

# I-1329

WE THE PEOPLE ★ Claiming our Democracy

Get BIG MONEY out of politics!

WAmend.org

## WAmend Overview, Background and Quote Sheet

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**The Washington State Coalition to Amend the Constitution ([WAmend.org](http://WAmend.org)) is working to GET BIG MONEY out of politics**

### A Statewide Citizen's Initiative Works to Stop Big Money from Buying Our Elections

WAmend.org, a coalition of citizen activists and grassroots organizations, has launched Washington State Initiative I-1329. WAmend is working to get big money out of politics and to reclaim our democracy for citizens rather than allowing corporations and wealthy individuals to influence the political process.

**Initiative I-1329** is part of a groundswell movement across the country to overturn *Citizens United* and *McCutcheon* through an amendment to the U.S. Constitution. I-1329 is a non-partisan issue supported by people from every political stripe. The initiative calls specifically for an amendment that would establish the following:

- 1. The rights of people protected by the Constitution of the United States are the rights of human beings only.**
- 2. All citizens should have equal voice in the political process, and no person or artificial legal entity should gain undue influence over government as a result of financial resources. To meet this goal, federal, state, and local governments shall be fully empowered to regulate all political contributions and expenditures.**
- 3. All political contributions and expenditures shall be publicly disclosed in a full and timely manner.**

The measure would urge Washington's Congressional delegation to support the initiation by Congress of the Constitutional Amendment process and to include the above principles.

### Do You Think Corporations Are People?

Neither does the Initiative 1329 Campaign. And surveys show that the vast majority of American citizens agree, whether they are from the left, the right, or in between: corporations are not people and corporate money shouldn't equal free speech.

And yet 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 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment. Corporations now have the right to make unlimited and even anonymous or so called "dark money" contributions to political campaigns. In part, Initiative 1329 works so that people will know the source of all political contributions and expenditures.

“We the people” of Initiative 1329 campaign ([WAmend.org](http://WAmend.org)) believe that big money in politics has corrupted the system. The problem is that the political system has been taken over by those with excessive financial resources and the interests of ultra-wealthy individuals and corporations are often in conflict with the public interest.

According to Jay Heyman, Chair of the Washington Coalition to Amend the U.S. Constitution (WAmend), “Dark, secret money is corrupting our system of government by making candidates and elected officials beholden to special interests.”

Should the measure pass in November, Washington will be the 17<sup>th</sup> state in our union to officially recognize the need to amend the U.S. Constitution to limit corporate influence in politics. Washington’s voice will be added to a growing chorus of states and local governments urging such an amendment to empower people to pass laws to limit, and require disclosure of, political contributions and expenditures, and where one person once again equals one vote. Most other states did so through legislative action rather than a citizens’ initiative—for that reason the entire country is watching Washington State’s grassroots “bottom-up” progress on I-1329.

The primary focus of the WAmend coalition today is to continue to recruit the Super Citizens needed to collect the signatures by July 2 that will be needed to place Initiative 1329 on the ballot in November.

To learn more about the I-1329 campaign, visit [WAmend.org](http://WAmend.org). Those interested can also visit “Another Business for Democracy” locations: [www.wamend.org/coffee-shops-merchants-and-ice-cream-parlors/](http://www.wamend.org/coffee-shops-merchants-and-ice-cream-parlors/). This project utilizes small businesses as locations where petitions can be signed by the visiting public, and where I-1329 volunteers can hold regularly scheduled “office hours” to receive completed petitions, distribute new forms and answer questions. “Another Business for Democracy” locations are being added, so check back frequently.

### **Additional Background Material and Quotes**

**Supreme Court Decisions** – In 1906 Teddy Roosevelt called for legislation forbidding all contributions by corporations “to any political committee or for any political purpose.” In 1907 Congress passed the Tillman Act, which did just that.

- On January 21, 2010 the US Supreme Court, in *Citizens United v. FEC*, in a 5–4 decision, overturned longstanding precedent limiting independent corporate expenditures in elections, stating that under the First Amendment, the government cannot discriminate against a speaker based on the speaker’s identity as a corporation. The majority said further that, “Independent expenditures do not give rise to the appearance of corruption.” As a direct result of *Citizens United*, in 2012 just 61 large donors to Super PACs (\$4.7 million per contributor) for the two major party presidential candidates matched \$285 million in grass roots contributions from more than 1,425,500 small donors. At least \$300 million was spent by groups that are **not** required to disclose their donors -- so-called “dark money”.
- On April 2, 1914 in *McCutcheon v. FEC*, the same majority declared unconstitutional the federal law that limited the aggregate amount that an individual could contribute during a federal election season to candidates, political parties and other political action committees (\$132,200).
- For the four justice minority, Justice Breyer eloquently expressed the concerns that cause the WAmend volunteers to work so hard to place Initiative 1329 before the voters. He wrote: “Where enough money calls the tune, the general public will not be heard.... That is one reason why the Court has stressed the constitutional importance of Congress’ concern that a few large donations not drown out the voices of the many.... [O]fficeholders will decide issues not on the merits or the desires of their constituencies, but according to the wishes of those who have made large financial contributions valued by the officeholder.”

Initiative 1329 calls for a constitutional amendment, which would overturn *Citizens United* and *McCutcheon*.

**Public Response** - In a 2010 poll 80% of Americans agreed that the “new rules that let corporations, unions and very wealthy people give unlimited money to Super PACs will lead to corruption.” Only 15% disagreed. Sixteen states have requested that Congress pass and return to the states for ratification an amendment to the US Constitution that addresses the problems of money in politics, including two states that offered resolutions to voters (Colorado and Montana). In 2012, *Citizens United* was overwhelmingly rejected in both Colorado and Montana by well over 70% of voters. This overwhelming support for resolutions for an amendment to overturn *Citizens United* came from both sides of the aisle.

## **QUOTE SHEET**

*\*NOTE High resolution photos are available to accompany the quotes below; additional high resolution photos highlighting the campaign trail are also available upon request*

“We like to believe that we have a democracy, and when we elect someone, they will represent the people in their district, but, unfortunately, that is no longer the case. Our representatives are now spending way too much time searching for and representing the money interests who funded their last election or who will be funding their next. We all know this is inherently unfair, unjust and was never the intention of the framers of the Constitution. Their intention was to build a new nation that left the notion of the King and the ruling class behind. Well, that “ruling class” has caught up with us with such Supreme Court decisions as *Citizens United* and the more recent *McCutcheon* decision. The wealthy can now buy both our politicians as well as initiative campaigns. This is never what our founders intended, and unless we stop it with several reforms such as a 28th amendment to the US Constitution, we will never be able to turn back this tide. For the sake of future generations, we must stop and reverse this tragic state of affairs and we must do it NOW.” --*Libby Carr, Campaign Manager*

“The outcome of our people’s initiative may well be an indication of whether corporations and the wealthiest citizens will continue to ride roughshod over our government and public policy. The pollsters tell us Americans are tired of having the political system corrupted by big money and special interests. Today, all across the country large numbers of people appear ready to stand together to change the way things are. As one of my teachers is often quoted as saying, ‘If not now, when?’ If there ever was a time to pull out the stops, now is the time for bold action.” --*Rabbi Jay Heyman, D.D, Campaign Chair*

“Was Abraham Lincoln being naïve at Gettysburg in 1863 when he said, ‘[W]e here highly resolve that ... government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.’ The billionaires and corporations who fund Super PACS would say, ‘Yes, because we know what is good for the people better than they do.’ The five Supreme Court Justices whose recent decisions have blown holes in our campaign finance laws would also say ‘Yes.’ We say ‘No’ to the cynicism contained in the Supreme Court’s decisions and “Yes” to Democracy for ourselves and for future generations.”

--*Jim Street, Campaign Volunteer, former Seattle City Council member and a retired King County Superior Court judge.*

“Washington Public Campaigns supports I-1329 because we know that unlimited and undisclosed money in politics is a corrupting influence - it undermines democracy. We need to send the strongest message possible to Congress that it's time to pass an amendment to the Constitution clarifying that corporations do not have the same rights as people and money is property not speech.”-- *Alice Woldt, Executive Director, Washington Public Campaigns*

“I decided to get involved with WAmend and passing I-1329 because I am tired of watching the influence corporations and very wealthy people are having on our electoral process through way of dumping large amounts of money into elections. I have two grandchildren now, ages 5 and 2, and I am deeply concerned

for their future. It's time the people took a stand and said enough is enough. I-1329 calls for a U.S. Constitutional Amendment stating only human beings are people and that money does not equal free speech. I want to know I am leaving behind a true democracy for my grandchildren and generations to come.” --*Cindy Black, Committee Volunteer*

“Only those people who have a lot of money are heard,” Cohen told ABC News about the U.S. political system. “The politicians do whatever the people who give them the money say that they want in order to get the money, ’cause they want the money.” --*Ben Cohen, Co-Founder, Ben & Jerry’s Ice Cream, Supporter I-1329*

“The way campaign funds are raised in Washington distorts what lawmakers can do and work on and makes it impossible to get any sensible reform on the left or right.” --*Lawrence Lessig, Harvard Law Professor, author, activist, supporter of I-1329*

“The most undercovered political movement in the United States — and there are a lot of undercovered political movements in the United States — is the broad-based national campaign to overturn the Supreme Court ruling that ushered in a new era of big-money politics... Support for an amendment now stretches from coast to coast...” --*John Nichols, The Nation & The Capital Times*

To learn more about the I-1329 campaign, visit [WAmend.org](http://WAmend.org).

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