

## **A Letter Co-Signed by Cenk Uygur, Buddy Roemer, and Larry Lessig**

To all those currently serving as State Legislators in United States of America,

As fathers, we are deeply concerned about the political state we are leaving as our legacy to the next generation of Americans. In this generation, we should ask ourselves if our children will enjoy the blessings of representative democracy or will their voices be silenced by outside interests dominating the political debate? Though we come from varying political perspectives, it is our shared belief that it is our generation's greatest responsibility to fix our democracy and save the republic.

87% of Americans are deeply troubled by the corrupting influence that outside interests have over the actions of the federal government<sup>1</sup>. Congress currently has a 9% approval rating<sup>2</sup>, which makes them less popular than the King of England during the times of the Revolutionary War<sup>3</sup>. The federal decision in Citizens United has taken the appearance of impropriety and encoded it into our nation's legal code. At the highest levels of American government, something is rotten in the state of representative democracy.

As Americans who believe in self-government, we believe that citizens should be the ones choosing our elected representatives, the ones writing our own laws, and the ones determining the fate of our country. As James Madison said, "The federal government ... ought to be dependent on the people alone", but as Thomas Jefferson said, "The issue is the same today as it has been throughout all history, whether man shall be allowed to rule himself or be ruled by a small elite." When Congress is not dependent upon the people alone, Americans are ruled by a small elite, but that's not our destiny as a country.

All Americans who support freedom and oppose corruption should stand up for these American values. This is not a left or right issue; it's not a Republican or Democrat issue; it's not liberal vs. conservative – this is an American issue. In America, we believe very deeply in self-government – the ability of educated citizens to select representatives to serve in positions of public trust and to serve in the public interest.

But the dangerous and foolhardy decision in Citizens United places all that we hold sacred in jeopardy. It reverses decades of federal campaign finance regulation and over-rides a century of effective campaign finance law at the state level. When states have objected to this travesty and attempted to pass laws remedying the situation (such as Montana), their cases were rejected by federal courts or not even heard in Washington DC. Like Congress, our nation's highest court is refusing to listen to the will of the people.

It is clear now that the only remedy available to fix this problem, before it becomes even worse, is an Amendment to the United States Constitution. There exist only two ways to amend the Constitution provided to us by the Founding Fathers in Article V of the United States Constitution – one path is through Congress and one way is through the many States, which is why we are writing to you today.

Since Congress is the source of the dysfunction we aim to fix, they cannot be trusted to fix it. Members of Congress themselves have asked that we "free them from fundraising", and others state plainly that "the current Congress is incapable of proposing an amendment." Congress could not even pass something as simple and decent as the DISCLOSE Act, which would merely illuminate the illicit sources of the money pouring into our politics, some of which may come from foreign sources.

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<sup>1</sup> USA Today/Gallup poll, July 19-22, 2012

<sup>2</sup> USA Today/Gallup poll, November, 2013

<sup>3</sup> "Loyalists, Fence-Sitters, & Patriots" Independence Hall Association, [ushistory.org/us/11b.asp](http://ushistory.org/us/11b.asp); see also "Encyclopedia of the Age of Political Revolutions and New Ideologies, 1760-1815", edited Gregory Fremont-Barnes, Greenwood Press 2007 p 436

This makes it plainly clear to us that the only path available to amending the Constitution is through the many States, including your state. As a State Legislator, the Founding Fathers intentionally gave you the power to rein in an out-of-control Congress, especially when they encroached on the states' rights to govern themselves. A convention of the states to propose amendments is the Founding Father's safeguard for representative democracy, and it is our right and our responsibility to use it.

The Constitution was originally sold by the Founders to the ratifying states on the basis that they retained their ultimate authority over the federal government through the amendment powers in Article V, which is the closing argument that Alexander Hamilton makes in the final Federalist Paper (No. 85). This process has been used at the state level hundreds of times to amend state constitutions, and there is ample evidence that a convention of this nature at the federal level is necessary, safe, and long overdue.

Once proposed at a convention, any amendment proposed to fix the corruption in our federal politics would then need to be ratified by 75% of the state legislatures. This is a high bar of support that must be passed before our nation's most cherished document can be successfully amended, and for good reason. The United States Constitution has been amended 27 other times, and at least once by every generation of Americans. We live in one of the longest stretches of time without an amendment since the creation of our union, but that's going to be fixed soon with the help of state leaders like you.

U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower favored a federal convention, and he once said, "Through their state legislatures and without regard to the federal government, the people can demand a convention to propose amendments that can and will reverse any trends they see as fatal to true representative government." That time is now upon us, and the question is whether we leave our children a nation where the citizens embrace self-government or a country that is ruled by illegitimate outside interests.

Let's take action today to wash away the corruption that is plaguing our nation's politics, to remove the appearance of impropriety for our elected officials, and to restore the faith between the citizens of our country and those they elect to positions of public trust. Let us ensure that the elections our children vote in someday are free and fair here in America, so that their elected representatives are beyond repute and citizen's voices are heard once again in the halls of our governments. Let us use the tools the Founding Fathers provided to revitalize our democracy and save the republic.

Thank you for your consideration of the proposals before you today that will address this most vital issue. We implore you to consider how the decisions that you make today will affect our children, your children, and the many generations of Americans yet to come. Our country's original Founding Fathers placed their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor on the line in order to create a more perfect union, and we encourage you to act in that patriotic spirit today.

Sincerely and Patriotically Yours,



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