

# I-1329

**WE THE PEOPLE** ★ **Claiming our Democracy**

**Get BIG MONEY out of politics!**

**WA***mend*.org

## WAmend Talking Points Outline, July 2013

Note: The following is an outline for use by presenters to various organizations. The talking points are bolded. The information in them should be included in the talk. The material that is not bolded is there for reference or inclusion at the discretion of the speaker.

### **1) The Problem: Government in the United States of America has been taken over by those with excessive financial resources.**

- a. This includes wealthy individuals and large for-profit corporations.
- b. They are using the machinery of government to further enrich and empower themselves.
- c. The wealthy have become empowered.
- d. The impoverished have become disenfranchised.
- e. Democracy, as most citizens conceive it, has failed.
- f. The public interest has been superseded by the profit motive.

### **2) The interests of these ultra-wealthy individuals and corporations, more often than not, are in conflict with the public interest.**

- a. For-profit corporations are legally mandated to maximize profit.
  - i. All corporate political expenditures must be made in effort to maximize profit.
- b. Profits are increased by externalizing costs, e.g. transferring the bill to the public.
- c. Profits are increased by lowering taxes on corporations and the wealthy.
- d. Profits are increased by eliminating regulations that imposes social responsibility:
  - i. Decent wages, hours and working conditions
  - ii. Environmental concerns
- e. Profits are increased by war.
- f. There has been a concerted and successful effort to convince the public that corporate interests are synonymous with public interests. For example:
  - i. The "Job Creator" myth. (There is no evidence that cutting top tax rates coincides with higher employment rates. The evidence is, in fact, to the contrary.)
  - ii. The assertion that deregulation translates into benefits for the general public. (Think "phone bill" and "too big to fail.")
  - iii. Stating that fair trade arrangements benefit the general public. (But if your job has been exported or if you have any kind of social conscience, then "Not so much." This particular public deception relies on citizens adopting an "If I'm OK then it's OK" attitude. This has been strongly encouraged by the business community because it dis-unites us. It makes us behave like cattle who are not disturbed when the farmer comes out to harvest one of the herd, as long as it isn't them.)

**3) Money has become political power in many ways. The restoration of Democracy requires that these connections be broken.**

- a. Campaign financing allows the wealthy to select and influence candidates and elected officials.
- b. Media ownership allows shaping of public opinion by controlling the knowledge base.
- c. The revolving door allows old-fashioned bribery.
- d. Unlimited highly paid professional lobbying makes the opportunity to influence elected officials a commodity that is available in proportion to one's wealth.

**4) Corporations cannot be allowed to impersonate individual human citizens.**

- a. By legal mandate, they act in opposition to the public interest.
- b. They have resources that vastly exceed those of ordinary citizens.
- c. They have, again by law, limited liability
- d. They are immortal.

**5) Money cannot be considered the legal equivalent of political speech.**

- a. "One person, one vote" embodies the essential characteristic of democracy: Every enfranchised citizen has an equal potential to influence government policy.
- b. Through the use of technology and communication infrastructure, public opinion has become a commodity which can be sold through the media.
- c. Personal or corporate wealth can, therefore, be translated directly into political influence.
- d. Wealth distribution is sharply skewed toward a financial elite.
- e. This is incompatible with democracy.

**6) Correcting these problems requires granting the government the authority to create and enforce laws that eliminate the relationship between excessive wealth and political power.**

- a. Clarifying that the rights of corporations are not synonymous with those of living human citizens and do not derive from the U.S. Constitution.
- b. The creation of regulations to limit how much individual citizens and corporations may expend money with the intent of influencing government policy.
- c. Provision of a publicly funded alternative for the financing of political campaigns.

**7) This will require a Constitutional Amendment.**

- a. The U.S. Supreme Court, in its decision in Citizens United vs. the Federal Elections Commission in January 2010, allowed unlimited spending by corporations and individuals for the purpose of influencing election campaigns.
- b. This effectively trumped over 100 years of efforts to keep the wealthy and the corporate from defeating democracy.

**8) Sixteen States have begun the Amendment process by requesting Congress to pass and return to the States for ratification, an Amendment to the US Constitution that addresses the problems of money in politics.**

- a. Hawaii, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Mexico, Rhode Island, Vermont, Connecticut, Maryland, Colorado, Montana, California, Delaware, Illinois, Maine, W. Virginia and Oregon. Also Washington, D.C.

**9) In Washington State, a resolution bill passed in the House but was stopped by the chair of the Senate Government Operations Committee (Senator Pam Roach) who twice opted not to let the bill be voted upon by members of the committee.**

**10) So...WAMEND ([www.WAMEND.org](http://www.WAMEND.org)) is organizing for a statewide initiative to appear on the ballot in November 2014.**

a. WAMEND is a coalition of 23 state and national groups.

**11) The initiative will request an amendment that makes clear that:**

a. The rights of corporations are not synonymous with those of living human citizens and do not derive from the U.S. Constitution.

b. Money in the political context is not the equivalent of speech and may be regulated by Congress and the States.

**12) THIS INITIATIVE WILL BE A TRUE PEOPLE'S INITIATIVE – NO PAID SIGNATURE GATHERERS!!!**

13) WAMEND needs:

a. People to carry THIS message to their respective organizations

b. People to recruit signature gatherers

c. Signature gatherers for the period from January to June 2014

d. People to write letters to the editor, talk with their elected representatives, help with the logistics of an initiative drive and,

e. We also need financial support.

**14) Go to [WAMEND.org](http://WAMEND.org) to sign up and learn more.**

**15) YOU CAN ALSO SIGN UP RIGHT HERE. I'LL HAVE THE SIGN UP SHEET IN THE BACK OF THE ROOM.**