



*Anne Arundel County Peace Action, Baltimore Peace Action, Howard County Peace Action, Maryland United for Peace and Justice, Peace Action Montgomery, Prince George's County Peace and Justice Coalition, Frederick Peace Action*

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SJ 7  
The Democracy Amendment Resolution**

TO: Sen. Paul Pinsky, Chair, and Members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee.  
FROM: Jean Athey, Executive Director, Maryland Peace Action  
DATE: February 16, 2021

Mr. Chair, Members of the Committee:

My name is Jean Athey. I am representing the 1000 members of Peace Action in Maryland, who are also members of our seven local Maryland Peace Action chapters. I am a resident of Baltimore, and I submit this testimony in support of SJ 7, the Democracy Amendment Resolution.

The Democracy Amendment addresses the three most critical threats to our democracy—restrictions on voting, money as speech, and the treatment of powerful multinational corporations as persons. Arguably, we have just lived through the gravest risk to democracy in our nation's history. We almost lost it, as our own Jamie Raskin so clearly and brilliantly demonstrated in the recent impeachment trial of former president Donald Trump.

How did the nation get to this terrifying state? We believe it all goes back to the attacks on democracy that are addressed in this resolution.

*Voting:* Multiple attacks were made in the recent election on people's right to vote, and if the potential voters were Democrats, and especially if they were people of color, every trick was utilized to prevent them from being able to vote--from legalistic, to subterfuge and lies, to threats of violence. The most basic tenet of democracy is that every citizen should have the right and the ability to vote. Yet we do not actually have this right.

*Money as Speech:* When money becomes speech, it is the voices of the wealthy that are heard, not the voices of the rest of us. Money drives policy and the needs of the people are ignored--democracy dies.

*Corporations as Persons:* It is shocking that organizational entities, many of them multinational, have accrued the rights of people in our democracy. It mocks the belief that our government is of the people, by the people, and for the people. We have come to see that our government is now of the corporations, by the corporations, and for the corporations. This is a travesty of democracy.

You may be wondering why Maryland Peace Action, which is an organization focused primarily on foreign policy issues, is testifying to you on this resolution. It is because we have plenty of

evidence that our country's basic lack of real democracy has distorted our actions abroad, in opposition to the will of the people of this country. Few individuals want the U.S. to engage in the endless wars of the past seventy years—we know this from multiple polls. But these wars have greatly enriched the “military-industrial complex,” and the wars and the weapons manufactured are in their corporate interest.

When average people are told of the massive amounts of money that flow to multinational corporations for needless and highly destructive weapons and for “wars of choice,” they are rightly appalled. It is not what we, as Americans, want. But under the current campaign finance laws, campaign contributions from weapons manufacturers ensure that members of Congress will continue to support them, and we will continue to be the country that the majority of the world considers to be the greatest threat to world peace.

Please vote for the Democracy Amendment to restore real democracy to our nation, and a hope for international peace.