

16 Feb 2021

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to ask you to support the Democracy Amendment Resolution SJ0007. Maryland should join with other states that have called upon Congress to summon an Article V convention to draft an amendment that would overturn *Citizens United*. I have researched the alarmist idea that an Article V convention could turn into a “runaway convention”. I am firmly convinced that the requirement that amendments must be ratified by a super-majority of three quarters of all the states is a significant-enough safeguard, as Senator Van Hollen has written.

In addition, history has shown us that it is unlikely that the Article V convention would even happen, as it’s more likely that congressional leaders will decide to take action themselves as the states begin to pressure Congress. Congress will act to *head off* the convention and keep the power to draft the language of an amendment in their own hands. I believe the timing could not be better to exert this kind of “peer pressure.”

The detrimental effect of *Citizens United* can be observed at the local level where the dollar amounts are rising. Four years ago I joined an advocacy group called WISE, consisting of over 700 women from Anne Arundel county. One of my tasks during the 2018 election cycle was to use the (MD) Campaign Reporting (Information) database to characterize candidates’ campaign donations and share that information with voters. We had some newcomers to the political scene in our district, and what I found is that they were ultimately outspent by more than 4 to 1 by the incumbents. I was also naively shocked to see how much of the donations came from businesses – as much as 40% of total campaign dollars. In our county, over-development was a hot topic – for a particular race, I calculated that, at a minimum, \$1 out of every \$5 of donation money was coming from development-related businesses, or employees thereof. There are a multitude of studies showing that, no matter how we try to act independently despite “gifts” like campaign donations, we are at the mercy of our animal brains¹. Corporations know this. We should be turning away business donations, rather than treating them as speech.

I testified for the first time in the assembly two years ago on this legislation. I since have learned that lobbyists sponsor \$50,000 casino events for legislators.

¹ “The Honest Truth About Dishonesty,” by Dan Aierly.

Compare that to the 2.5 minutes I got after having to take off work for the entire afternoon. And sadly, a number of you could not even be bothered to stay in your seats while I spoke. A regular citizen doesn't stand a chance.

In conclusion, I want to mention that I am a mechanical engineering professor of 21 years. When I talk to my students about structural failure, I tell them to be sure that they address the "root cause" of the failure as it's the most effective way to solve the problem. There are so many things I want to see fixed in our current society, and I view money in our politics as a "root cause" of failure. The voices of truly unbiased experts and our citizens, are drowned out by the money that's allowed to pour in. I am here today to respectfully ask you to support this resolution to do your part to address this root cause of failure in our democracy.

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