

June 25, 2013

To: Oregon State Senate Committee on Rules
From: Main Street Alliance of Oregon
Re: Support for HJM 6 A to Level the Playing Field For Small Businesses

Chair Rosenbaum and Committee Members,

The Main Street Alliance of Oregon, a network of over 1200 small business owners statewide, are in full support of House Joint Memorial 6 A.

We encourage small business owners to speak out on state and federal policy impacting our businesses and our communities. As part of our outreach and decision making process, we regularly survey small businesses throughout the state.

Part of our 2012 survey was on the subject of political spending and elections. Statewide we polled 377 small businesses. As we walked into the shops of these small business owners, the first question we asked was this: *In January 2010, the US Supreme Court ruled in its Citizens United decision that corporations are free to spend unlimited sums of money in elections. Do you believe this change is good for small businesses, bad for small businesses, or has not impact?*

And 79% of these business owners answered, often quite passionately, bad! Many added *"The Citizens United decision was bad for small business and bad for all of us!"* or words to that effect.

Then, the second question from our surveyor was: *Would you support or oppose a constitutional amendment declaring that corporations are not people and money is not speech?*

And again, in this statewide sampling of small businesses, *72% of business owners we polled would support a constitutional amendment declaring that corporations are not people and money is not speech.*

In conversations we have had with business owners throughout the state, the bottom line is as small business owners we are sick and tired of the "big box stores" and large corporations dominating our democracy and jeopardizing our ability to compete in the market place. The Citizens United decision reinforces a system that allows dominant players – big money – to directly influence our elections AND further tilts the playing field towards a narrow and already well-represented range of interests leaving small businesses out of the discussions.

Our hope is that Congress will act to pass a constitutional amendment to clarify that constitutional rights belong to individuals and that pouring millions of dollars into the political process is not the same as free speech.

We urge you to help level the playing field for small businesses in our democracy by passing House Joint Memorial 6 A.

Yours respectfully,



Jim Houser, co-chair
Hawthorne Auto Clinic, Portland



Mark Kellenbeck, co-chair
BrainJoy LLC, Medford