

## Testimony of Charles Shafer in Favor of Senate Joint Resolution 7

Dear Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee:

Thank you for taking up Senate Resolution 7 and for considering my opinion. I urge you to vote in FAVOR of this important piece of legislation

I am the chair of the Ethical Action Committee and a Board member of the Baltimore Ethical Society. However, I testify solely for myself; my views do not necessarily represent the Society. Nevertheless, the humanistic values and commitments of Ethical Culture support adoption of this Resolution. We believe that we must respect every person's inherent worth. And that requires having the right to participate in governance. The democratic process is essential to a humane world order. Of course, the right to participate is more than just to engage in some ritual, like signing a petition or even voting. Rather, all members of society must have an equal right to be heard and to be informed.

Our country has achieved hard won success in insuring fairer elections. But, sadly, 10 years ago the US Supreme Court broke with prior precedent and reversed direction on the road to fair elections by wiping out campaign finance restrictions. The court claimed that contributions of millions of dollars wouldn't promote corruption and that citizens would know who was making those contributions. Instead, the result of that decision has been the crushing of the influence of most citizens by the overwhelming power of wealthy individuals and corporations. Real limits and meaningful disclosure have been eviscerated. . Even though politicians trumpet the number of their small donors, effectively hidden is the huge amount they receive from the wealthy.

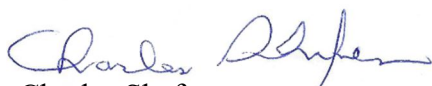
Of course, corporations don't bring bags of money and receive written promises to do their bidding. They don't need to. **FAQ: Why do the wealthy heap tons of dollars on politicians?**  
**A: They want something.** The wealthy want tax cuts for themselves. Banks want decreased regulation. Insurance companies want to secure their profits on medical care. Many businesses don't want workers to get fair pay and the ability to bargain collectively. **In short, what they want is power. And they can buy power with dollars and, if possible, by hiding those dollars.**

I don't believe that seeking campaign finance reform will solve every problem. Just as I don't believe that there will be a cure for all cancer victims. But we have a cancer on our political system. And we must do everything we can do to battle it. Of course, there are many reasons why the passage of a constitutional amendment may not be accomplished. But we will certainly fail if we do not try.

Therefore, reducing the disproportionate power granted to the wealthy is the only ethical way to proceed.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted.

  
Charles Shafer.