



CITY OF OAKLAND
newsrelease
Office of the City Attorney

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City Attorney's Office: (510) 238-3148
Council President's Office: (510) 238-7007
On line at www.oaklandcityattorney.org

Oakland City Council approves "Restoring Democracy" resolution

Resolution by City Attorney Barbara Parker and City Council President Larry Reid opposes the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision

OAKLAND, CA – The City Council voted Tuesday to put Oakland on the forefront of a national grassroots movement opposing the unchecked influence of major corporations in elections.

The Council voted unanimously to approve a resolution by City Attorney Barbara Parker and Council President Larry Reid opposing the US Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, which rolled back restrictions on corporate spending in the electoral process. The Court's 2010 decision ruled that corporate spending is constitutionally protected speech, and that corporations have the right to spend unlimited sums of money in elections.

City Attorney Parker today thanked the City Council for sending a clear message to federal legislators, who have the power to pass a historic Constitutional amendment to reverse the Supreme Court ruling.

"The *Citizens United* decision threatens the entire democratic process by allowing major corporations to drown out all other voices," Parker said today. "It's important for cities like Oakland that cherish democracy to take a stand against the rigging of elections by the wealthiest corporate interests. The City Attorney's Office is now exploring other measures that we can implement locally to ensure fairness, transparency and honest competition in our local elections."

Oakland's proposed resolution supports a Constitutional amendment to reverse the Supreme Court's decision and directs the City's federal lobbyist to advocate for such legislation, which Congress is currently considering. Several jurisdictions in California – including the cities of Los Angeles, Berkeley and Arcata – have passed similar measures condemning *Citizens United*.

"I was delighted to join City Attorney Parker in bringing this important resolution before the Council," said Council President Larry Reid. "The Oakland City Council has a long, proud track record of standing up for democracy so that everyone has a voice, not just those with deep pockets."

Katherine Gavzy, President of the League of Women Voters Oakland, supported the Reid-Parker resolution and read the following statement about *Citizens United* at the City Council meeting Tuesday:

“This decision treats corporate speech the same as that of human beings. It encourages unlimited spending on political campaigns by special interests. In a brief to the Supreme Court in the *Citizens United* case, the League of Women Voters of the United States and the Constitutional Accountability Center submitted this joint statement about corporations and personhood:

While our Constitution reflects an increasingly expansive view of individual participation in the political process, it does not reflect a similar solicitude for corporate participation. To the contrary, our constitutional history reflects a growing concern over the influence of corporations, and the distinction between the legal protections afforded to living persons and corporations has been part of our constitutional law from the Founding. Corporations are never specifically mentioned in the Constitution, and from the earliest days, this Court has held that the government need not treat corporations the same way it treats individual citizens.

The League of Women Voters of Oakland supports an energetic legislative strategy to fight the corrosive impact of the *Citizens United* decision on our democracy. Congress must act now to get big money out of politics.”

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