

SENATOR
ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS
DEMOCRATIC CONFERENCE LEADER



THE SENATE
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August 28, 2015

Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader, US Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Harry Reid
Democratic Leader, US Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable John Boehner
Speaker, House of Representatives
H-232, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader, House of Representatives
H-204, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senate Majority Leader McConnell, Senate Democratic Leader Reid, Speaker Boehner and House Democratic Leader Pelosi:

New York State and our nation's government face a growing crisis in ethics and accountability. One of the main causes of this problem is the unprecedented amount of outside money that is now being allowed to pour freely into our elections. These funds represent a deliberate effort to unfairly influence the electorate and empower a small group of individuals and corporations. Elected officials are becoming more beholden to the interests facilitating these outside funds while the public's trust in our democracy erodes. New York State has long served as a national progressive leader, and as such I urge you take action and end the monetizing our elections.

The wave of outside money is due to the U.S. Supreme Court's 2010 *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* and related decisions. The *Citizens United* decision declared that artificial entities – corporations, unions, and associations – have the same rights as individual



Americans with regard to spending on elections, stripping state and federal laws and decades of judicial precedent that allowed needed regulation of campaign spending.

New York State and other states have the ability to ignite change. Article V of the U.S. Constitution allows for a constitutional amendment that would allow us to remedy the Supreme Court decisions. As a State Legislature we have the ability to debate and ratify such amendments. The U.S. Constitution empowers the people, the states, and the Congress to use the amendment process to ensure a balance of power and our ability as a people to self-govern.

As Leader of the State Senate Democrats, I am proud that so many of my colleagues support this effort to rectify the threat to our democracy caused by the *Citizens United* ruling.

The power of our people to dictate change and our own future is what makes America great. Therefore, I urge the House of Representatives and the Senate to take action against the *Citizens United* ruling and pass a constitutional amendment. The road ahead may be long, but strengthening our democracy and restoring the public's trust requires bold leadership and decisive actions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrea Stewart-Cousins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Andrea Stewart-Cousins
New York State Senator, 35th District
Senate Democratic Conference Leader

CC:
New York State Congressional Delegation

Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand
Honorable Charles Schumer
Honorable Lee M. Zeldin
Honorable Pete King
Honorable Steve Israel
Honorable Kathleen M. Rice
Honorable Gregory Meeks
Honorable Grace Meng
Honorable Nydia Velazquez
Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Honorable Yvette D. Clarke
Honorable Jerrold Nadler

Honorable Carolyn Maloney
Honorable Charles B. Rangel
Honorable Joseph Crowley
Honorable Jose E. Serrano
Honorable Eliot Engel
Honorable Nita Lowey
Honorable Sean Patrick Maloney
Honorable Chris Gibson
Honorable Paul D. Tonko
Honorable Elise M. Stefanik
Honorable Richard Hanna
Honorable Tom Reed
Honorable John M. Katko
Honorable Louise Slaughter
Honorable Brian D Higgins
Honorable Chris Collins