



What's the problem?

“Big money in politics”, “public officials have sold us out”, “the system is rigged against us.” The concentrated financial influence of special interests in our politics is the number one problem our nation faces, and the survival of American democracy is on the line if we choose not to act.

Our Constitution guarantees the proposition that all people are created equal. No entity – be it a global corporation, international union, or political party - can take away the inherent rights of human beings. Our American birthright is built on that fundamental assurance.

We have been living through a decades-long trend where global corporations and special interests have been gaining “super-citizen” status. *Citizens United v. FEC* is a 2010 Supreme Court ruling that says: 1) corporations have the same rights as humans, 2) limitless political spending is the same as free speech, and 3) Americans CANNOT set limits on political spending. [A secret 1971 memo by Justice Lewis Powell tells how this started.](#)

Why is a Constitutional amendment the solution?

An amendment is the way to rebuild the foundation of American democracy by allowing the American people to set common sense limits on political spending. Right now, we are prohibited from setting limits to outside money in our politics. The 28th Amendment is the first step to securing American democracy for people.

Several individual measures toward disclosure, contribution limits, and greater government transparency have had support as high as 86% of the voters, which affirms the overwhelming support for reform. However, each measure is always at risk of being swept away by a change in the political winds.



Do we need a 28th Amendment?

The 28th Amendment gets concentrated, corrupting money out of our elections and politics, secures our rights to equal representation and human liberty, and makes effective, honest government possible.

Can we . . .	With 28 th Amendment	Without 28 th Amendment
Limit campaign spending by corporations & unions?	Yes	No
Give every American an equal vote?	Yes	No
End corruption & secure a level playing field in elections?	Yes	No
Ensure that politicians represent their constituents and the country, not donors and special interests?	Yes	No
Keep longstanding state anti-corruption laws?	Yes	No
End the revolving door & pay to play with lobbying reform?	Yes	No
Have small-donor election systems in all election races?	Yes	No
End overrepresentation and government of the donor class?	Yes	No
Choose democracy over plutocracy, a republic over tyranny of money?	Yes	No

Notes

Recent 5-4 Supreme Court decisions:
 Unlimited campaign spending by corporations, unions, billionaires, superPACs, held to be required under First Amendment; definition of "corruption" declared not to include unlimited campaign spending, so long as not directly by candidate or campaign committee, *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, 2010
 State anti-corruption laws that were effective for a century struck down as violation of "free speech rights of corporations," *American Tradition Partnership v. Bullock* (Montana), 2012
 State laws to strengthen viability small donor/public funding system after Citizens United struck down as violating "rights" of large donors to drown out/dominate message. In *Arizona Free Enterprise Club PAC v. Bennett*, 2012
 A "level playing field is unconstitutional." Chief Justice John Roberts, Oral argument in *Arizona Free Enterprise Club PAC v. Bennett*, 2012
 Limits on annual contributions to federal candidates that exceeded \$120,000 struck down as a violation of "free speech rights" of wealthy, *McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission*, 2014



Why should I support American Promise?

American Promise is built for the sole purpose of winning the 28th Amendment to the Constitution.

Working state-by-state as the multiplier, amplifier, and accelerator of energy toward the 28th Amendment, American Promise:

- 1) equips all Americans to act locally - any party, every citizen, all voices;
- 2) networks all of us nationally – online and real-time on a secure member platform called AP Connect™; and
- 3) mobilizes us when and where there is an event or vote to secure control of our lives by setting reasonable spending limits on special interests.

American Promise provides the infrastructure, the Constitutional rigor, and the fierce cross-partisanship that can deliver the amendment. While we focus on winning and ratifying the 28th Amendment, we applaud and support the efforts other democracy advocates as well.

Isn't it up to the Supreme Court to decide what the Constitution means?

Yes and No. The highest court in the land deliberates and rules on cases by interpreting the Constitution, and we respect that. But the Supreme Court has been dangerously wrong at times:

- Denying any human rights of African Americans
- Denying the right of women to vote
- Blocking many Americans from voting by way of a poll tax
- Denying young people drafted into the Armed Services the right to vote

Ultimately, We the People are responsible for our national Constitution. Our country's Founders included Article V in the Constitution to enable Americans to pass and ratify amendments. The American People have used this mechanism for all 27 Amendments to date, including the Bill of Rights. It is worth noting that 8 of the 27 amendments reversed Supreme Court decisions.

What will the 28th Amendment say?



To begin, it is essential to know what the 28th Amendment will do: 1) secure fair, free elections; 2) protect the rights of all Americans to equal participation and representation; and 3) return to original liberties for people rather than new privileges for the largest corporations, unions, and special interests.

As for what the 28th Amendment will say, American Promise is leading the year-long effort to build national consensus around the most effective amendment language. We are bringing Americans from all walks of life together with law professors, attorneys, former judges and Constitutional experts for deliberation and debate. In addition to online and other forms of research and deliberation, we will continue to organize public meetings and citizen roundtable discussions, as we did at the first [National Citizen Leadership Conference](#). To make this process most effective, American Promise has refrained from endorsing any specific amendment bill, while we applaud and facilitate continued progress in Congress.

We will continue to bring many more Americans into the deliberations and debate. We're confident that we will get the best, most effective Amendment language in a timely manner consistent with our roadmap for passage and ratification of the 28th Amendment.

The 28th Amendment is making good progress and several solid versions already are pending in Congress. These are a good start. Among the several versions of the amendment are pending in Congress, this one received 54 votes in the US Senate in the last Congress, and was reintroduced in the House (167 co-sponsors) and Senate (44 co-sponsors):

Section 1. To advance democratic self-government and political equality for all, and to protect the integrity of government and the electoral process, Congress and the States may regulate and set limits on the raising and spending of money by candidates and others to influence elections.

Section 2. Congress and the States shall have power to implement this article by appropriate legislation, and may distinguish between natural persons and corporations or other artificial entities created by law, including by prohibiting such entities from spending money to influence elections.

Section 3. Nothing in this article shall be construed to grant Congress or the States the power to abridge the freedom of the press.

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-joint-resolution/5/text>

This version of the amendment also has some support (22 co-sponsors in the House) -



<https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-joint-resolution/48/text>

We include different amendments on AP Connect, a member service of American Promise. For access to AP Connect, [join American Promise here](#). If you have other questions, suggestions, or want to share your story, please let us know! Drop us a line at info@americanpromise.net

What's the process for a Constitutional amendment?

The Constitution provides that an amendment may be proposed **either** by the Congress with a two-thirds majority vote in both the House of Representatives and the Senate **or** by a convention of the states called by Congress upon request by two-thirds of the State legislatures. Once an Amendment is passed, it must be ratified by three-fourths of the states. Though it is reasonable to wonder if Congress and the States can manage to do this, all 27 amendments of our Constitution have passed by 2/3 of Congress and been ratified by 3/4 of the States. It's what Americans do: [watch this](#).



How do we get the consensus - the super-majority - needed for the 28th Amendment when the country is so divided?

Amendments are born in times of turmoil. Since the 2010 ruling, millions of Americans, 18 states, and 800 cities and towns have battled successfully for resolutions to overturn *Citizens United*. We enjoy overwhelming agreement across the political spectrum that we must stop money from killing our democracy and American Promise trains us to begin on common ground in conversations with neighbors and friends.

The 28th Amendment has been gathering momentum one citizen, one town, one county, and one state at a time – in millions of conversations. When resolutions to overturn *Citizens United* qualify for the ballot, they win and win BIG - in red and blue territory. The outsized influence of hidden money in our government has no party limit; Democrats, Republicans, and Independents are equally complicit in taking money from special interest groups to write laws that benefit those groups. The vast majority of Americans are in favor of the 28th Amendment, and [we're already well on our way](#).

Couldn't we just elect the right President to appoint the right Supreme Court justices to overturn *Citizens United*?

There is no **right** President, and Supreme Court Justices come and go. Political winds change. It is the American people who secure our will via the Constitution with an amendment that reflects that will. There are many well-intended approaches to the problem of money in politics but amending the Constitution is the only way to preserve, protect, and defend an effective democracy for the people. Once and for all.

What is American Promise's political affiliation?

We are Americans of all parties and no party. We insist on a cross-partisan balance in all we undertake, from our [National Advisory Council](#) to our affiliation with the [Bridge Alliance](#), from our [local American Promise Associations](#), to our speakers at our events such as the [National Citizen Leadership Conference](#).

The 28th Amendment is a universal goal. American Promise looks beyond political leanings because amendments require cooperation and hard work across the country and across the aisle. With support of most Americans, we are winning.

Is American Promise a non-profit?



Yes. We provide educational resources and activities through American Promise, Inc. a non-profit corporation under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. We provide grassroots membership activities and, people-powered advocacy through American Promise Initiative, Inc., a non-profit corporation under section 501 (c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Are AP Citizenship membership fees and donations tax-deductible?

Contributions are not tax-deductible. This is because AP Citizen dues must go into American Promise Initiative for “grassroots lobbying” that holds our political representatives accountable. You can become a member of American Promise [here](#). In addition, we gratefully accept tax-deductible donations for our educational activities [here](#).