

Letter to Washington State Congressional Delegation

[Senator Patty Murray](#)

March 1, 2015

Senator Maria Cantwell
Representative Jim McDermott
Representative Adam Smith
Representative Rick Larsen
Representative Dave Reichert
Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Representative Jaime Herrera Beutler
Representative Suzan DelBene
Representative Denny Heck
Representative Derek Kilmer
Representative Dan Newhouse

Requesting Constitutional Amendment to Overturn *Citizens United v. FEC*

Dear Senators and Representatives,

As Members of the Washington State Legislature, we fundamentally disagree with the conclusions reached by the 5-4 majority in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* (2010). As you know, that decision declared that artificial entities have the “right” to spend unlimited amounts in our elections, and opened the floodgates for unlimited election spending by extremely wealthy individuals.

This radical departure from judicial precedent and democratic values has already brought a torrent of big money, much of it secret, into American and Washington State politics. Since 2010 there has been an explosion in the dollars being spent on America’s elections at the federal, state and local level. The result is a fundamental distortion of campaigns for public office.

Democracy has at its heart a basic promise: each citizen has an equal voice in selecting who represents them. Our Republic is built, in Lincoln’s words, on the commitment that ours is a “government of the people, by the people, for the people.” The *Citizens United* decision poses a direct and dramatic threat to that promise and to that commitment.

In *Citizens United*, the majority held that state legislatures as well as Congress are forbidden from imposing limits on spending by corporations and the super-rich to influence election outcomes. The Court has undermined the power of the People’s representatives to regulate our elections. *Citizen's United* has taken our democracy out of the people's hands and placed it squarely in the pockets of wealthy individuals and special interests. That is not democracy.

Apart from the Court reversing itself, the only way to overturn the Supreme Court’s ruling, is to amend the U.S. Constitution to make clear the authority of Congress and state legislatures to regulate election spending consistent with our American ideals of equality and democracy. We, the undersigned members of the Washington State Legislature, call upon you to join your colleagues in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives to send a constitutional amendment to the states reversing the United States Supreme Court’s ruling in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*. Such an amendment should restore the right of the People’s elected representatives to place reasonable limits on spending in elections and to make distinctions between the role of natural persons and artificial entities in our electoral process.

In addition, we stand ready to ratify such an amendment upon passage.
Respectfully submitted,