



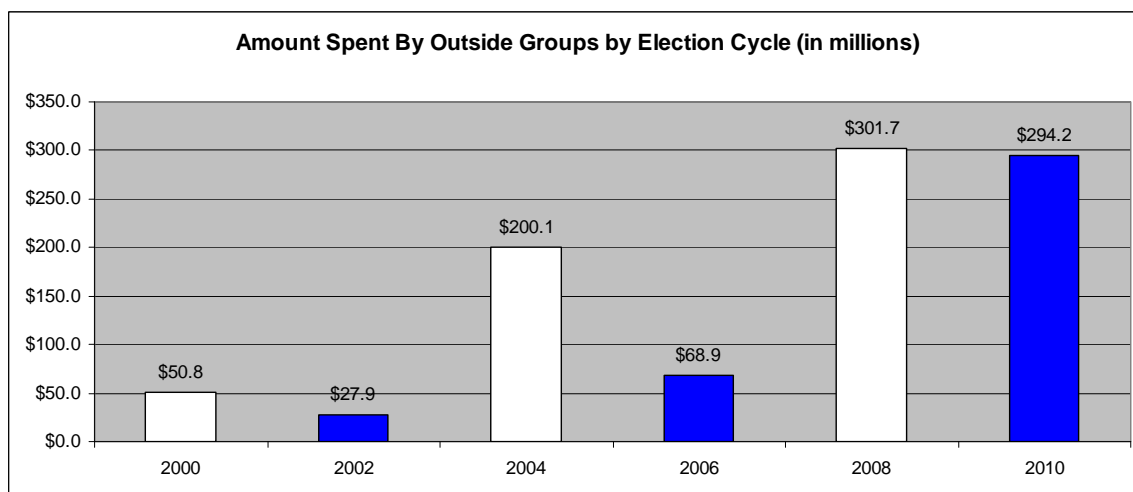
Jan. 21, 2011

Citizens United: One Year Later

One year ago, the U.S. Supreme Court reversed a century of jurisprudence by permitting corporations to spend unlimited amounts to influence elections. The opinion, which also reversed many Supreme Court precedents and statements, resulted in exploding expenditures, diminishing disclosure and a furious public backlash.

Citizens United Quadrupled Outside Electioneering Expenditures

- Spending by outside groups in the 2010 election cycle was four times higher than in the 2006 elections (the most recent midterm cycle), jumping from \$68.9 million to \$294.2 million. More than three-fourths of the money spent in the 2010 elections was by groups that either accepted contributions that exceeded previous limits or concealed the sources of their money altogether.¹
- Nearly half of the money spent was by just 10 groups. The top spending groups were the “Crossroads” entities (American Crossroads and Crossroads GPS) coordinated by GOP operatives Karl Rove and Ed Gillespie; the U.S. Chamber of Commerce; and the anonymously funded “American Action Network,” whose leadership included former Sen. Norm Coleman (R-Minn.).
- Of 75 contests in which power changed hands in last fall’s elections, spending by outside groups favored the winning candidate in 60.
- Because spending in presidential cycles normally dwarfs midterm cycles, the shocking levels in 2010 presage blockbuster spending in 2012. (Compare the solid bars with the hollow bars in the chart below for a contrast between midterm and presidential cycle spending).



***Citizens United* Resulted in Far Less Transparency of Election Spending**

Contrary to the Supreme Court's promise in its *Citizens United* opinion, voters were not able to learn the sponsors of many of the corporate-funded ads that *Citizens United* permitted. Although nearly 100 percent of electioneering groups used to disclose their sources of money, only about half did so in 2010.

- Of the \$294.2 million spent by outside groups to influence last fall's elections, 46 percent was spent by groups that did not reveal where their money came from.
- Seven of the 10 biggest spending groups concealed their donors' identities.

The Public Overwhelmingly Opposes *Citizens United*

Polls have consistently confirmed that Americans across the ideological spectrum disagree with *Citizens United*. For example:

- A Washington Post-ABC poll found that 80 percent of those queried, including 76 percent of Republicans, oppose the opinion;²
- Survey USA found that 79 percent of Democrats and 67 percent Republicans think Congress should be able to limit the amount of money corporations spend to influence elections.³
- 95 percent of respondents told Hart Research Associates that corporations spend money on politics in order to buy influence.⁴

***Citizens United* Has Spurred Numerous Public Policy Efforts to Mitigate its Effects**

- In the last Congress, legislation to provide public funding to candidates to break the dependence on funding from corporations and billionaires enjoyed its highest level of support.
- *Citizens United* has led to legislative efforts to give shareholders power over corporations' political spending; to ban federal contractors from making political contributions and expenditures; and to mandate disclosure of those funding electioneering ads.
- The opinion also has led to a robust petition campaign to amend the Constitution to clarify that corporations do not enjoy the same First Amendment rights as human beings.

¹ Spending data in this fact sheet are based on analysis of Federal Election Commission (FEC) data by Public Citizen and the Center for Responsive Politics (www.opensecrets.org).

² Dan Eggen, "Large Majorities Opposes Supreme Court Decision on Campaign Financing," *Washington Post* (Feb. 17, 2010).

³ Survey USA, "Americans Broadly in Favor of Limiting What Corporations Can Spend in Elections" (Feb. 2-9, 2010), available at: <http://www.surveyyusa.com/client/PollReport.aspx?g=05cabb5f-599f-47a8-98fb-e3e254e425e4&c=161>

⁴ Hart Research Associates, "Protecting Democracy from Unlimited Corporate Spending" (June 6-7, 2010).