



## Action Sheet for January 2018

**Our Action:** Our action this month is focused on generating support for statewide resolutions calling Congress to support the 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment. State representatives don't create political will, they respond to it. It's up to us to encourage our representatives to support statewide resolutions if they have not already, and thank them and encourage next steps if they have. **To do this, we will write a letter to our state representative requesting a meeting to partner in supporting the 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment.** So far, 19 states have called on Congress to pass a 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment. These resolutions build momentum within the movement and pave the pathway for the needed 38-state ratification once a bill is passed through Congress.

**Laser Talk:** Eight out of 10 Americans agree that our political system is out of control. Billions of dollars are pouring into campaigns from corporations, unions and the wealthy.

Special interests do not pour large sums of money into political campaigns just for the sake of it – they expect something in return and usually receive it. Citizens lose their voice in the process.

A 28<sup>th</sup> amendment would overturn the 2010 Citizens United Supreme Court decision which gave human constitutional rights to corporations and struck down laws that provided limits on campaign spending with increasingly frightening consequences. Here is one example.

When Wall Street firms buy politicians, and financial corruption brings our economy to the brink, too many citizens lose their jobs, homes, and life savings, and Wall Street goes unpunished.

Americans see the urgency of passing a 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which would allow us to place reasonable limits on campaign contributions and reserve human liberties for people, not corporations.

### **The Problem:**

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.

The *Citizens United* decision has fueled elections dominated by record-breaking spending by Super PACs and unaccountable outside groups funded by corporations and a tiny, extraordinarily wealthy sliver of the American population. In 2012, the first presidential election cycle after *Citizens United*, 3,318 donors, amounting to less than .01 percent of the U.S. population, accounted for 93 percent of Super PAC funding.

Money isn't speech; it's power. Supreme Court decisions such as *Buckley v. Valeo* and *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* created radical new "free speech rights" for corporations, unions and special interests at the expense of the rights of all Americans and the interests of the country. 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 in jeopardy if we fail to act. A 28th Amendment is more urgent than ever. The Supreme Court won't fix its catastrophic mistake, so it's up to the people to ensure that our elected representatives fix it.

### **Write a letter to your state representative:**

1. Identify your state representative.
  - i. Enter your address into [https://openstates.org/find\\_your\\_legislator/](https://openstates.org/find_your_legislator/)
  - ii. Go to their website to find their mailing address.
2. Introduce yourself: Provide personal information to root yourself in the community (I have taught math at our local high school for 10 years, I am active in my local church, etc.) and briefly share why this issue matters to you.
3. Make the 'ask': Ask your state representative for a meeting to see how you can partner with them to move the 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment forward.
4. Provide some background to support your argument: In your own words, share why it is important for your state representative to be a leader in the movement for a 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment. Visit the 'Laser Talk' and 'More Background' sections of this Action Sheet to support your argument.
5. Repeat the 'ask', say thank you, and request a response: Leave your address, phone number and email address so they can get back to you.
6. If you don't hear back within a week, follow up on the phone.

**That's it!**

## **Prepare for a meeting with your state representative:**

1. Identify if you live in one of the 19 states which have already passed resolutions.
  - i. Go to [united4thepeople.org](http://united4thepeople.org) – the list is on the main page.
2. Figure out if your state representative is already a co-sponsor of a statewide resolution for the 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment to ensure that people, not money, govern.
  - i. Click on ‘State and Local’ to identify where your state legislature stands. There are links to existing bills, both past and in progress, where you can see co-sponsors.
3. Components of a successful meeting:
  - a. Share your personal story.
    - i. Why is getting money out of politics important to you?
  - b. Genuinely thank your state representative for something they’ve done (Do some research if need be).
  - c. Ask questions
    - i. Example: What are your thoughts on the notion that money is constitutionally considered speech?
    - ii. Example: How much of your time is spent fundraising and how much of your time is spent with constituents?
  - d. Clarify issue
    - i. As you ask questions, you’ll get to know your state representative. Take what they’ve said and make sense of it in the context of the 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment and why statewide resolutions are a powerful tool.
  - e. Make the ask
    - i. If your state representative was a co-sponsor of a resolution that has already passed, thank them and ask them to sign the [Candidate Pledge](#) and if they say yes, either you can acknowledge their action in a letter to the editor or ask if they would let the community know of their support by submitting their own letter to the editor.
    - ii. If your state representative was not a co-sponsor of a resolution that already passed, ask them about their views of money in politics. Will they sign the [Candidate Pledge](#)?
    - iii. If your state representative is in a state that has not yet passed a resolution, urge them to support an existing resolution or introduce one if none exists. [Will they sign the Candidate Pledge?](#)
  - f. Follow up
    - i. Ask for a follow up meeting. Try to schedule this while in the office.

**That’s it!**