

**Remarks by Eva Valentine January 18, 2012**  
**Press Conference in support of SB772, A Resolution Restoring Free Speech**

The League of Women Voters filed an amicus brief in the *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* case before the U.S. Supreme Court in November 2009, a continuation of the League's historic support for individuals' voting rights and campaign finance reform.

When the Supreme Court announced its decision in January 2010, the president of the League of Women Voters stated: "The Supreme Court has made a tragic mistake. Their decision in *Citizens United v. FEC* is constitutionally irresponsible and will surely bring about an anti-democratic revolution in how we finance elections in this country. Today, basic pillars of American democracy have been undermined – that elections should not be corrupted by vast corporate wealth and that the voters should be at the center of our democratic system.

"In creating a new Constitutional right for corporations to spend unlimited amounts of their shareholders' money to determine the outcome in candidate elections, the Court has unleashed into our elections tremendous sums of money from for-profit corporations that cannot possibly be matched in quantity by contributions from ordinary citizens. The only possible outcome of this is that big money and special interests will have an even tighter grip on our democracy."

Two years later, it is clear that the League president's prediction was accurate. The amount of unidentified and unlimited campaign spending even this early in the Presidential primary season illustrates that, before the voters choose who will win an election, the money chooses who will run.

Campaign finance reform is imperative if our democracy is to function. The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts supports this resolution calling on the United States Congress to pass and send to the states for ratification a Constitutional amendment to restore First Amendment rights, which were designed to protect the free speech of people - not corporations, unions or special interests.

Senator John McCain made the point forcefully in an appearance on David Letterman's show last week when he said: "In the United States Supreme Court, there was a decision called *Citizens United*. Basically what they did was unleash the floodgates of money. We can get 10 people together, each of them give \$10 million, which they can do now, and you could have \$100 million in a campaign—by 10 people.

"This political system is awash in money. There will be scandals. The effect of all this, unfortunately, leads to the cynicism and the frustration of the American people, and their lack of confidence in the system. It's got to change, and it will only change, unfortunately, when there is some major scandal. The United States Supreme Court showed a degree of ignorance and naivety that I found astonishing."

I agree with Senator McCain. But must we wait for a scandal to reform this system?

Let's start now.