

More on Constitutional Amendment Action in Congress

The Senate Judiciary Committee held a historic hearing on June 3, 2014: the second hearing on a proposed constitutional amendment to overturn the results of the Supreme Court cases that have vastly increased the power of wealthy donors in elections, thereby drowning voices of the voters.

Senator Patrick Leahy, Chairman of the Committee, opened the hearing with the following words:

This morning the Senate Judiciary Committee begins its consideration of a constitutional amendment to repair the damage done by a series of flawed Supreme Court decisions that overturned longstanding precedent and eviscerated campaign finance laws. Left unanswered, these rulings will continue to erode fundamental aspects of our democratic process. It is time for Congress and the American people to act.

To read all the statements submitted at the hearing click [HERE](#).

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid stated as follows:

I am here today because the flood of dark money into our nation's political system poses the greatest threat to our democracy that I have witnessed during my time in public service. The decisions by the Supreme Court have left the American people with a status quo in which one side's billionaires are pitted against the other side's billionaires.

Senator Mitch McConnell testified against Senate Joint Resolution 19 (SJR19), as did Floyd Abrams, Partner, Cahill Gordon & Reindel, LLP. Abrams is the attorney who argued on behalf of Senator Mitch McConnell in the re-argument ordered by the Supreme Court on the constitutionality of McCain Feingold (The Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002) in the *Citizens United* case. He defended the rights of corporations and unions to donate unlimited amounts of money to political allies. Read their statements to understand their arguments, and build our responses, because there are very good arguments to make in response.

Floyd McKissick brought the perspective of a North Carolina resident and member of the North Carolina State Senate. He spoke in favor of SJR 19 based on his experience in the legislature.

Professor Jamin B. Raskin, Director, Program on Law and Government, American University Washington College of Law, spoke in favor of SJR 19, and wrote a passionate and detailed history of the case law that brought us to this point, ending with this statement: "I commend the sponsors of this historic legislation and urge them to stand strong. The American people are with you."

The Senate Judiciary Committee voted SJR19 out of the Judiciary Committee with 50 sponsors, including our own Senators Maria Cantwell and Patty Murray. HALF of the Senators supported SJR 19 before the vote in the Senate.

On September 8, 2014, the first day after the August recess, Majority Leader Harry Reid scheduled a vote in the US Senate on SJR 19, the Constitutional amendment submitted by Senator Tom Udall from New Mexico. He used cloture rules. Cloture means closure of debate: it is a technique to stop debate for 30 hours (including stopping filibusters) followed by a vote in which 60 votes are needed to move the legislation forward.

Fifty four Senators voted in favor of the amendment. No one expected to get 60 votes immediately, and most people thought we would only get 50 votes. Of course Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell voted for the amendment. Thank you Senators!

The House has introduced a companion resolution with the same wording as the Senate's SJR 19: House Joint Resolution 119 (HJR 119). HJR 119 has been referred to the House Judiciary Committee. It already has 117 co-sponsors, including six of our state's elected Representatives: Susan Del Bene Congressional District I, Rick Larson CD 2, Derek Kilmer CD 6, Jim McDermott CD 7, Adam Smith CD 9, and Denny Heck CD 10.

This is incredible progress in a very short time! It is amazing and it indicates that a Constitutional amendment will be passed.

[Click here for the proposed amendment.](#)