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23rd District

Antonio@ohiosenate.gov
(614) 466-5123
(614) 719-3913 (fax)



State Senator Nickie J. Antonio District 23

Senate General Government and Agency Review Committee
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Sponsor Testimony SR 221

Good afternoon Chair Schuring, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member O'Brien and members of the General Government and Agency Review committee. Thank you for this opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Resolution 221. I am pleased to offer such an important resolution for the Ohio General Assembly.

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.

This 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.

That U.S. Supreme Court decision 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.

The current rules of the game are tilted towards corporate interests and their political goals. Corporations are not people. Corporations do not need healthy food, clean water and sufficient housing to survive. Elections do not exist to vote for the

betterment of business, they exist for the representation to attain betterment of the general public, and it is they who create those businesses.

In 2014, the Brennan Center for Justice of the New York University School of Law did an analysis of campaign spending since the 2010 *Citizens United* vs. the FEC Supreme Court decision.¹ This report found that of the \$1 billion spent in federal elections by super PACs from 2010 through 2014, nearly 60 percent of the money came from just 195 individuals and their spouses.

Recent studies indicate 88 percent of voting-age Americans favor overturning the *Citizens United* decision and placing limits on corporate spending in U.S. elections.² In addition, more than 66 percent of small business owners surveyed believe that *Citizens United* makes it harder for their businesses to compete against large corporations.³

To date, 19 states and over 600 municipalities in the United States have already approved resolutions or voted for ballot initiatives calling for the end of corporate personhood.

By equating money to speech, we have allowed a very small group of extremely wealthy individuals to speak for the general public. Our resolution will restore the people's choice, ensuring that every vote counts.

It is important to note that in the United States, we still live in a democracy. It is time that our society truly reflects the will of the people. It is time to give ownership of our government back to the people—not the corporations.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have at this time.

¹<https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/publications/Outside%20Spending%20Since%20Citizens%20Unit%20ed.pdf>

² <https://www.pri.org/stories/2018-05-10/study-most-americans-want-kill-citizens-united-constitutional-amendment>

³ <https://www.cnn.com/2012/01/26/opinion/brodwin-citizens-united/index.html>