

Ten Years After Citizens United, House Democrats Call on Senate to Take Up House-Passed Government Reform Measures

This month marks ten years since the Supreme Court's major ruling in the Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission case. The ruling removed reasonable campaign contribution limits and has allowed a small group of individuals and corporations to spend enormous sums of money on campaigns without disclosing their identities. As a result, this "dark" money has been able to drown out the will of the people on key issues.

The American people elected House Democrats on the pledge that we would clean up corruption in Washington and ensure that government worked for the people. One of the first bills to come to the Floor under the Democratic Majority was H.R. 1, the For the People Act. This legislation reforms our campaign finance system to undo the disastrous consequences of Citizens United and includes other critical government reforms. Here's a look at how this comprehensive government reform measure and other legislation passed by the House will return us to a government that is of, by, and for the people:

THE IMPACT OF THE CITIZENS UNITED DECISION

In *Citizens United v. FEC*, the Supreme Court asserted that corporations are people and removed reasonable campaign contribution limits, allowing a small group of wealthy donors and special interests to use dark money to influence elections. This has led to policies that benefit special interests, not policies that enjoy support from the majority of Americans. [According to an analysis by End Citizens United:](#)

- Outside groups have spent over \$4.4 billion in federal elections since the Citizens United decision.
- Of the \$4.4 billion, nearly \$1 billion has been spent in federal elections as untraceable, "dark money" expenditures since the decision.
- Eighty-six percent of all outside spending in federal elections in the past 30 years has come in the ten years since the decision.

HOUSE DEMOCRATS PASS REFORMS TO OUR CAMPAIGN FINANCE SYSTEM

In March 2019, the House passed H.R. 1, the For the People Act. The bill addressed the *Citizens United* decision by reforming our campaign finance system, ensuring complete transparency, and putting in place reasonable limits. Specifically, the legislation:

- Expresses Congress' intent to curb the use of shell companies and other illicit activities that allow foreign money to enter and undermine our democracy.
- Bans foreign money.
- Ensures disclosure of online political ads.
- Requires all political organizations to disclose their large donors.
- Prohibits big-money contributors and special interests from hiding the true funding sources of their political spending.
- Empowers citizens by establishing a matching system for small donations.
- Restructures the Federal Election Commission to have five commissioners in order to break gridlock, devotes resources to ensure campaign finance laws are enforced, and improves oversight of existing campaign finance laws.

HOUSE DEMOCRATS PASS ADDITIONAL REFORMS TO MAKE GOVERNMENT WORK FOR THE PEOPLE

In addition to campaign finance reforms, the For the People Act puts in place other reforms to ensure government works for the people:

- **Redistricting Reform:** Puts in place national redistricting reform by requiring states to adopt independent redistricting commissions for purposes of drawing Congressional districts.
- **Ethics Reform:** Demands accountability and guarantees public officials put constituents first by:
 - Prohibiting Members of Congress from serving on corporate boards.
 - Requires the online linking of Federal Election Commission reports and Lobbying Disclosure Act reports.
 - Prohibiting Members of Congress from using taxpayer funds to settle any case of employment discrimination acts by the Members.
 - Requiring presidents to disclose ten years of federal tax returns.
 - Strengthening the Office of Government Ethics.
 - Closing loopholes for lobbyists and foreign agents.
 - Addressing conflicts of interest in the Executive Branch.
 - Instituting a code of ethics for the Supreme Court.
- **Voting Reforms:** Ensures clean and fair elections and makes it easier for Americans to exercise their right to vote by:
 - Creating automatic voter registration.
 - Expanding early voting and targets policies that lead to disenfranchisement and limit voting hours.
 - Restoring voting rights to citizens who have served felony sentences.
 - Providing financial support to improve election infrastructure and improves oversight by requiring a national strategy for protecting U.S. democratic institutions.
 - Prohibiting voter roll purges, a tactic used in Georgia, Texas, North Dakota, Missouri, Ohio and other states to kick eligible voters off the voting rolls.

The House has also passed legislation to restore voting rights and secure our elections, so that every American can exercise their most fundamental right and voice their will on key issues:

- **Voting Rights:** In December 2019, the House passed H.R. 4, the Voting Rights Amendment Act, to restore the full protections of the Voting Rights Act and combat voter suppression.
- **Election Security:** The House has also passed two major bills to secure our elections and prevent foreign interference:
 - **Securing America's Federal Elections Act:** In June 2019, House Democrats passed an election security bill that authorizes a \$600 million Election Assistance Commission (EAC) grant program to assist states in securing election infrastructure.
 - **The SHIELD Act:** In October 2019, House Democrats passed a bipartisan election security bill to prevent foreign interference in our elections and defend the integrity of our voting systems.

HOUSE DEMOCRATS CONTINUE TO CALL ON THE SENATE TO TAKE ACTION

Government reform continues to be a top priority of the American people. According to [a poll](#) from the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy and the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, 66% of the public thinks that major changes are needed to the U.S. government. House Democrats have passed comprehensive reforms to return government to the people and are continuing to call on Senator McConnell to allow consideration of this legislation in the Senate.

Office of House Majority Leader Steny H. Hoyer, 1/14/20