a rally in front of your state capitol building, or organize a town hall meeting. *For more information, see page 8 or go to [www.citizen.org/Page.aspx?pid=4679](http://www.citizen.org/Page.aspx?pid=4679)*
- **Spread the word via local media.** Local media is a great vehicle for amplifying one's message to a diverse audience of local citizens. Not everyone reads the New York Times or watches Fox News, but many do read the letters to the editor of their local newspaper. With a single letter to the editor or opinion piece you can reach hundreds or thousands of local citizens, build public awareness about and support for a constitutional amendment, and let others know how to connect with people working on the issue locally. Local radio talk shows are another great option, if there are any in your area. *For more information, see page 10*
- **Petition at public events.** Petitioning is a great way to demonstrate public support for the amendment to Congress and the media. It is also an excellent organizing tool – a way to engage fellow citizens on the issue and mobilize them to join the movement. Go where people in your community congregate, such as festivals, candidate town hall meetings, farmer's markets, demonstrations, local group meetings, shopping malls or subway stops. If you're looking for ideas, check your local newspaper for a calendar of upcoming community events. *For more information, see page 12 and sample petition at end*
- **Host house parties or public gatherings to educate and mobilize others in your community.** Holding a house party or public gathering is an excellent way to involve more local citizens in the movement. You could invite people and organizations you know to participate, people who signed the petition at a recent local event, groups you do not already work with but that might make good allies, or the general public. Public Citizen and People for the American Way can also publicize your gatherings to our supporters in your area. *For more information, see page 14*

- **Encourage local/ state groups to get on board.** Either by urging them to pass resolutions or, more simply, sign onto a local coalition statement, this activity will further build public awareness of and support for a constitutional amendment. It is essential to building strong local coalitions and down the line, putting political pressure on members of Congress to follow the people's lead. *For more information, see page 16 and sample resolutions at end.*

For further information about any of these activities or if you have questions, please contact Anna White at [awhite@citizen.org](mailto:awhite@citizen.org) or 202-588-7715 or Diallo Brooks at [dbrooks@pfaw.org](mailto:dbrooks@pfaw.org) or 202-467-2363

Please document any and all activities in which you and/or your group engages and let Public Citizen and People for the American Way know about them. Send us photos, media coverage, event reports, and any other records of your activities so they can be profiled online and used to inspire more citizens to get involved and take action!

## Instructions for Organizing to Mark the One-Year Anniversary of the Supreme Court's *Citizens United v. FEC* Ruling

The one-year anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's disastrous *Citizens United v. Federal Election Committee* ruling is fast approaching (**Friday, January 21, 2011**). The anniversary provides an excellent opportunity to demonstrate public outrage over corporate corruption of our democracy and to keep building the grassroots movement for a constitutional amendment to overturn the decision.

Here are some basic instructions to help you get started. We'll provide more information, ideas and tips leading up to the anniversary to those who express interest.

**1. Identify local citizens and/or groups interested in working with you to organize a demonstration or other type of public event.** You may already know a core group of people interested in taking local action on this issue. If not, you might recruit volunteers through circles of friends and acquaintances, local citizen groups, universities, community email lists, local newspapers, etc. Public Citizen and People for the American Way can also help connect you with our supporters in your area.

**2. Determine when and where the event will take place.** It is recommended that the local demonstrations and events take place on **Friday, January 21**, but if a weekend date is preferred, the next day (**Saturday, January 22**) would work too. The possibilities for locations are practically endless, but will depend on your local context. Some locations to consider for demonstrations: State Capitol Building, a corporate chain store or a well-trafficked public space in your town or city. Depending on the location, size or nature of your event, you may need to apply for a permit; check with your local police department for more details.

*Note: If you're interested in targeting a corporation with your demonstration, here is a list of corporations that have not pledged to refrain from political spending:*

[http://saveourelections.com/?page\\_id=16](http://saveourelections.com/?page_id=16)

**3. Decide what you will do at the demonstration or event.** A demonstration could be as simple as a few people holding signs in a public location, handing out flyers and collecting petition signatures in support of a constitutional amendment to overturn *Citizens United v. FEC*. Or it could be a full-blown rally with a program, musical acts and speakers. Or if you would prefer, consider organizing a community forum or teach-in about corporate influence in government. Other activities that could be incorporated or organized in conjunction with your event: creative street theater, a visual public opinion poll, delivery of petition signatures or public announcements of support by local/state politicians. Since a primary goal of the local demonstrations and events is to garner media coverage of the issue, we recommend that you think “visual” and “dramatic.” Imagine your event through the eyes of a local newspaper photographer or television crew, and brainstorm compelling props, images and sign slogans that would be effective in getting your message across.

**4. Proceed with preparations!** Make a list of what needs to be done and what materials need to be prepared. Assign tasks and come up with a time line for completing them.

**5. Publicize the event to potential attendees and the media.** Once all the basic details (what, when, where) have been finalized, start spreading the word about your event to people and groups who might be interested in participating. In the week leading up to your event, send a media advisory and make follow up calls to local newspapers, television, and radio stations. Start compiling a list of media contact information beforehand, if you don't have one already. ***Note:** Public Citizen and People for the American Way will provide a sample media advisory that local groups can modify.*

**6. Document your event.** Arrange to have someone take photos and/or video footage of your event to put online and amplify its impact. Please also share with Public Citizen and People for the American Way, so we can incorporate them into future grassroots organizing materials.

Got any other ideas or suggestions? Please share, so we can pass them on to other activists around the country. And if you have any questions or need anything to proceed with planning a demonstration, please don't hesitate to contact Public Citizen organizer Anna White ([awhite@citizen.org](mailto:awhite@citizen.org), 202-588-7715) or PFAW Field Organizer Sergio Lopez ([slopez@pfaw.org](mailto:slopez@pfaw.org) 202-467-2363)

## Writing an Op-Ed

1. **Find a news hook.** You can have a great topic for your op-ed, but if it doesn't relate to the current news, editors won't pick it to be published. Luckily, there are a lot of ways to make your topic relevant and newsworthy. Some ideas: include surprising new research or statistics that illuminate your topic; link your topic to a holiday or an anniversary of a historic event (such as the upcoming one-year anniversary of the *Citizens United v FEC* ruling on January 21, 2011); reference popular culture; tie your topic in with a debate or trend that's big in the news; show how the conventional wisdom about a topic is wrong; or any combination of the above.
2. **Make it personal.** If you have a personal story to tell about your topic, tell it. If you can tie it in to local events or connect it to local personalities, do that. The more personal and the more local your story is, the more compelling it will be.
3. **Pick a target paper.** Look at the op-ed pages of some papers that you would like to see your op-ed in. Do they accept op-eds from readers? What tone do those take and what sort of topics are they interested in? How long are they? Your local paper may not have as big a readership as The New York Times, but it might be eager to publish an op-ed with a local focus by a local author. Pick a first choice paper and tailor your op-ed to it.
4. **Write it.** First, make sure that your op-ed is within the word count limit of the papers you're submitting it to (these are usually found in a submissions guidelines section of the paper's website). Be sure to include your call to action clearly and early; support it with compelling facts; mention a strong argument from the other side of the debate and rebut it; and repeat your call to action. Then carefully proofread it and make sure it fits in the word limit.
5. **Pitch it.** Find your target paper's op-ed submission information on the paper's website. Send your op-ed in the body of an email, and include a brief note at the top explaining the context for your op-ed and providing your contact information. If you don't hear back from the editors in a couple of days, send them another note or call the editorial department to follow up. If your first choice paper doesn't accept it, don't give up! Pick your second choice paper, and try again.
6. **Share it.** Once it's published, send your op-ed to friends, families, bloggers you know, and organizations working on the issue. Make sure it's read and noticed!

## Writing a Letter to the Editor

Instead of writing a full op-ed, you might want to respond to a news article or another person's op-ed with a letter to the editor. Some tips for your letter:

- **Be timely.** Email your letter within a day or two of the article you're responding to being published—ideally, send it later on the same day. *Note: Letters to the editor that cite the one-year anniversary of the *Citizens United v FEC* ruling should be submitted before January 21, 2011 and do not necessarily need to respond to an article or op-ed published that week.*

- **Be brief.** Stay within the word limit for letters to the paper, but if you can say your piece in even fewer words, do it.
- **Be surprising.** The best letters to the editor make readers look at an issue in a new way—introduce interesting facts that weren't in the paper's coverage of the issue, or look at the same facts from a different angle.
- **Be polite.** No matter how much you might disagree with the article you're responding to, be respectful—newspapers won't publish letters they consider rude or insulting."

## Tips for Petitioning in Your Community

Tens of thousands of people have signed our petitions for a constitutional amendment to restore free speech and fair elections to the people. That's impressive, but we need many more citizens to join us to build a grassroots movement powerful enough to take on the vast corporate corruption of our democracy.

Petitioning in your community is an excellent way to build grassroots support for a constitutional amendment. It's also simple and easy to do!

Here are some tips for petitioning in your community:

**1. Where to Petition:** Go where people in your community congregate, such as festivals, candidate town hall meetings, farmer's markets, demonstrations, local group meetings, shopping malls or subway stops. If you're looking for ideas, check your local newspaper for a calendar of upcoming community events.

**2. How to Petition:** You can roam a crowd, stand in front of a table (an ironing board will do in a pinch!) or pass the petition through a seated audience.

**3. With Whom to Petition:** You can petition by yourself, with a buddy or as part of a group. If you've never petitioned before you may feel more comfortable pairing up with another person – either a friend, family member, colleague, neighbor or someone else in your community who cares about this issue. Public Citizen and People for the American Way can connect you with others in your area who might join you.

**4. What to Bring:**

- Copies of the petition (see Appendix for sample copy)
- One or more clipboards
- Pens

If you have a table, consider using a visual element to attract attention and engage people passing by. For example, you could display a poster board “citizens’ poll” with a question related to the issue, such as “Should corporations have the same free speech rights as human beings?”, and a divided space underneath for people to check under “Yes” or “No.”

**5. How to Approach People:** Find a quick way of describing the petition and inviting people to sign it. It will be hard to keep people's attention if you offer a long introduction. Some sample ways to introduce the petition:

- “Hi! Want to help prevent corporate control of our elections?”
- “Hi! Want to help stop the corporate takeover of our democracy?”
- “Hi! Have a minute to help rescue democracy from corporate control?”

**6. What to Say Next:** Some people may immediately know what you're talking about and eagerly sign the petition. Others may want more information. You can ask them if they are familiar with the recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling that gave corporations the green light to pour unlimited amounts of money into elections, on the basis that corporations should have the same free speech rights as real people. Try to tailor your comments to the audience. For example, if

you are collecting signatures at a climate change rally, you could focus on how the ruling empowers oil and coal companies to attack political candidates seeking to reduce U.S. dependence on fossil fuels. To prepare for any questions that may arise, you may want to review the fact sheet on *Citizens United v FEC* and other background materials included in this tool kit.

**7. How to Return Completed Petitions:** Please return the completed petitions to Public Citizen by fax, email or mail. Follow the instructions at the bottom of each petition page for doing so. If you have the time and know-how, you can also enter the information into a spreadsheet and email it to us - but please send the form(s), too.

### **Strategies for Maximizing Petition Signatures:**

- Coordinate with others to petition at the same event, either simultaneously and/or in shifts.
- If circulating in a crowd, approach groups of two or more people, so several people hear your explanation about the petition at once.
- Have multiple clipboards available, so more than one person can sign at the same time.
- If tabling, stand in front of the table and actively invite people who pass by to sign the petition (compared to sitting silently behind the table, waiting for people to approach you).
- If at a sit down event, make an announcement about the petition (if appropriate) before circulating clipboards through the audience.
- Give stickers to people who sign the petition
- Set a personal or collective goal for an event and/or time frame. For example, 150 petition signatures at a weekend farmer's market or 500 signatures by the end of the month.
- Bring extra pens!

### **Frequently Asked Questions:**

#### **Q: What if someone asks a question and I don't know the answer?**

A: Share what relevant information you do know and encourage them to visit the websites listed in this action toolkit for more information. You also can offer to take their contact information and get back to them later.

#### **Q: What if someone says they're not interested in signing?**

A: That's fine. Some people may be otherwise occupied and not interested. Others may have specific reasons for not signing. No matter what, remain polite and try not to spend too much time debating the issue. Lots of potential petition signers could pass by if you spend a long time talking to one person who isn't going to sign.

#### **Q: What if someone doesn't want to fill in all their information?**

A: Some people, for privacy or other reasons, may not wish to provide all the information requested. At very least, people need to fill in their full name and zip to be counted. We strongly encourage them to include their email address too, which will allow us to send them periodic updates about the continuing problem, proposed solutions and ways to take action.

If you have any questions, ideas, or additional tips you would like to share, please don't hesitate to contact [action@citizen.org](mailto:action@citizen.org). We are here to support you!

# Instructions for Organizing a House Party or Public Gathering

## What You'll Need to Provide:

- A place to gather
- Snacks and drinks (or go potluck and encourage participants to bring a snack, dish, dessert or drink)
- Paper and pen for collecting everyone's contact information
- Any materials needed to prepare for a particular action or activity

## Steps to Take:

**1. Confirm the date and time.** Plan to gather for about 2-3 hours, depending on the agenda for the gathering.

**2. Confirm the location.** Can you host people at your home or would you prefer to organize a meeting of local citizens somewhere else in your community? If your home is not an option, look into other venues, such as a church, community center or college.

**3. Decide who to invite.** You can limit the gathering to people you know or open it up to others in your community. Contact Public Citizen and People for the American Way if you would like to invite fellow supporters in your community to attend. If so, we can send them an invitation on your behalf.

**4. Spread the word!** You can invite local citizens to the gathering via email, phone, text message, a social networking site and/or flyers in public places. If the house party is open to the public, you might send a notice to relevant local email lists and organizations, post an announcement in a local newspaper or advertise it on a community bulletin board. Include contact information so people can RSVP and contact you with any questions they may have. Make follow-up phone calls as necessary.

**5. Send a reminder to participants.** Closer to the date, send out a reminder. Include the date/time, address, directions to the location, your contact information, and a reminder about anything they should bring.

**6. Designate roles.** Depending on the nature of your agenda and program, you may want to identify volunteers to facilitate the discussion, take notes, and/or serve as timekeeper. Make sure that attendees write their name and contact information on a sign in sheet; this information will allow you to follow up with attendees afterward!

**7. Let us know how it went!** After the event, report back to us!. We would love to know how your gathering went, what actions you are working on together, and how we might support your efforts!

## Sample Program (Feel free to modify!)

**1. Introductions:** In addition to their names, house party participants might briefly share a little bit about themselves, their motivations for getting involved and action ideas they are

interested in pursuing collectively. If you have a large group, try to make the introductions brief.

2. **Educational presentation:** This could be an actual oral presentation, a panel of speakers, or a short video of relevance. It could be followed by a Q & A and/or discussion.
3. **Overview of proposed action steps:** If you and/or others have already started taking actions local, share information about it and how others can get involved. If specific plans for taking action have not been finalized yet, here's your chance to do so!
4. **Conclusion:** Confirm next steps and who is responsible for them. Decide how you will stay in touch with each other and when you would like to meet up next.

## ENCOURAGING LOCAL/STATE ORGANIZATIONS TO GET ON BOARD

A great way to build grassroots support for a constitutional amendment is through coalition building. Having groups pass resolutions or sign onto a local coalition statement helps educate more people about the issue, build public and political support for a constitutional amendment, and facilitate the mobilization of greater numbers of people to take action.

**Here are some simple steps to take:**

- 1. Decide what you would like groups to do.** While groups can simply pass a resolution or sign onto a coalition statement, there will be a greater impact if there are specific expectations outlined for groups who do so. These might include: giving a presentation to their members or their board, on the resolution; covering the topic and updates in their newsletter, website, blog, and/or facebook page; and encouraging members to register their support for relevant state and national legislation.
- 2. Draft a sample resolution or coalition statement** (see Appendix for some examples)
- 3. Make a list of local and/or state groups that you would like to invite.**

**Contact the leadership of or people you know who are involved with the group/s.** Include a brief introduction about the issue, what you are requesting, a copy of the sample resolution (see appendix for some examples) or the coalition statement (could be modified version of one of the sample resolutions). If you don't get an answer immediately, make a follow up call.

- 4. Maintain contact with groups that sign on.** You might create a simple website or blog for the coalition and/or an email list to facilitate dissemination of information, periodic updates, and action alerts on the issue.

*Note: You could also seek to get local, county and state government to pass resolutions. To do so, contact a sympathetic city or county council member or state legislator.*

## SAMPLE RESOLUTIONS

### **RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF AMENDING THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION TO PREVENT CORPORATE CONTROL OF ELECTIONS**

*WHEREAS, the First Amendment to the United States Constitution was designed to protect the free speech rights of people, not corporations;*

*WHEREAS, for the past three decades, a divided United States Supreme Court has transformed the First Amendment into a powerful tool for corporations seeking to evade and invalidate democratically-enacted reforms;*

*WHEREAS, the United States Supreme Court's ruling in Citizens United v. FEC overturned longstanding precedent prohibiting corporations from spending their general treasury funds in our elections;*

*WHEREAS, this corporate takeover of the First Amendment has reached its extreme conclusion in the United States Supreme Court's recent ruling in Citizens United v. FEC;*

*WHEREAS, the United States Supreme Court's ruling in Citizens United v. FEC has unleashed a torrent of corporate money in our political process unmatched by any campaign expenditure totals in United States history;*

*WHEREAS, the United States Supreme Court's ruling in Citizens United v. FEC presents a serious and direct threat to our democracy;*

*WHEREAS, the people of the United States have previously used the constitutional amendment process to correct those egregiously wrong decisions of the United States Supreme Court that go to the heart of our democracy and self-government;*

***Now hereby be it resolved that \_\_\_\_\_ calls upon the United States Congress to pass and send to the states for ratification a constitutional amendment to restore the First Amendment and fair elections to the people.***

***Date \_\_\_\_\_***

## **RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT AMENDING THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION TO RESTORE THE PEOPLE’S POWER TO LIMIT CORPORATE INFLUENCE IN ELECTIONS AND POLICYMAKING**

*Due to the incorrect interpretation of the Constitution and the adverse impact on the rights of people in our democracy in the U.S. Supreme Court decision in Citizens United vs. Federal Election Commission (FEC), local, state, and federal elected officials must take action to restore the authority of the American people to restrict the undue influence of corporations on our elections and public policy.*

*WHEREAS, the Supreme Court’s 5-4 decision in Citizens United v. FEC broke with long-settled legal precedents that acknowledged the power of citizens through their elected representatives to limit corporate influence in elections;*

*WHEREAS, the Supreme Court’s radical rewrite of the First Amendment’s protections will permit even greater corporate influence over our political process by allowing unlimited spending from corporate profits to favor or oppose candidates;*

*WHEREAS, the Supreme Court’s decision will allow the free speech rights of a corporation to dilute and outweigh the free speech rights of ordinary citizens, because of the vast financial resources corporations have for spending money to influence elections compared with regular people;*

*WHEREAS, the Supreme Court’s elevation of corporate “rights” may have constitutional repercussions that go far beyond this one case and will undermine the ability of the people to regulate corporations in numerous policy areas affecting people’s health, wealth, and opportunities;*

*WHEREAS, the American people, through their local, state, and federal governments, must reclaim their rightful place as sovereigns in our democracy and protect the electoral process from corporate domination;*

*WHEREAS, fair elections are fundamental to the health and well-being of our democracy; and*

*WHEREAS, [the City Council/State of \_\_\_\_\_ - or - ORGANIZATION] believes that corporations are not entitled to the same rights in our elections as people.*

*NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE [ELECTED OFFICIALS OF CITY/STATE - or – ORGANIZATION] THAT:*

*[The City/State of \_\_\_\_\_ - or - ORGANIZATION] strongly condemns the Supreme Court’s ruling in Citizens United vs. FEC and supports amending the U.S. Constitution to limit corporate influence and restore democracy in our elections for the benefit of the American people.*

*PASSED and APPROVED this the \_\_\_\_ day of [MONTH]), [YEAR].*