



Minnesota Citizens for Clean Elections

May 2018 – Newsletter No. 1

Welcome to the first issue of the MnCCE quarterly newsletter! This comes to you from the MnCCE Membership Team.

MnCCE was incorporated and attained 501c3 status in Feb. 2017. During the year since, our leadership has communicated through emails, under the name “Clean Elections” to our 300+ member associates, alerting them to political advocacy actions taken by MnCCE. At times we have also asked associates to contact their elected officials to advocate for or against certain actions or proposals in the Minnesota Legislature. Minutes of our monthly meetings, where strategic direction and tactical actions are discussed, are also distributed.

We feel individual topic-focused emails and monthly meeting minutes have a place, but they are one-way, and lack the big picture of what’s happening. Also, it is not an effective way to educate 300 people on various topics of importance - topics like gerrymandering, dark money, 28th Amendment, campaign finance board, etc. Newsletters are our attempt to share with associates a big-picture of what MnCCE is doing to advocate for clean elections in Minnesota.

Also, to make the conversation two-way, we want to offer a letter to the editor feature, so each of you can express opinions, issues and concerns that you may have. Until we get a permanent letter-to-the-editor address send your comments to rbardal@hotmail.com

Since November 2017 MnCCE has provided speakers to talk about various topics at our monthly meetings. In February 2018 we moved the meetings to Saturdays, hoping for more attendees. Unfortunately, fewer than 50 people attend the Saturday meetings. That means over 250 of our associates don’t get to listen and participate in these presentations.

This May newsletter is mostly about why we are starting a newsletter and our hopes for it. Looking forward to engaging in a two-way communication with you going forward! If you have expertise in organizing a newsletter, please let rbardal@hotmail.com know. We need your help.

In case you haven’t checked it out, here’s the link to MnCCE’s website:
www.cleanelectionsmn.org

Also, like us on Facebook at Minnesota Citizens for Clean Elections.

Sincerely,

MnCCE Membership Team: Julie Palmer, Jim Herrick, Alice Evenson, Mary Morris, and Ron Bardal, Team Chair - rbardal@hotmail.com

Please go to the next page to read about our May topic: *Overturing Citizens United*.

Overturing Supreme Court's 2010 Citizens United Ruling

In the 1970's Congress passed campaign finance reforms. 1974 Post-Watergate amendments limited contributions, set expenditure limits and created the FEC. Since 1976, certain individuals and corporations seeking greater political influence have sought to erode these restrictions through the courts. In 2002 Congress passed the McCain-Feingold Act, limiting the use of unlimited "soft money" (slush funds and secret money) that occurred during the Watergate era.

Lawsuits rising to the level of the Supreme Court (SCOTUS) have steadily eroded campaign finance rules. This culminated in the 2010 SCOTUS ruling in *Citizens United vs. FEC (Federal Election Commission)* 558 U.S. 310 (2010), a landmark U.S. constitutional law and corporate law case dealing with regulation of campaign spending by corporations.

The two most controversial declarations in the *Citizens United* case are:

- Corporations, like real persons, have the same Constitutional rights as citizens.
- Money is free speech, therefore restricting how much money is spent to influence election outcomes may be seen as unconstitutional; though SCOTUS expected sources of those monies to be disclosed, they aren't. Contributors wanting to be anonymous began utilizing 501(c)4's (supposedly for social welfare groups) to hide donor sources.

Money spent on national elections rose ten-fold from about \$0.7 billion in 1976 to almost \$7 billion in the 2016. The result has made political contributions a game nearly exclusively for the super rich. In the 2016 election 68% of this total was contributed by 0.5% of the population. As a result, the rich are being well represented, but needs of the other 99.5% go wanting.

Due to the *Citizens United* ruling, no one, including Congress, can pass laws restricting these contributions. The only way to reverse this decision is to amend the U.S. Constitution. Efforts are underway in Minnesota and across the country to pass the 28th Amendment. This is the seventh time in our history a Constitutional amendment will be sought to overturn a previous Supreme Court ruling.

The 28th Amendment is a national effort. Common Cause, League of Women's Voters, Move-to-Amend, American Promise and other organizations are working nation-wide to pass it. To date, 19 states have petitioned Congress to initiate this Amendment. MnCCE is working, with these organizations to have the MN Legislature act on bills before them for Minnesota to join this movement. When two-thirds of the states petition, Congress will be required to act on the amendment or cede control to the states. (*More on MnCCE's initiatives in the next newsletter.*)

Big money interests will not sit idly by. The best hope of overcoming this influence is for citizens to talk to their elected officials and make our voices heard. Though billions are spent to influence elections, it is still the people that vote. We need to educate the electorate on what is going on, so they can vote intelligently. Join us for our June 14, 1:00 p.m. working session, at Byerlys, Edina, 7171 France Ave South - community room. We will launch our survey of 2018 candidates to identify their position on this critical issue. This is a big effort and we need your help on mailings to candidates at this 1-½ hr. meeting, so we can make this effort successful!