

# 2017 END OF YEAR UPDATE


Free Speech For People

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

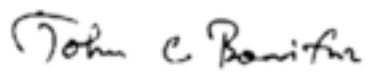
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**OVER THE PAST EIGHT YEARS**, our supporters across the nation have enabled us to become the leading force in the courts to advance a new jurisprudence on money in politics; to continue to provide key legal support to the growing national movement for a 28th Amendment to the US Constitution to restore democracy to the people; to serve as an important resource for public education for this movement, generating significant coverage of our work through our communications and social media outreach; and to lead new innovative and bold campaigns to confront the unprecedented corruption of the presidency. Thank you!



John Bonifaz

## YOU ARE HELPING TO ABOLISH SUPER PACS

Super PACs - political money machines designed to work around campaign contribution limits and inject unlimited political money into our political campaigns - are more powerful now than ever. But we are approaching a turning point.

In November 2016, Free Speech For People filed a lawsuit in federal court against the Federal Election Commission challenging the DC Circuit Court of Appeals *Speechnow* ruling – a decision which has led to the explosion of super PAC spending in elections. As anticipated, the FEC dismissed our initial administrative complaint. In response, on June 22, 2017, we filed an amended complaint challenging this dismissal. This case, *Lieu v. FEC*, seeking to abolish super PACs, will now present to the courts, including the Supreme Court, the opportunity to revisit the *Speechnow* decision.

## YOU HELPED ENACT A MODEL LAW TO END SUPER PACS AND FOREIGN CORPORATE MONEY IN ELECTIONS

This year, Free Speech For People won a major victory in our challenge to super PACs and foreign corporate money in US elections. In July 2016, Free Speech For People launched a campaign in St. Petersburg, Florida, to pass a model ordinance abolishing super PAC spending and foreign corporate money in local elections. On October 5, 2017, following significant grassroots organizing and legal advocacy, the St. Petersburg City Council voted to enact this ordinance, the first of its kind in the country.

The passage of this model ordinance now creates the potential of an important test case to challenge *Speechnow* before the Supreme Court and to challenge foreign corporate money in our elections. Free Speech For People is the first organization in the country to advance a model law which would end super PACs and foreign corporate money in elections. We are now preparing to work with the City Attorney's Office of St. Petersburg to lead the legal defense of this law, should it be challenged in court.

## **YOU ARE HELPING TO DEFEND CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM IN MONTANA AND ALASKA**

With your help, Free Speech For People is advancing important new legal arguments for campaign finance reform efforts by providing key legal support in the defense of state contribution limits in Montana and Alaska.

Montana – On October 23, 2017, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit reversed a lower court ruling and upheld Montana’s campaign contribution limits. Free Speech For People had submitted a series of amicus briefs in support of Montana’s limits as the case developed in the Ninth Circuit. The lower court had ruled that Montana had no legitimate interest in preventing corruption or its appearance, and that, even if it did, its contribution limits were too low to be “closely drawn” to that interest. However, the Ninth Circuit panel ruled 2-1 that Montana had adequately established its interest in preventing corruption, and that its contribution limits, while low compared to national numbers, were high compared to the cost of campaigning in Montana.

Alaska - We continued to defend limits on out-of-state contributions with the filing of an amicus brief in *Thompson v. Hebdon* in July 2017 before the Ninth Circuit. The case involves various challenges from opponents of Alaska’s campaign finance reforms, including the provision which limits how much money candidates for state office can accept from nonresident (out-of-state) contributors.

Free Speech For People’s brief argues that the state contribution limits are critical to maintaining democratic self-government. As with all of our legal advocacy work, our cutting-edge democratic self-government argument has potential implications that go beyond this case and, by design, provides a foundation through which broad campaign finance reforms may be enacted.

## **YOU ARE SUPPORTING OUR CONTINUED MOVEMENT FOR A 28th AMENDMENT**

In 2017, Free Speech For People worked with our allies in support of a state resolution in Nevada calling for a 28th constitutional amendment to overturn the *Citizens United* ruling and to reclaim our democracy. The resolution passed the state legislature on May 25, 2017, making Nevada the 19th state to issue this call. With this important victory, we have now reached half of the states required for ratification of this constitutional amendment.

## YOU ARE SUPPORTING NEW INITIATIVES TO CONFRONT THE CORRUPTION OF THE PRESIDENCY


In January 2017, Free Speech For People launched a new and groundbreaking program to challenge the unprecedented corruption at the highest level of our government. This program includes the launch of a campaign calling for an impeachment investigation of President Trump due to violations of the Domestic and Foreign Emoluments Clauses of the U.S. Constitution.

To date, more than 1.2 million people have signed on in support of the campaign, which has since expanded to include a focus on obstruction of justice and other abuses of power and the public trust.

This program also includes:

- a campaign calling upon the New York Attorney General to investigate whether to initiate charter revocation proceedings against the Trump Organization in New York State, due to the corporation's collusion with the President to violate the two anti-corruption provisions of the U.S. Constitution;
- a campaign calling for the divestment of public pension funds from Trump-owned businesses;
- a legal challenge to the pardon of former Maricopa County, AZ Sheriff Joe Arpaio; and
- a complaint before the Federal Election Commission seeking an investigation into potential violations of federal campaign finance law by the Russian Government and the Trump Campaign in the 2016 election.

Key to this work is the groundswell of support from people like you across the country. You have enabled us to continue to build public pressure to hold the President to account – pressure which is vital if we are to directly challenge the corruption of the White House and see Congress launch an impeachment investigation.



**WITH YOUR SUPPORT**, Free Speech For People will continue the fight to hold power to account, to advance a new jurisprudence on money in politics, and to build the grassroots movement to reclaim our democracy.

In addition to gifts received from individual donors throughout the year, Free Speech For People is proud to have received support from the following foundations and organizations in 2017:

Amalgamated Transit Union

The Clements Foundation

Endeavor Foundation

Gaia Fund

The Herb Block Foundation

The Overbrook Foundation

Park Foundation

Rockefeller Brothers Fund

Wallace Global Fund

WhyNot Initiative

**Free Speech For People is grateful for all who supported our work in 2017!**