



### Ohio House of Representatives

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### Committees:

- Finance
- Civil Justice
- Economic and Workforce Development
- Finance – Sub. Committee on Transportation – *Ranking Minority Member*
- Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review

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13<sup>th</sup> District

**Sponsor Testimony by Representative Michael J. Skindell**  
**House Federalism Committee**  
**Wednesday, June 26, 2019**

**House Resolution 140 – Urging Passage of Constitutional Amendment to Reverse *Citizens United* Ruling and to Diminish the Role of Money in Our Electoral System**

Chairman Becker, Vice Chair Stoltzfus, Ranking Member Miller and members of the House Federalism Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Resolution 140. This resolution calls on all legislators at the state and federal level, as well as all other communities and jurisdictions, to support an amendment to the United States Constitution that would abolish corporate personhood and the legal doctrine of money being equated with political speech.

House Resolution 140 is in response to the United States Supreme Court decision of *Citizens United v. Federal Elections Commission*, 130 S.Ct. 876, 558 U.S. 310 (2010), which equated spending to political speech and struck down the legal limits on spending in the electoral process. *Citizens United* greatly increased the role of money in politics. The decision basically gave corporations the same political speech rights as individuals, essentially taking away all corporate restrictions on campaign finance and spending in elections.

The U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United* has created an unprecedented role of money in politics and has established an alarming imbalance in the playing field for ordinary citizens to participate in the political process. This decision has led to the rise of Super PACs, an unprecedented political influence of corporations and wealthy individuals and a distortion of the political and legislative agenda in this country.

According to Richard L. Hasen, a campaign finance expert at the University of California-Irvine, outside spending by groups hit approximately \$88 million in 2012 by July of that

election cycle, compared to about \$37.5 million in 2008<sup>1</sup>. In a 2014 study by the Brennan Center for Justice, it was found that spending by outside groups--- primarily Super PACs--- reached \$486 million for US Senate races alone that year. The same study also found that Super PACs spent approximately \$1 billion in the past three election cycles since the US Supreme Court decision was handed down; nearly 60% of which, or more than \$600 million, was spent by just 195 people and their spouses<sup>2</sup>.

In addition, a February 2017 report by OpenSecrets.org found that: “During the 2016 election cycle, the top 20 individual donors (whose contributions were disclosed) gave more than \$500 million combined to political organizations. The 20 largest organizational donors also gave a total of more than \$500 million, and more than \$1 billion came from the top 40 donors.”

This disturbing trend of substantial increases of the role of money in politics distorts our political system. It corrupts our governmental system, drowns out voices of the electorate who cannot give these huge donations and makes our electorate more cynical. We can improve our democratic system by minimizing the role of money in politics. The passage of this resolution will be a good start.

Chairman Becker, Vice Chair Stoltzfus, Ranking Member Miller and members of the House Federalism Committee, thank you for your consideration of House Resolution 140. I would be happy to answer any of your questions at this time.

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<sup>1</sup> Bia, Matt, “How Much Has *Citizens United* Changed the Political Game?”. *The New York Times Magazine*. July 17, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Childress, Sarah, “Report: After *Citizens United*, Outside Spending Doubles”. *Frontline*. January 14, 2015.