Here is the link to all OMNI newsletters:
such as Campaign Finance, Capitalism, Corporations, Corruption, Democracy, Occupy, Plutochracy.

http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/

Here is the link to the Index:

http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/

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FOR OUR DEMOCRACY, What Should Democrats Do?

Dick Bennett

John Brummett’s recent column, “Koch Who? Classic. . . ,” asked What should the Democrats Do? to ensure the well-being of most citizens, the core of the Party. In reply he described a focus group of Arkansas women. But the restoration of the achievements of FDR’s New Deal will require much more than even the best, numerous focus groups on all levels of politics. The problem is the overwhelming control of national—and increasingly local—US representative government by the money of 1% of the population. The present US plutocracy derives from the many structures of corruption: a tax system favoring the rich and corporations, the long, expensive campaigns welcome to the rich and to the mainstream media, and so on. The major corruption (but see Cole below) is unrestrained power of money, recently swollen by the Supreme Court rulings Citizens United and McCutcheon v. FEC, in which corporations are defined as persons, given First Amendment rights, and restrictions over campaign financing are removed.

My newsletters on Citizens United and McCutcheon, US Capitalism, US Democracy, Koch Brothers, Corporate Personhood, and US Corporations provide a host of information and advocacy, but three paths especially emerge to democratize our electoral system by reducing the power of money and expanding the equality of citizens. The first two are reforms to control the excesses of capitalism—its obsessive drive for capital accumulation that results in monopoly and inequality. The third is a radical rejection of this reigning economic system.
I. Anti-Corruption Legislation

Pass the Anti-Corruption Act (end tax loopholes, brief campaigns, run-off voting, transparency: see US Democracy Newsletter #1

Push FEC to Use Its Full Regulatory Powers: transparency and strict definition of “coordinated” use of money

Defeat ALEC

II. Amend the Constitution to Reverse Citizens and McCutcheon (see Corporate Personhood Newsletter #4 Table of Contents at end and here for full contents: http://omnicenter.org/storage/newsletters/2012/2012-08-04.pdf).

III. In This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate, Naomi Klein sets forth the reasons why capitalism must be replaced by a life- rather than a profit-centered economic system.

Many of us believe in the power of education and knowledge to resist the birth and growth of ideas and practices hurtful to all species. As a professor, I urged my students to think of themselves as autonomous centers of being, even while I was committed to the principles and practices of Roosevelt’s New Deal affirmative government and Four Freedoms.

But that train was derailed several decades ago. Now our country is dominated by a capitalist regime enforced by the wealth of a few people epitomized by the Koch Brothers just at the time when we need urgently to be organizing cooperatively through affirmative government to prevent the worst that climate change is certain to inflict upon us.

REFORMING CAPITALISM

League of Women Voters

TRANSPARENCY IN POLITICAL FUNDING AND ENFORCEMENT OF THE LAW AGAINST UNLIMITED COORDINATED EXPENDITURES

Tell the FEC What to do About Citizens United
Did you see Elisabeth’s note below?  We really need you to respond.

2014 was the most expensive midterm election ever. Ever.

That was fueled by the Supreme Court’s decision in *Citizens United*, which unleashed secret contributions and unlimited spending by special interest groups seeking to buy our elected officials and distort our elections.

But, as Elisabeth explains below, the Federal Election Commission (FEC) has authority under existing law to put a stop to these abuses.

Please honor Elisabeth’s request and send comments to the FEC right now.

Thanks,

Lloyd Leonard
Senior Director of Advocacy
League of Women Voters

Dear Lloyd:

Another election has come and gone and millions of Americans went to the polls to vote at the local, state and federal levels on the issues and candidates that mattered most to them. While they were working as citizens to make those important decisions, millions of dollars of secret money poured into the 2014 elections from dark money groups which hide the identity of their donors, seeking to buy our elected officials and distort our elections. And we won’t ever know who paid for all of the ads that bombarded voters throughout the election.
The Federal Election Commission (FEC) can do something to stop the secret money. But so far the Commission has failed to set new rules requiring full disclosure in our elections. Tell the FEC to stop the secret money that is polluting our elections!

What’s more, Super PACs raised and spent more than $600 million dollars in 2014 to elect candidates who will do their bidding and defeat those who might resist. Super PACs and other outside groups can raise and spend unlimited amounts because they are supposedly “independent” from the candidates, but in reality, there are many ways to coordinate that are not blocked by the FEC’s weak regulations.

The FEC can do something to stop the Super PACs from coordinating with candidates, which would put a lid on much of the outside spending from special interests. Tell the FEC to stop the coordinated spending that is poisoning our elections!

The FEC is the federal agency in charge of our nation’s campaign finance laws, but so far they’ve done practically nothing to address the U.S. Supreme Court’s disappointing decision in Citizens United, which unleashed the secret and unlimited spending. The FEC has authority under existing law, even after Citizens United, to set disclosure rules and rigorously define “coordination,” but thus far they have refused to do so.

The FEC is now receiving public comment about steps they should take “to address corruption in the political process.” As a League supporter, you know how important specific regulations can be. We need you to tell the FEC to act and enforce the law.

The American voter has a right to know who is funding political campaigns. And the American public has a right to have the law against unlimited coordinated expenditures strictly enforced. Tell the FEC to shine a light on secret money and tell the FEC to stop coordinated expenditures by outside groups.

We must work to maintain the integrity of our Democracy by ensuring our elected
official will be responsive to voters and not to the big money and the secret money from special interests. The stakes are too high, and the League will not stand by and let our political system be corrupted.

Please, add your voice to thousands of others by taking action now.

Sincerely,

Elisabeth MacNamara
President, League of Women Voters

Citizens United, Corporate Personhood NO: Constitutional Amendment

MOVE TO AMEND

Formed in September 2009, Move to Amend is a coalition of hundreds of organizations and hundreds of thousands of individuals committed to social and economic justice, ending corporate rule, and building a vibrant democracy that is genuinely accountable to the people, not corporate interests.

Move to Amend is calling for an amendment to the US Constitution to unequivocally state that inalienable rights belong to human beings only, and that money is not a form of protected free speech under the First Amendment and can be regulated in political campaigns.

You can click here to sign Move to Amend's petition to amend the US constitution, and if you want to get involved click here to find a chapter or affiliate where you live.
called out its attempts to block new rules intended to help protect workers and prevent air pollution.

Murray Energy is now claiming that *Citizens United* — the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that has allowed unlimited election spending by billionaires and Big Business to corrupt our democracy — may also give corporations privacy rights previously belonging only to people.

In response to our motion to dismiss the lawsuit, Murray Energy is arguing that radio ads we ran about it challenging new worker safety and clean air protections “invaded its privacy” and caused it “mental anguish and emotional distress.”

Remember, Murray Energy is a corporation.

And Murray Energy sued us, not the other way around.

**But in this post-*Citizens United*, “corporations are people” world, companies claim to have human privacy that can be invaded and human feelings that can be hurt.**

A hearing in the case is scheduled for December 9.

I wish we didn’t have to devote time and money to fighting a lawsuit that is the desperate act of a member of an industry engaged in a losing battle against the tide of history.

But we do.

Can you chip in right now so that we don’t have to eat into funding for real work while we defend ourselves from this attack?

As if invoking *Citizens United* to claim a right intended for living, breathing human beings isn’t radical enough, Murray Energy goes even further, suggesting that it is willing to make this lawsuit about the truth of climate science itself.

It could be the Scopes Monkey Trial all over again.

To recap, here’s what we’re up against:

**A corporation with very deep pockets — claiming that *Citizens United* entitles it to rights meant for people and seemingly eager to put science on trial — is suing us.**

I hope you’ll make a contribution to help us fight back and keep standing up to corporate power.

Thank you for whatever you can chip in today.

Onward,
Robert Weissman
 President, Public Citizen
© 2014 Public Citizen • 1600 20th Street, NW / Washington, D.C. 20009 • unsubscribe

**Corporations are not People - Jeff Clements**
Join Jeffrey Clements, founder of Free Speech for People and author of *Corporations Are Not People-Reclaiming Democracy from Big Money and Global Corporations*. He will discuss this second edition of his book.

Clements spoke at the Clinton School last Nov. 19, 2014, but his organization and book remain to guide us in the struggle.

Clinton School - Corporations are not People - Jeff Clements
1200 President Clinton Ave
Little Rock, AR 72201
United States


300,000 people took over Manhattan Island this weekend demanding climate justice (Full disclosure: I was one of them). While it’s important for the continued existence of the human race to minimize greenhouse gases like CO2 and methane emissions that generate heat in our atmosphere, simply using sustainable energy sources and consuming less isn’t a cure-all for climate change. If we really want to get to the root of the problem and have real climate justice, we have to end corporate personhood. Until corporations are no longer considered people, they’ll always be able to claim their inalienable constitutional rights to make a profit at all costs and get around any new regulations, like emissions laws or energy usage limits.

How Artificial Entities Gained Constitutional Rights

Corporations have been people since 1886, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the Santa Clara County vs. Southern Pacific Railroad case that the constitutional right of equal protection under the law, originally meant for freed slaves in the 14th Amendment, applied not only to human beings, but to artificial entities like corporations as well. Since then, these artificially-created legal entities meant to shield people from liability and risk have had the same constitutional rights as living, breathing human beings with a pulse, like you and me, and have finagled those rights to gain control over every aspect of society.

Previously, corporations were chartered for very specific projects solely for the public good and kept on a tight leash – if a corporation did anything it wasn’t specifically chartered to do, its corporate charter was revoked. This changed in the 1818 Dartmouth College vs. Woodward ruling, in which the Supreme Court agreed that Dartmouth College’s corporate charter was a contract between private entities, and beyond the regulation of the state
After corporations gained personhood rights in 1886, they became persons with Fourth Amendment protections in 1906 with the Hale vs. Henkel decision. A major antitrust case against a group of tobacco corporations was stopped short when, after the U.S. government demanded a tobacco farmer turn over his financial documents, he alleged that his corporation had the right to be free from unreasonable search and seizure as a corporate “person.”

In 1976, corporate money became protected by the First Amendment in the Buckley vs. Valeo ruling. Seven justices agreed that donations to campaigns were the same as free speech. The 1979 First National Bank of Boston vs. Bellotti Supreme Court case established precedent that corporations’ money was not only free speech, but that corporate money could be allowed to influence the outcome in a ballot initiative rather than simply go to one candidate or another in an election. Interestingly enough, the justice who wrote the majority decision in Bellotti was Lewis Powell, author of the 1971 Powell Memo. Powell wrote the memo to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce when he was still a corporate lawyer, laying out a strategy for corporations to take over society by first taking over the schools, the media, and the courts.

In more recent history, the 2010 Citizens United vs. FEC case said that corporate money in elections was free speech and could be completely unregulated through independent channels. This year’s McCutcheon vs. FEC case ruled that money in elections was free speech, and current aggregate limits on individual donations were a violation of the First Amendment. While Citizens United and McCutcheon are the most well-known cases, simply overturning those cases while ignoring all the rest is akin to scratching off the scab but doing nothing about the infection.

Essentially, immortal, fictional, man-made legal phantoms that neither eat, drink, breathe, make love, nor die, are fully armed with every constitutional right you and I have. The difference between corporations and us is that they often have more money to play with to hire expensive lawyers that can undo the will of the people. One case study is what happened in Humboldt County, California.

What Corporate Constitutional Rights Has to Do with Climate Justice

In the 1990s, Humboldt County voters passed strict guidelines establishing ownership of their legislature.
environment, along with zoning laws to prevent public land from being converted into something the people didn’t support. Walmart attempted to open a location in Humboldt County in 1999, but the zoning laws prevented them from doing so. Walmart spent over $200,000 hiring petition gatherers in the community to overturn zoning laws, but the ballot initiative to overturn the people’s own zoning laws fell short. A victory, right? Think again.

In 2003, the Maxxam Corporation’s subsidiary, Pacific Lumber, wanted to cut down a portion of Humboldt’s redwood forest, and submitted a logging plan adherent to the county’s environmental standards. After the Department of Forestry sanctioned it, Pacific Lumber ended up cutting down far more trees than originally proposed. After enough citizens complained about the water quality and damage to the environment caused by the logging, newly-elected District Attorney Paul Gallegos sued Pacific Lumber for fraud. Maxxam then mounted a recall campaign against Gallegos in retaliation for his enforcement of the law, and the recall cost the people of Humboldt County $300,000 to keep their elected official. Gallegos kept his job by a 69 percent to 31 percent margin, and continued his lawsuit against Maxxam, which amounted to over $250 million. Another win for the people, right? Wrong.

The people of Humboldt County were so incensed over the corporate-funded recall effort against their duly-elected official that in 2006, they passed Measure T. The measure effectively prohibited corporations and other entities from outside Humboldt County from donating money to influence Humboldt County elections. In 2008, the Pacific Legal Foundation, whose key funder in its first several decades was Richard Mellon Scaife (heir to the Paul Mellon dynasty), and which is currently funded by a Koch Brothers-funded foundation, successfully overturned Measure T in U.S. District Court. The PLF argued that Measure T’s restrictions on campaign financing was a violation of both the 14th Amendment’s equal protection clause, and the First Amendment. This set the precedent that allowing some corporations to set up shop, but not others, like Walmart, violated the 14th Amendment. This also set precedent that when Maxxam submitted a fraudulent logging plan, it was allowed to do so, since lying was a form of free speech.

So, when you ask, what do corporate constitutional rights have to do with climate justice? Everything.

**How We Fix It**

We can regulate greenhouse gas emissions all we want, pass a carbon tax, and demand moratoriums on drilling and fracking. But because the Supreme Court has ruled that corporations have no duty to the public good and can be unilaterally focused on making a
profit at any cost, and that corporations are legal persons with inalienable constitutional rights, any corporation can sue the people and win as long as they have those constitutional rights.

However, this can be fixed by pursuing a simply-worded constitutional amendment. It must state that constitutional rights are only intended for human beings, not artificial entities like corporations. And it must also state that money is property, not free speech, and can be regulated in elections and ballot initiatives. If we have the grassroots movement to put 300,000 people in the streets of New York City for climate justice, we have the movement to pass that amendment. Let's get to work.

Carl Gibson, 27, is co-founder of US Uncut, a nonviolent grassroots movement that mobilized thousands to protest corporate tax dodging and budget cuts in the months leading up to Occupy Wall Street. Carl and other US Uncut activists are featured in the documentary We're Not Broke, which premiered at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival. Carl is also the author of How to Oust a Congressman, an instructional manual on getting rid of corrupt members of Congress and state legislatures based on his experience in the 2012 elections in New Hampshire. He lives in Sacramento, California.

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HEUVEL’S PREDICTION CAME TRUE SEPTEMBER 21, 2014!

MCCUTCHEON V. FEC

The 'Next Citizens United' May Fuel a Popular Uprising

By Katrina vanden Heuvel, The Nation, 11 March 14

ity poor Shaun McCutcheon.

McCutcheon is the Alabama businessman suing the Federal Election Commission for abridging his First Amendment right to free speech - that is, if we define free speech as McCutcheon's right to donate upward of $123,200 in a single election cycle. He claims eliminating federal limits on an individual's aggregate campaign contributions is "about practicing democracy and being free." To underscore his love of freedom, McCutcheon wrote checks to 15 Republican candidates in the symbolic sum of $1,776.

The Supreme Court is expected to hand down its decision in McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission any day now. Given the Roberts court's track record, the biggest campaign-finance decision since Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission is likely to blow another gigantic hole in the fabric of our democracy.

Such a ruling will fuel popular outrage and increase pressure for fundamental reforms such as disclosure and
public financing. Already, Senator Tom Udall (D-NM) and Rep. Jim McGovern (D-MA) have introduced a constitutional amendment allowing campaign spending limits. This would finally supercede the Supreme Court's infamous 1976 ruling in Buckley v. Valeo, which equated money with speech and effectively turned our elections into auctions.

[McCutcheon won, but vanden Heuvel may be right. The number of US Senators who support a constitutional amendment to overturn Citizens United is growing.

Dick,

There were once only four.

Later there were 26.

Now there are 50.

And counting.

I'm talking about the number of senators who support a constitutional amendment to overturn Citizens United.

In 2010 — the year the Supreme Court handed down that disastrous ruling — four senators formally supported an amendment.

By the end of 2012, it was 26.

As of this week, it's 50.

In other words, as we speak, exactly half of the United States Senate supports an amendment many thought was "impossible" a few short years ago.

I've seen a thing or two, but even I got goose bumps Thursday, when we heard from the 49th and 50th senators to sign on.

Something historic is happening. And as part of Public Citizen, you can feel very proud that you helped bring this about.

This is why we can't take our foot off the gas at all.

This is why we have to keep reaching out to senators who aren't yet on board while they're home for the August congressional recess. One more and we'll have a majority!

This is why a group of benefactors will match, dollar-for-dollar, whatever you contribute right now. Donate right now. Maybe $50 to mark this milestone. Keep the pedal to the metal.

Thank you.

Onward,

Robert Weissman
President, Public Citizen
CLEMENTS WAS IN LITTLE ROCK, COBB IN SPRINGFIELD. Let's watch for their activities and publications.

Live & IN Person: **David Cobb** speaking in Springfield: Challenging Corporate Rule & Creating Democracy! Move to Amend

Sue Skidmore [suesactivism@mchsi.com]

Thursday, April 17, 2014 12:55 AM


**Move to Amend** national spokesperson David Cobb, attorney and lifelong activist, is speaking in Springfield, Missouri on April 21st @ 6:30pm, in an effort to build connections, inspire activism, and reveal the origins of corporate power in America.

The Move to Amend Coalition is a national partnership of over 330,000 people and hundreds of organizations whose goal is to amend the U.S. Constitution to end corporate rule by building a multiracial, cross-class democracy movement. David's presentations are part history lesson and part heart-felt call-to-action! "Challenging Corporate Rule & Creating Democracy" aims to help local folks understand how they can work to abolish corporate personhood and establish a government of, by, and for the people.

Pinned at the top of the Facebook event, you will find a video titled, “Legalize Democracy!” Legalize Democracy is a 30 minute documentary about Move to Amend. This is a great introductory for those needing to learn what this movement is about. Here is the direct link for it:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=kyVD7jVhqKo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=kyVD7jVhqKo)

David Cobb and Move To Amend Coming Listen to David Cobb on Tell Somebody on KKFI KC Community Radio at the link below: [http://hwcdn.libsyn.com/p/0/2/c/02c53eba4721c7cf/tts_2014_04_10.mp3?c_id=7071691&expiration=1397718256&hwt=e251f1de3f9e18842fd8e25893e0c459](http://hwcdn.libsyn.com/p/0/2/c/02c53eba4721c7cf/tts_2014_04_10.mp3?c_id=7071691&expiration=1397718256&hwt=e251f1de3f9e18842fd8e25893e0c459)

The **local Springfield chapter of Move to Amend** has been working to build their grassroots base over the past few years and have succeeded in passing several non-binding municipal resolutions in Southwest Missouri. These towns include: Seligman, Exeter, Purdy, Granby, Pierce City, Freistatt, Verona, and most recently, Birch Tree, Eminence, and Winona. You can see all the resolutions that have been passed across the country by navigating to our list of passed resolutions.

[https://movetoamend.org/resolutions-map](https://movetoamend.org/resolutions-map)
Move to Amend finances these tours through the generous donations of event attendees.

For more information about David Cobb, visit his bio here: https://movetoamend.org/spokespeople#david

For more information about Move to Amend, visit our website here: https://movetoamend.org/

***Please share this event and invite everyone you know! Thank you for getting involved!***

PETITIONS FOR AMENDMENT

Help us get 5 million signatures to end Citizens United

January 7, 2015

Michelle Chan, Friends of the Earth foe@foe.org via uark.edu

10:14 AM (9 minutes ago)

to James

Dear Dick,

I don't have to tell you how the flood of polluter money in politics has had a devastating impact on our environment. From the failure to regulate dangerous bee-killing pesticides to the massive giveaway of billions of taxpayer dollars to the fossil fuels industry, excessive corporate power has not only poisoned our environment but our democracy as well.

January 21st will mark the 5th anniversary of the Citizens United v. FEC case, in which the Supreme Court ruled that corporations had Amendment right to spend unlimited amounts of "independent expenditures" in an effort to sway our elections.

We must put an end to this unlimited spending.

Tell Congress: Overturn Citizens United NOW!

Like me, I am sure you have seen the significant impact that this ruling has had—and you know that we must act now to reverse it.

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Tell Congress: Overturn Citizens United NOW!
had in the last few election cycles. For example, last year the Chamber of Commerce spent $31 million to ensure its favorite candidates got into office, helping make the 2014 mid-term elections the most expensive in history.

That’s why more than 3.5 million Americans of all political stripes have signed on to a petition calling for Congress to reverse Citizens United, and I hope to get to 5 million, so that we can send a powerful message to Capitol Hill later this month.

Help us reach our goal of 5 million people saying “enough” to unlimited corporate spending in our elections: Take action today!

As you know, this unchecked corporate spending has had huge environmental consequences. For example, if you look at this outgoing Congress, climate change deniers took an average of $346,975 from the fossil fuels industry, while members who do acknowledge climate change took less than a third of that ($96,999).

The evidence is clear: unless we get big money out of politics, we will never have a fair shake at protecting people and the planet.

Add your voice: Tell Congress to overturn Citizens United!

Let’s get money out and voters in!

In solidarity,
Michelle Chan,
Economic policy program director,
Friends of the Earth
Sign this petition to OVERTURN CITIZENS UNITED

Kristin Brown, League of Conservation Voters feedback@lcv.org via uark.edu

Dec 19 2014 to James

Stand up to the dirty energy corporations that are polluting our democracy. Sign up as a citizen cosponsor of a bill to overturn Citizens United TODAY »

Dick,

Polluter spending in our elections is out of control. The Koch brothers and their dirty energy allies spent more than $100 million to support anti-environment candidates in the 2014 midterms, all thanks to the Supreme Court’s disastrous Citizens United ruling. But Citizens United doesn’t just hurt our democracy — it affects our ability to address the climate crisis as well.

Because of climate change, communities across the country are being hit with more severe droughts and wildfires, threatening our homes, our safety, and our way of life. At the same time, rising sea-levels and erratic storms increase flooding in coastal areas, damaging property and endangering lives. And power plant pollution continues exacerbating asthma attacks and compromising public health. We all pay the price when polluter-backed politicians try to block action on climate change.

We have to stop corporate polluters from buying our elections in their attempt to block action on climate change. That’s why we’re gathering support now so that when the next Congress begins work in January, they’ll know where you stand.

Join the growing list of people calling for a government of, by, and for the people. Show your support for a bill to overturn Citizens United »

Citizens United opened the floodgates for corporate polluters to spend unlimited amounts of money to influence our elections, and this election was no exception. It was the most expensive midterm in history coming in at nearly $4 billion dollars. Unfortunately, we know exactly what this means — there are more politicians in Congress who are more loyal to big polluters than to their own constituents.

It means more assaults on critical standards for clean air and water, which could lead to more asthma attacks and jeopardize the water we drink. It means more attempts to stifle any action to address climate change, despite the severe droughts and wildfires and more erratic storms and flooding that cost millions of dollars in damage to our homes, businesses, and infrastructure. It is all too clear that now is the time to stand up to big
polluters and their allies.

This year, we made progress. More than 179 members of Congress supported legislation that would have limited the influence of corporate polluters by overturning Citizens United, and when it came up for a vote in September, a majority of Senators voted to advance the bill.

We’re in this fight for the long haul, but we need you to stand with us by going on record supporting legislation to overturn Citizens United before the end of the year so that we can keep the momentum for action going as we prepare for the next Congress.

Add your name to become a citizen cosponsor of the bill to overturn Citizens United NOW »

It’s time for Congress to put the health of this planet and its people before special interests and dirty corporations, so thank you for taking action to overturn Citizens United today.

Thank you,

Kristin Brown
Director of Digital Strategy
League of Conservation Voters

Cole Stangler, “Oligarchy Enshrined.” In These Times (June 2014). Most of the article explains the Supreme Court rulings and their consequences. The final section advocates the remedy of a constitutional amendment. But what should it say?

Constitutional amendment going to floor of Senate for debate

Rick Staggenborg [staggenborg4senate@hotmail.com]

Actions

To:

Rick Staggenborg [staggenborg4senate@hotmail.com]

Friday, May 02, 2014 3:19 PM

There are two ways to look at the news that the Udall amendment giving Congress and the states the power to regulate elections is going to a floor vote:
On the plus side, it could be the first step toward real reform.

On the down side, it could be the realization of our greatest fear: Congress, recognizing that the issue is not going away, will pass the weakest amendment possible and no legislation to give it teeth. Declaring a victory for democracy, the movement to effectively reform campaign finance and abolish corporate constitutional rights would lose all momentum. This would be just like the Public Option bait and switch decimated the single payer movement, leaving us with the Obamacare bailout.

All the more reason to double our efforts to make support for a strong amendment a campaign issue in 2014 and beyond until we elect a Congress that will pass it.

If you are in Oregon, please sign up for alerts about the Oregon Democracy Coalition efforts to do just that:

http://www.oregondemocracycoalition.org/get-involved.html

If you are outside of Oregon, please consider getting your groups to do the same thing. Feel free to contact me for details on how we are organizing.

Thanks,
Rick
In solidarity for peace and justice,
Rick Staggenborg, MD
Board President, Take Back America for the People
Founder, Soldiers For Peace International
Coos Bay, OR 541-217-8044
Date: Fri, 2 May 2014 13:17:01 -0500
From: alerts@pfaw.org
To: staggenborg4senate@hotmail.com
Subject: MAJOR NEWS

Members of Congress:
I strongly urge you to support and do whatever is within your power to PASS Senate Joint Resolution 19, a constitutional amendment to save our democracy.
Senate Joint Resolution 19 by Sen. Tom Udall.

And the Rules Committee Chair, Sen. Chuck Schumer, announced that SJ Res 19 will receive a vote in the Senate THIS YEAR!

Please sign our petition to Congress here, right now, urging passage of SJ Res 19>>

This is a moment we’ve been working towards since the very day the Citizens United decision was handed down in 2010.

It took the time and hard work of millions of activists like you across the country to build support for the amendment strategy in Congress. We started from scratch, and every year, with your incredible help and support, were able to get more and more buy in from members of Congress for constitutional remedies to solve the problem of big money’s dominance in elections.

This week, in addition to Sen. Schumer’s announcement, the Majority Leader of the U.S. Senate, Harry Reid also endorsed the amendment strategy by becoming a cosponsor of SJ Res 19. And more senators joined as cosponsors as well, bringing the total number of U.S. senators supporting an amendment to 39.

We are making tremendous progress. Let’s keep it up. Let’s PASS SJ Res 19 and take this massive leap towards restoring Government By the People.

Please add your name in support of SJ Res 19 now. It only takes a moment. Add you name here>>

SJ Res 19 would directly answer decisions like Citizens United and McCutcheon by restoring the ability of Congress and the states to regulate the raising and spending of money on elections.

16 states and more than 550 towns and cities around the country are already on record in support of a constitutional amendment to restore Government By the People. On ballot initiative after ballot initiative, when put to a vote by the people, three quarters of voters support adoption of an amendment.

We now have a bill that will be voted on in the Senate THIS YEAR -- and we all have to step up right now to make sure it passes.

Please stand with us again to show your support and tell Congress to pass SJ Res 19>>

Thank you for all you continue to do to move America back towards the democratic principles that make our country great.

Onward,
Put a stop to Citizens United for good

It’s time to put a stop to the corrosive impact of special interest money in politics and end *Citizens United* once and for all.

Members of Congress:

2014 was the most expensive Senate midterm election in history — thanks in part to the Supreme Court’s decision in *Citizens United*.

Free and fair elections are the cornerstone of our democracy. Special interests shouldn’t be able to buy our elections.

That’s why I’m supporting Tom Udall’s constitutional amendment to end *Citizens United*, and I’m urging you to do the same.

CONSEQUENCES OF *CITIZENS UNITED* AND *MCCUTCHEON V. FEC*

CORPORATIONS USE RULINGS TO OPPOSE MINIMUM WAGE EFFORTS

Industry Group Files Lawsuit Seeking to Kill Seattle's Minimum Wage, Claiming It Violates Their Free Speech

*Ian Millhiser, ThinkProgress*, Reader Supported News, June 13, 2014

Millhiser reports: "Last week, Seattle Mayor Ed Murray (D) signed a bill that will eventually raise his city’s minimum wage to $15 an hour. It took eight days for a lobbying group representing major employers like McDonald's and Taco Bell to file a lawsuit asking the courts to repeal the legislation."

READ MORE

CHANGE THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM
This Changes Everything:


The most important book yet from the author of the international bestseller The Shock Doctrine, a brilliant explanation of **why the climate crisis challenges us to abandon the core “free market” ideology of our time, restructure the global economy, and remake our political systems.**

In short, either we embrace radical change ourselves or radical changes will be visited upon our physical world. The status quo is no longer an option.

In *This Changes Everything* Naomi Klein argues that climate change isn’t just another issue to be neatly filed between taxes and health care. It’s an alarm that calls us to fix an economic system that is already failing us in many ways. Klein meticulously builds the case for how massively reducing our greenhouse emissions is our best chance to simultaneously reduce gaping inequalities, re-imagine our broken democracies, and rebuild our gutted local economies. She exposes the ideological desperation of the climate-change deniers, the messianic delusions of the would-be geoengineers, and the tragic defeatism of too many mainstream green initiatives. And she demonstrates precisely why the market has not—and cannot—fix the climate crisis but will instead make things worse, with ever more extreme and ecologically damaging extraction methods, accompanied by rampant disaster capitalism.

Klein argues that the changes to our relationship with nature and one another that are required to respond to the climate crisis humanely should not be viewed as grim penance, but rather as a kind of gift—a catalyst to transform broken economic and cultural priorities and to heal long-festering historical wounds. And she documents the inspiring movements that have already begun this process: communities that are not just refusing to be sites of further fossil fuel extraction but are building the next, regeneration-based economies right now.

Can we pull off these changes in time? Nothing is certain. Nothing except that climate change
changes everything. And for a very brief time, the nature of that change is still up to us.

- See more at: http://books.simonandschuster.com/This-Changes-Everything/Naomi-Klein/9781451697384#sthash.mils8ecs.dpuf

REVIEW OF KLEIN’S BOOK BY FOSTER AND CLARK

http://monthlyreview.org/2015/02/01/crossing-the-river-of-fire/

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REVIEW OF THE MONTH

Crossing the River of Fire

The Liberal Attack on Naomi Klein and This Changes Everything

by John Bellamy Foster and Brett Clark

topics: Capitalism, Climate Change, Ecology, Movements, Political Economy, Social Movements places: Americas, Global, United States

http://monthlyreview.org/2015/02/01/crossing-the-river-of-fire/

John Bellamy Foster is editor of Monthly Review and professor of sociology at the University
of Oregon. Brett Clark is associate professor of sociology at the University of Utah and co-author of The Tragedy of the Commodity (Rutgers University Press, forthcoming).

The front cover of Naomi Klein’s new book, *This Changes Everything*, is designed to look like a protest sign. It consists of the title alone in big block letters, with the emphasis on Changes. Both the author’s name and the subtitle are absent. It is only when we look at the spine of the book, turn it over, or open it to the title page that we see it is written by North America’s leading left climate intellectual-activist and that the subtitle is Capitalism vs. the Climate.1 All of which is clearly meant to convey in no uncertain terms that climate change literally changes everything for today’s society. It threatens to turn the mythical human conquest of nature on its head, endangering present-day civilization and throwing doubt on the long-term survival of Homo sapiens.

The source of this closing circle is not the planet, which operates according to natural laws, but rather the economic and social system in which we live, which treats natural limits as mere barriers to surmount. It is now doing so on a planetary scale, destroying in the process the earth as a place of human habitation. Hence, the change that Klein is most concerned with, and to which her book points, is not climate change itself, but the radical social transformation that must be carried out in order to combat it. We as a species will either radically change the material conditions of our existence or they will be changed far more drastically for us. Klein argues in effect for System Change Not Climate Change—the name adopted by the current ecosocialist movement in the United States.2

In this way Klein, who in No Logo ushered in a new generational critique of commodity culture, and who in The Shock Doctrine established herself as perhaps the most prominent North American critic of neoliberal disaster capitalism, signals that she has now, in William Morris’s famous metaphor, crossed “the river of fire” to become a critic of capital as a system.3 The reason is climate change, including the fact that we have waited too long to address it, and the reality that nothing short of an ecological revolution will now do the job.

In the age of climate change, Klein argues, a system based on ever-expanding capital accumulation and exponential economic growth is no longer compatible with human well-being and progress—or even with human survival over the long run. We need therefore to reconstruct society along lines that go against the endless amassing of wealth as the primary goal. Society must be rebuilt on the basis of other principles, including the “regeneration” of life itself and what she calls “ferocious love.”4 This reversal in the existing social relations of production must begin immediately with a war on the fossil-fuel industry and the economic growth imperative—when such growth means more carbon emissions, more inequality, and more alienation of our humanity.
Klein’s crossing of the river of fire has led to a host of liberal attacks on This Changes Everything, often couched as criticisms emanating from the left. These establishment criticisms of her work, we will demonstrate, are disingenuous, having little to do with serious confrontation with her analysis. Rather, their primary purpose is to rein in her ideas, bringing them into conformity with received opinion. If that should prove impossible, the next step is to exclude her ideas from the conversation. However, her message represents the growing consciousness of the need for epochal change, and as such is not easily suppressed. 

http://monthlyreview.org/2015/02/01/crossing-the-river-of-fire/

The Global Climateric

The core argument of This Changes Everything is a historical one. If climate change had been addressed seriously in the 1960s, when scientists first raised the issue in a major way, or even in the late 1980s and early ’90s, when James Hansen gave his famous testimony in Congress on global warming, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was first established, and the Kyoto Protocol introduced, the problem could conceivably have been addressed without a complete shakeup of the system. At that historical moment, Klein suggests, it would still have been possible to cut emissions by at most 2 percent a year.5

Today such incremental solutions are no longer conceivable even in theory. The numbers are clear. Over 586 billion metric tons of carbon have been emitted into the atmosphere. To avoid a 2°C (3.6°F) increase in global average temperature—the edge of the cliff for the climate—it is necessary to stay below a trillion metric tons in cumulative carbon emissions. At the present rate of carbon emissions it is estimated that we will arrive at the one trillionth metric ton—equivalent to the 2°C mark—in less than a quarter century, around 2039.6 Once this point is reached, scientists fear that there is a high probability that feedback mechanisms will come into play with reverberations so great that we will no longer be able to control where the thermometer stops in the end. If the world as it exists today is still to avoid the 2°C increase—and the more dangerous 4°C, the point at which disruption to life on the planet will be so great that civilization may no longer be possible—real revolutionary ecological change, unleashing the full power of an organized and rebellious humanity, is required.

What is necessary first and foremost is the cessation of fossil-fuel combustion, bringing to a rapid end the energy regime that has dominated since the Industrial Revolution. Simple arithmetic tells us that there is no way to get down to the necessary zero emissions level, i.e., the complete cessation of fossil-fuel combustion, in the next few decades without
implementing some kind of planned moratorium on economic growth, requiring shrinking capital formation and reduced consumption in the richest countries of the world system. We have no choice but to slam on the brakes and come to a dead stop with respect to carbon emissions before we go over the climate cliff. Never before in human history has civilization faced so daunting a challenge.

Klein draws here on the argument of Kevin Anderson, of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change in Britain, who indicates that rich countries will need to cut carbon emissions by 8–10 percent a year. “Our ongoing and collective carbon profligacy,” Anderson writes, “has squandered any opportunity for ‘evolutionary change’ afforded by our earlier (and larger) 2°C budget. Today, after two decades of bluff and lies, the remaining 2°C budget demands revolutionary change to the political and economic hegemony.”

Instead of addressing climate change when it first became critical in the 1990s, the world turned to the intensification of neoliberal globalization, notably through the creation of the World Trade Organization. It was the very success of the neoliberal campaign to remove most constraints on the operations of capitalism, and the negative effect that this had on all attempts to address the climate problem, Klein contends, that has made “revolutionary levels of transformation” of the system the only real hope in avoiding “climate chaos.” “As a result,” she explains,

we now find ourselves in a very difficult and slightly ironic position. Because of those decades of hardcore emitting exactly when we were supposed to be cutting back, the things that we must do to avoid catastrophic warming are no longer just in conflict with the particular strain of deregulated capitalism that triumphed in the 1980s. They are now in conflict with the fundamental imperative at the heart of our economic model: grow or die…. Our economy is at war with many forms of life on earth, including human life. What the climate needs to avoid collapse is a contraction in humanity’s use of resources; what our economic model demands to avoid collapse is unfettered expansion. Only one of these sets of rules can be changed, and it’s not the laws of nature….

Because of our lost decades, it is time to turn this around now. Is it possible? Absolutely. Is it possible without challenging the fundamental logic of deregulated capitalism? Not a chance.

Of course, “the fundamental logic of deregulated capitalism” is simply a roundabout way of
pointing to the fundamental logic of capitalism itself, its underlying drive toward capital accumulation, which is hardly constrained at all in its accumulation function even in the case of a strong regulatory environment. Instead, the state in a capitalist society generally seeks to free up opportunities for capital accumulation on behalf of the system as a whole, rationalizing market relations so as to achieve greater overall, long-run expansion. As Paul Sweezy noted nearly three-quarters of a century ago in The Theory of Capitalist Development, “Speaking historically, control over capitalist accumulation has never for a moment been regarded as a concern of the state; economic legislation has rather had the aim of blunting class antagonisms, so that accumulation, the normal aim of capitalist behavior, could go forward smoothly and uninterruptedly.”

To be sure, Klein herself occasionally seems to lose sight of this basic fact, defining capitalism at one point as “consumption for consumption’s sake,” thus failing to perceive the Galbraith dependence effect, whereby the conditions under which we consume are structurally determined by the conditions under which we produce. Nevertheless, the recognition that capital accumulation or the drive for economic growth is the defining property, not a mere attribute, of the system underlies her entire argument. Recognition of this systemic property led the great conservative economist Joseph Schumpeter to declare: “Stationary capitalism would be a contradictio in adjecto.”

It follows that no mere technological wizardry—of the kind ideologically promoted, for example, by the Breakthrough Institute—will prevent us from breaking the carbon budget within several decades, as long as the driving force of the reigning socioeconomic system is its own self-expansion. Mere improvements in carbon efficiency are too small as long as the scale of production is increasing, which has the effect of expanding the absolute level of carbon dioxide emitted. The inevitable conclusion is that we must rapidly reorganize society on other principles than that of stoking the engine of capital with fossil fuels.

None of this, Klein assures us, is cause for despair. Rather, confronting this harsh reality head on allows us to define the strategic context in which the struggle to prevent climate change must be fought. It is not primarily a technological problem unless one is trying to square the circle: seeking to reconcile expanding capital accumulation with the preservation of the climate. In fact, all sorts of practical solutions to climate change exist at present and are consistent with the enhancement of individual well-being and growth of human community. We can begin immediately to implement the necessary changes such as: democratic planning at all levels of society; introduction of sustainable energy technology; heightened public transportation; reductions in economic and ecological waste; a slowdown in the treadmill of production; redistribution of wealth and power; and above all an emphasis on sustainable
There are ample historical precedents. We could have a crash program, as in wartime, where populations sacrificed for the common good. In England during the Second World War, Klein observes, driving automobiles virtually ceased. In the United States, the automobile industry was converted in the space of half a year from producing cars to manufacturing trucks, tanks, and planes for the war machine. The necessary rationing—since the price system recognizes nothing but money—can be carried out in an egalitarian manner. Indeed, the purpose of rationing is always to share the sacrifices that have to be made when resources are constrained, and thus it can create a sense of real community, of all being in this together, in responding to a genuine emergency. Although Klein does not refer to it, one of the most inspiring historical examples of this was the slogan “Everyone Eats the Same” introduced in the initial phases of the Cuban Revolution and followed to an extraordinary extent throughout the society. Further, wartime mobilization and rationing are not the only historical examples on which we can draw. The New Deal in the United States, she indicates, focused on public investment and direct promotion of the public good, aimed at the enhancement of use values rather than exchange values.

Mainstream critics of This Changes Everything often willfully confuse its emphasis on degrowth with the austerity policies associated with neoliberalism. However, Klein’s perspective, as we have seen, could not be more different, since it is about the rational use of resources under conditions of absolute necessity and the promotion of equality and community. Nevertheless, she could strengthen her case in this respect by drawing on monopoly-capital theory and its critique of the prodigious waste in our economy, whereby only a miniscule proportion of production and human labor is now devoted to actual human needs as opposed to market-generated wants. As the author of No Logo, Klein is well aware of the marketing madness that characterizes the contemporary commodity economy, causing the United States alone to spend more than a trillion dollars a year on the sales effort.

What is required in a rich country such as the United States at present, as detailed in This Changes Everything, is not an abandonment of all the comforts of civilization but a reversion to the standard of living of the 1970s—two decades into what Galbraith dubbed “the affluent society.” A return to a lower per capita output (in GDP terms) could be made feasible with redistribution of income and wealth, social planning, decreases in working time, and universal satisfaction of genuine human needs (a sustainable environment; clean air and water; ample food, clothing, and shelter; and high-quality health care, education, public transportation, and community-cultural life) such that most people would experience a substantial improvement in their daily lives. What Klein envisions here would truly be an ecological-cultural revolution.
All that is really required, since the necessary technological means already exist, is people power: the democratic mass mobilization of the population.

Such people power, Klein is convinced, is already emerging in the context of the present planetary emergency. It can be seen in the massive but diffuse social-environmental movement, stretching across the globe, representing the struggles of tens of millions of activists worldwide, to which she gives (or rather takes from the movement itself) the name Blockadia. Numberless individuals are putting themselves on the line, confronting power, and frequently facing arrest, in their opposition to the fossil-fuel industry and capitalism itself. Indigenous peoples are organizing worldwide and taking a leading role in the environmental revolt, as in the Idle No More movement in Canada. Anti-systemic, ecologically motivated struggles are on the rise on every continent.

The primary burden for mitigating climate change necessarily resides with the rich countries, which are historically responsible for the great bulk of the carbon added to the atmosphere since the Industrial Revolution and still emit the most carbon per capita today. The disproportionate responsibility of these nations for climate change is even greater once the final consumption of goods is factored into the accounting. Poor countries are heavily dependent on producing export goods for multinational corporations to be sold to consumers at the center of the world capitalist economy. Hence, the carbon emissions associated with such exports are rightly assigned to the rich nations importing these goods rather than the poor ones exporting them. Moreover, the rich countries have ample resources available to address the problem and carry out the necessary process of social regeneration without seriously compromising the basic welfare of their populations. In these societies, the problem is no longer one of increasing per capita wealth, but rather one of the rational, sustainable, and just organization of society. Klein evokes the spirit of Seattle in 1999 and Occupy Wall Street in 2011 to argue that sparks igniting radical ecological change exist even in North America, where growing numbers of people are prepared to join a global peoples’ alliance. Essential to the overall struggle, she insists, is the explicit recognition of ecological or climate debt owed by the global North to the global South.

The left is not spared critical scrutiny in Klein’s work. She acknowledges the existence of a powerful ecological critique within Marxism, and quotes Marx on “capitalism’s ‘irreparable rift’ with ‘the natural laws of life itself.’” Nevertheless, she points to the high carbon emissions of Soviet-type societies, and the heavy dependence of the economies of Bolivia and Venezuela on natural resource extraction, notwithstanding the many social justice initiatives they have introduced. She questions the support given by Greece’s SYRIZA Party to offshore oil exploration in the Aegean. Many of those on the left, and particularly the so-called liberal-left,
with their Keynesian predilections, continue to see an expansion of the treadmill of production, even in the rich countries, as the sole means of social advance.18 Klein’s criticisms here are important, but could have benefited, with respect to the periphery, from a consideration of the structure of the imperialist world economy, which is designed specifically to close off options to the poorer countries and force them to meet the needs of the richer ones. This creates a trap that even a Movement Toward Socialism with deep ecological and indigenous values like that of present-day Bolivia cannot seek to overcome without deep contradictions.19

“The unfinished business of liberation,” Klein counsels, requires “a process of rebuilding and reinventing the very idea of the collective, the communal, the commons, the civil, and the civic after so many decades of attack and neglect.”20 To accomplish this, it is necessary to build the greatest mass movement of humanity for revolutionary change that the world has ever seen: a challenge that is captured in the title to her conclusion: “The Leap Years: Just Enough Time for Impossible.” If this seems utopian, her answer would be that the world is heading towards something worse than mere dystopia: unending, cumulative, climate catastrophe, threatening civilization and countless species, including our own.21

Liberal Critics as Gatekeepers

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Dick Bennett

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