GOODNIGHT DEMOCRACY

A ROOTSTRIKERS PROJECT
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In the great fifty states
There was room for debate
And a Bill of Rights
Setting forth the mandate...
We the People
That all citizens have the right to speak freely
About how government should be ideally

- WE WANT...
- WE NEED...
- WE BELIEVE...
People had power to elect politicians  
Who would serve public interest and make good decisions
But all of that changed one day
When the Supreme Court said corporations can pay
For political ads with unlimited dollars
And drown out speech of those whose checkbooks are smaller
What we once called democracy

We want...
WE WANT

Is what big money wants it to be
Goodnight democracy
Goodnight liberty tree

THIS ELM TREE
BROUGHT TO YOU BY
CHEVRON
Goodnight politicians representing public good
Goodnight citizens who believed they could
For our Super PAC ad.
Goldman Sachs

VOTE FOR HIM!
I'M FOR MAIN STREET!

Goodnight equal speech
Goodnight ads that teach
Goodnight great states
Goodnight our children's fates
Goodnight elections that are fair
Goodnight voices of the people everywhere
On January 21, 2010, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled 5-4 that corporations and unions have the right to spend unlimited amounts of money on political speech, such as advertisements, as long as they do so “independently.”

The decision, known as *Citizens United v. the Federal Election Commission*, cited the logic that more speech is better than less, and it is only acceptable to limit political speech (of which spending is a form) when it causes corruption. As long as spending isn’t coordinated with a candidate’s campaign, the Court held, it does not lead to corruption, so its limitation is unjustified, even if the spender is a corporation.

80% of Americans oppose this decision. Why might that be?

Some points to consider:

- Only 0.05% of Americans contribute the maximum amount allowed by law to candidates’ campaigns (currently $2,400 per candidate). Only 0.26% give more than $200. Only 10% of Americans give to political campaigns at all. Does the unlimited spending that *Citizens United* protects truly make possible a greater volume of speech, or does it simply allow a select few to speak at a louder volume?

- The committees that have formed in response to this ruling to take advantage of unlimited spending are called “SuperPACs.” SuperPACs are frequently run by candidates’ former campaign managers. Candidates are also allowed to consult on the content of ads that SuperPACs run and even appear in them. Is the spending of these groups really independent?
Candidates can ask their supporters to donate to the specific SuperPACs that spend money on their behalf. Does this not qualify as coordination with their campaigns?

SuperPACs are allowed to accept donations from nonprofits, which don’t have to disclose their sources of funding. In effect, this creates a loophole allowing SuperPACs to spend unlimited amounts of money on elections without the public ever being able to know whence it came.

On multiple occasions, Congress had the opportunity to tighten laws surrounding the disclosure of SuperPAC spending. On multiple occasions, that legislation failed.

5 of the 6 members of the Federal Election Commission, whose job it is to oversee the activity of SuperPACs, are serving on expired terms.

In the 2010 election, SuperPACs spent $83.7 million. While this is irrefutably an enormous sum, it only represents 2% of the $3.6 billion that was spent overall. Alarming as SuperPACs might be, they are but a symptom of a much larger disease affecting American government.

What is happening to our democracy? Wake up, citizens. It’s time to become Rootstrikers.

ROOTSTRIKERS
www.rootstrikers.org