

I am writing in support of HJM 6, which calls on Congress to send an amendment to the states for ratification that addresses the dominance of big money in political decisions and the unwarranted gift of constitutional rights to corporations. There are several other bills before the legislature that call for a federal constitutional amendment related to the Citizens United decision (at least HJM 5, SJM 3, and SJM 9). Of these, HJM 6 is by far the best.

There is one clause in particular that makes HJM 6 so much better than the other resolutions that call for a federal amendment –

"Whereas based on the American value of fair play, leveling the playing field and ensuring that all citizens, regardless of wealth, have an opportunity to have their political views heard, there is a valid rationale for regulating political spending." This clause is so important for the following reasons:

1. It makes clear that there is reason to regulate political spending beyond just that in candidate elections. Corporate and other big money contributions greatly distort votes on ballot measures. Corporate lobbying has led to bills that most citizens would be loath to support. High cost public relations campaigns shape debates in ways that would be unrecognizable with rational citizen discussion.
2. This Whereas makes it clear why political spending needs to be regulated – to ensure that the voices of citizens are heard. Some amendments have been proposed that give Congress and the states the ability to regulate campaign spending for any reason they see fit, with no requirement for neutrality regarding content, candidate, or political party. One can imagine abuses, especially related to third parties and minorities. On a good note, the federal House Joint Resolution 20, on which Oregon's Rep. Peter DeFazio is a sponsor, includes appropriate language relating to the above Whereas.
3. An amendment addressing this Whereas should also allow a system like Arizona's clean elections law, which the Court struck down in 2011, to function again. The law had previously opened Arizona to representation by a wider sort of people.

Thank you for considering my thoughts on this important issue.

Charlie Swanson