

Democracy Blocks

Our democracy is in distress. In order to achieve democratic change in America, we need to halt the corrupting influence of corporate money in politics, prevent the systemic manipulation and suppression of voters, and reform the rules in the U.S. Senate.

The Rules Governing the U.S. Senate – what do we do?

- Fact 1: During Lyndon Johnson's six years as majority leader there was 1 filibuster. During Harry Reid's six year term there have been 381 filibusters.
- Fact 2: There was not a single day of debate on the Senate floor on vital issues like Employee Free Choice Act, Climate Change, Immigration Reform, or Campaign Finance Disclosure despite support by a majority of Senators for each of these bills.
- Fact 3: The Senate rules are not in the constitution and have been changed numerous times in the history of the Senate.

Solution:

- Adopt new rules on the first legislative day.
- Provide only one chance to filibuster any legislation
- Require the 41 Senators engaging in the filibuster to stay on the Senate floor and speak to sustain the filibuster
- Streamline the nominations process for judicial and presidential appointments

Corporate Money – what do we do?

- Fact 1: Over the last 30 years there has been a 525% increase in campaign spending with \$343 million spent on House races in 1983 and \$1.8 billion spent in 2010.
- Fact 2: The cost of the average winning campaign for a seat in the House of Representatives in 2010 was \$1.3 million and the average Senate race cost \$7.5.

Fact 3: Congressmen and Senators spend anywhere from 30-70% of their time fundraising. Americans know our system is broken – 7 in 10 favor a reform of our campaign system.

We must develop a strategy to stop the flood of corporate money from drowning out the voices of voters and constituents.

- State and federal legislation to advance and protect public financing of elections
- Push for disclosure of political spending
- Grassroots, state and federal efforts to stop the flood of corporate money unleashed by the *Citizens United* ruling

Voter Suppression – what do we do?

Develop a strategy that will bring more people into the electoral process and prevent the systemic suppression of targeted portions of the electorate.

- Fact 1: Seemingly reasonable sounding voter ID laws unfairly impact seniors and minorities where 18% and 25% do not have government issued ID cards.
- Fact 2: As many as 11% of the voting population, or about 21 million people, do not have access to a government issued ID.
- Fact 3: Between 2002 and 2007 – out of the 300 Million votes cast—in only 86 cases were there convictions for voter fraud. There is a greater chance of being struck by lightning than encountering “voter fraud” in the USA.
- Fight back against Ballot initiatives and state laws requiring restrictive photo identification
 - Advance legislation at the state and federal level to stop additional barriers meant to exclude targeted populations of voters
 - Develop a long term strategy to stop gerrymandering of state and federal districts

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