

I-1329

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Tony Ventrella Steps Up as I-1329 Spokesperson

Tony Ventrella is a familiar face in the Northwest, best known for his 22 years as sports director at KING-5 and KIRO-7 Television. Currently, Ventrella is the Digital Media Host for the Seattle Seahawks and Sounders.

Ventrella supports getting big money out of elections, and is pleased to announce that he is a spokesperson for I-1329, a Washington State initiative campaign sponsored by WAmend.org. WAmend, a coalition of citizen activists and grassroots organizations, believes that unlimited and anonymous sources of money are corrupting the political system. Washingtonians are joining citizens throughout the nation to call for an amendment to the U.S. Constitution to overturn U.S. Supreme Court decisions *Citizens United* and *McCutcheon*. Should I-1329 pass in November, Washington would be the 17th state in the union to officially recognize the need to amend the U.S. Constitution to limit corporate influence in politics.

“To me, this approach is one of the solutions to the gridlock in our Congress,” Ventrella says of his involvement with the campaign. “When you have corporations that claim to be ‘people’ and that donate unlimited amounts of money to political campaigns, it scares off people who want to do good work,” he adds.

The U.S. Supreme Court’s decision *Citizen United* declared that corporations are “people” entitled under the Constitution to the same protections afforded to people in the Bill of Rights and that corporations have the right of “free speech” protected by the freedom of speech clause in the 1st Amendment. Corporations now have the right to make unlimited and even anonymous or so called “dark money” contributions to political campaigns. Instead, Initiative 1329 would urge Congress to provide for disclosure of the source of all political contributions and expenditures.

“Congress was designed by the founders of our country to be the voice of the people. By having unlimited campaign donations that are not transparent, what is being reflected by Congress is not the voice of the

people, but instead, the voices of corporations and the wealthiest people with the most to spend,” says Ventrella.

“While I’m totally for free speech, I’m not for the freedom of spending unlimited money on political campaigns or the freedom of not having to disclose where it came from. It’s such a dangerous trend.”

Ventrella reflects further on campaign spending. “When money is dumped into any kind of campaign, whether it is to sell hamburgers or pharmaceuticals or political candidates, people will flock to that product because it is what they see and hear. You can do that if you are selling a product, but I don’t think our political races and the people running for those races are products.”

On describing his involvement with politics, Ventrella says, “I’m outspoken in my own community about my own beliefs. I have friends from both major political parties and I respect their positions. And I think the majority of people, whether from the left or the right, believe that there is too much big money in politics.”

From the early days of his career, Ventrella recalls his time at his hometown radio station: “The station had a policy where we gave one free commercial per day to any candidate running for political office, but no candidate could buy a commercial on the station.” When he considers the vast change that has taken place over the years, he says, “The media are now making a killing in political spending, but it’s at the expense of our system of government. Whether you are a Democrat, Republican, Tea Party or union member, we are all victims of too much money in politics.”

He adds, “I come from a family of people who believe that sharing and giving of your time and resources to others less fortunate is not only a good thing to do, but it is the right thing to do. My entire family felt that way from my mother to my father to my favorite uncle Ralph. And now we need to give more than ever because our government doesn’t support some of the basic needs in our country, even such things as basic school supplies. You look at the money spent on political campaigns to prevent some of the basics, and I have to believe that all this political spending is making our society worse.”

Always the optimist, Ventrella looks to a brighter future. “I-1329 is a great effort and I’m proud to be part of it.”

Tony Ventrella’s media career spans 40 years, including his time at Seattle’s network affiliate stations. After high school and a stint in the U.S. Army, Tony worked for his father at Ventrella’s Barber Shop in Norwalk, Connecticut before opening his own shop at age 24, but he eventually found his way into broadcasting. In addition to his work in sports and media, Tony Ventrella is an inspirational speaker. His signature keynote, called “Smile in the Mirror,” is based on his book of the same title, and contains practical ideas for living a better life along with a mix of humorous and memorable stories.

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The Washington State Coalition to Amend the Constitution (WAmend.org), a coalition of citizen activists and grassroots organizations, has launched Washington State Initiative 1329. I-1329 calls for a constitutional amendment which would overturn Citizens United and McCutcheon.

NOTE - A high resolution image of Tony Ventrella is attached. WAmend overview, background and quote sheet are also included in this packet of information (attached).