



Suggestions for conversations at the voter's door

[Open the conversation]

You: Hello, my name is [_____]. I'm a volunteer with Wyoming Promise, a group of Wyoming citizens who are tired of our representatives in Congress doing what the corporations and big money donors want, instead of representing you and me. Do you have a moment to chat?

Voter: [hopefully yes]

You: We're trying to actually change the system so that we can prohibit corporations, SuperPACS and dark money groups from controlling our politics. The Supreme Court says corporations have a right to political speech and can spend unlimited amounts of money advocating for individual candidates, and the only way we can change that is to amend the Constitution to say corporations are not people, and money is not speech. If enough states demand that amendment, Congress will have to propose it so that the states can ratify it.

We are sponsoring a citizens' initiative here in Wyoming to demand that such an amendment be proposed. Our initiative is called the Free and Fair Elections Act, and we are hoping to get it on the ballot in November 2018. Do you agree that money plays too big a role in politics?

Voter: [hopefully yes]

You: Well the Free and Fair Elections initiative is trying to get big money out of politics. If we get enough signatures by next February we can put this on the Wyoming ballot in November of 2018. Would you like to sign our petition to get this on the ballot?

Voter: [hopefully yes]

You: Great! Are you registered to vote in Wyoming?

Voter: [yes/no/I think so/I'm registered at a different address]

You: [if yes] Great! Please sign right here, but please write today's date and then print your name very clearly so the Secretary of State will be able to read it when we turn these in next February. Also please write down your street address, not a post office box.

[if no] Well you can sign this if you register to vote first. Here is some information on how to register to vote. Once you are registered please contact us and we'll come back out with a petition for you to sign.

[if "I think so"] Did you vote in the presidential election last year? If so, you are registered, so you can sign. [follow script from above]

[if "I'm registered at a different address"] We're not sure when the Secretary of State's records will get updated, so to be sure that your signature counts, the Secretary told us to have you write down your old address and your new address when you sign.

Before the "yes," the conversation could go in many different directions:

Voter: I'm not sure. I need more information

You: [a] Here is a brochure that has more information about what we are doing. It lists our website on the back, WyomingPromise.org, where we have a lot of information about the initiative.

[b] I have the complete text of our initiative right here, at the back of this petition packet. Would you like to read it?

Voter: But this doesn't specify what the amendment will say. I don't want to sign until I see the exact language of the amendment.

You: Unfortunately that isn't how the process works. The Constitution says that only Congress or a convention of states can draft the actual language. But once the language is drafted, it must go back to the states to ratify the amendment, so if you don't like what the language says at that time, you can work against ratification. All you are saying by signing this is that you want a 28th Amendment to be proposed to get money out of politics.

Voter: I've heard about those constitutional conventions. They say a convention would make up its own rules and do whatever it wanted. That sounds pretty scary to me.

You: Here is a flier with some information about that. While there are a few people who are afraid a convention of states could run away, most scholars don't think that is possible. In fact, the Wyoming legislature just passed a law that would make it illegal for any Wyoming delegate to vote on anything at a convention that did not relate to the single topic of the convention. Yes, it would literally be illegal for a Wyoming delegate to "run away" and vote on anything other than a money-in-politics amendment.

The Free and Fair Elections initiative is in two parts. It first asks Congress to propose the 28th Amendment, which is what 19 other states have already done. If Congress doesn't do so within 6 months after we approve this measure, the initiative then converts into a call for a convention of states to propose the Amendment. We would be the sixth state to call for that convention. When 34 states call for the convention, Congress must call it.

Voter: I'm a Republican. Isn't this something that the Democrats are pushing?

You: Wyoming Promise is completely non-partisan. Sen. Al Simpson has endorsed this effort, has signed the petition, and is asking others to sign it too.

National polls say that 80% of all Americans, regardless of party affiliation, support this. In 2012, on the same ballot, voters in Montana voted for Mitt Romney over Barack Obama by 16 points, but approved this measure by over 50 points, 75% to 25%. Colorado voters also voted in favor of this in 2012 by the same margin. Everywhere this has been on the ballot it has succeeded by huge margins.

Voter: I agree that we need to get money out of politics, but why do we need to change our Constitution? Can't Congress just pass a law?

You: Well to a large extent, Congress is the problem, not the solution. But the bigger problem is that any law that Congress might pass would be declared unconstitutional by our Supreme Court. That's how we got into this mess: the Supreme Court, in *Citizens United*, declared the McCain-Feingold Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act unconstitutional, which opened the door to all of these huge donations by corporations and billionaires. The only way to overturn the Supreme Court's decision is to amend the constitution.

Voter: But how about the Wyoming Constitution? Can't we just pass a law to protect us here in Wyoming?

You: Montana had a strong provision in its Constitution giving people rights that corporations did not share. Wyoming has similar provisions in its Constitution. But the Supreme Court also struck down the Montana constitutional protections as violating the U.S. Constitution. If anybody were to challenge Wyoming's constitution on the same grounds, I'm afraid we'd meet the same fate.

Voter: So it sounds like you are against free speech.

You: Wyoming Promise is very much in favor of free speech for human beings. It is against allowing corporations the right to drown out the speech of human beings by spending billions of dollars to get their message out so that the voices of ordinary citizens cannot be heard.

Voter: Are you against corporations? Seems to me like they do a lot of good.

You: This measure is absolutely not against corporations. They are good tools for economic activity. But they are not good tools for political speech. We're just trying to limit corporations to what they are best at, and leave politics to human beings alone.

Voter: I'm with you, but what's the point? This will never happen.

You: So far 19 states have called on Congress to do this, and there are groups like ours working in at least a half dozen states right now to get more states on board. There is a lot of grass roots support for this. But one thing we know for sure: if we do nothing, then nothing will change. Signing this can only help accomplish what you and I both know needs to be done here.

Voter: I'm so glad you are doing this! I want to help in any way I can!

You: Great! Here is a brochure with information about Wyoming Promise. There is a website listed on the back. You can go there and click on the Volunteer button, fill in your name and contact information, and we will put you in touch with the local volunteer leader.

Voter: I'm so glad you are doing this! I wish I could help out but I'm so busy with other things.

You: Great! Here is a brochure with information about Wyoming Promise. There is a website listed on the back. You can go there and click on the Donate button. That will take you to a page where you can donate money to help us buy these fliers, pay for our data program, and other promotional materials so we can succeed.