

## **Motion Carried**

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**ARTICLE 18** Motion made by John Lippitt, Precinct 7 to see if the Town will adopt the following resolution:

*We, the voters at the 2012 Annual Town Meeting of the Town of Reading, affirm our belief that the First Amendment to the United States Constitution was designed to protect the free speech rights of people, not corporations.*

*The United States Supreme Court's 2010 decision in Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission overturned longstanding precedent prohibiting corporations and unions from spending their general treasury funds in public elections. We believe that the ruling created a serious and direct threat to our democracy and the conduct of free and fair elections, by permitting corporations and others to drown out the voices of ordinary persons. Already we have seen our political process flooded with newly unleashed corporate and other money, resulting in historically unprecedented campaign expenditures.*

*The people of the United States have previously used the Constitutional Amendment process to correct decisions of the United States Supreme Court that invade or invalidate democratic institutions, including elections.*

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT WE, THE VOTERS AT THE 2012 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING OF THE TOWN OF READING, CALL UPON THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO PASS AND SEND TO THE STATES FOR RATIFICATION A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO RESTORE THE FIRST AMENDMENT AND FAIR ELECTIONS TO THE PEOPLE, AND FURTHER, WE CALL UPON THE MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL COURT TO PASS ONE OR MORE RESOLUTIONS ASKING FOR THOSE ACTIONS.**

The Town Clerk of the Town of Reading shall send a copy of this resolution to the state and federal representatives and senators serving the Town of Reading, and to the Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the President of the United States, and take any other appropriate action relative thereto.

Or take any other action with respect thereto

**Background:** A little more than two years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court made a precedent-breaking decision. In a five-to-four vote on a case called *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* (*Citizens United* for short), the court ruled that corporations and unions have the same rights to freedom of speech as U.S. citizens under the Bill of Rights. The court expanded on previous rulings that said that spending money to deliver a political message counts as speech. It held, for the first time, that corporations have the right to spend unlimited corporate funds to support or oppose candidates for elected office. This overturned the 1907 law banning corporate contributions signed by President Theodore Roosevelt, who said, "All contributions by corporations to any political committee or for any political purpose should be forbidden by law."

### **WHAT DOES THIS TOWN MEETING RESOLUTION DO?**

The resolution presented here to Town Meeting states that:

- Free speech rights belong to people not corporations or other organizations, and
- Unlimited spending by corporations and others in our elections presents a real danger to our democracy because corporations and others with wealth can drown out the voices and interests of all of us ordinary citizens.

This resolution calls: