



# Money, Influence & Self-Government

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A Washington State Proposal for Campaign Finance Reform:  
Undoing *Citizens United* and reigning in political spending

# *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*

The expansion of independent election spending by corporations and unions



## THE CLEAN LEGAL DISTINCTION

**Independent spending changed. Direct corporate giving did not.**

For voters and lawmakers:

How much influence can outside money have, and how transparent must it be?

**STRUCK DOWN:**  
Bans on corporate/union independent spending

**UPHELD:**  
Reporting and disclaimer requirements

**UNCHANGED:**  
Ban on direct corporate contributions to candidates

# 15 Years After *Citizens United*

OpenSecrets' 2025 analysis shows outside spending surged and political funding became more concentrated after *Citizens United*

## OUTSIDE SPENDING IN FEDERAL ELECTIONS

**\$574M → nearly \$4.5B**

OpenSecrets-reported outside spending, selected election cycles



## TOP 100 DONORS

**1.5% → 14.8%**

Share of all federal election spending, 2008 vs. 2024.

## DARK MONEY

**\$1.4B**

Reported 2024 dark-money spending

## TOP 1% OF SUPER PAC DONORS SUPPLIED



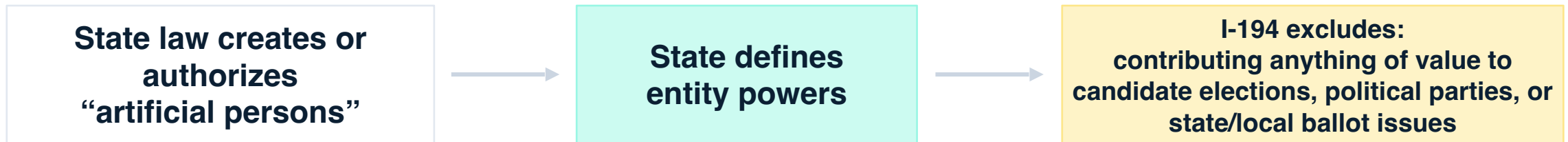
Concentration rose from already high to almost total.

**2024 donor scale:** top 10 donors each gave at least \$42.3M. The largest donor gave about \$280M.

# The Montana Plan

What political powers should state-created or state-authorized entities receive?

## CORE LEGAL LOGIC



## COVERED ENTITIES

**Corporations • nonprofits • trusts • partnerships • trade associations • unincorporated associations • such entities doing business in Montana**

## ENFORCEMENT AND BOUNDARIES

**Violation:** forfeiture of privileges to do business in Montana.  
**Restoration:** possible after disgorgement and certification of compliance.  
**Does not apply to:** individuals, political committees, the state/political subdivisions, public corporations, or distribution of news/commentary/editorial content.

## Status check

As listed by the Montana Secretary of State, I-194 is approved to gather signatures, not yet qualified for the 2026 general-election ballot.

# State-By-State Movements

Urge Federal Amendment; Entity-Power Theories; Targeting of Super PAC Funding.

ENACTED

## Washington

CONSTITUTIONAL-AMENDMENT APPROACH

### Initiative 735

- Calls for a U.S. constitutional amendment that concentrated money should not dominate the political process.

IN PROGRESS

## Montana

BALLOT INITIATIVE

### Initiative 194

- Exclude election-related spending powers from covered artificial persons.

UNDER CONSIDERATION

## Hawaii

LEGISLATIVE BILL

### Senate Bill 2471

- Reaffirm that artificial persons have only powers necessary or convenient for lawful purposes.

ENACTED

## Maine

SUPER PAC LIMITS

### Contribution Limits

- \$5,000 contribution limit for PACs making independent expenditures.

#### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR WASHINGTON

**There is no single national model.**

**Washington:** public mandate and amendment language  
**Montana/Hawaii:** state-defined powers of artificial persons  
**Maine:** targeted limits on outside-money vehicles

#### Bottom line

**States are testing ways to reduce the dominance of large political spending - but they are using different legal tools to do it.**

# Public Opinion on Money-In-Politics Reform

Pew Research polling shows strong concern about campaign costs, donor influence, and the role of special interests

MAJORITIES SEE THE PROBLEM - AND SUPPORT ACTION

## What Americans say about money in politics

% of U.S. adults



THE UNUSUAL POLITICS OF THIS ISSUE

## Broad agreement across party lines

### Favor campaign spending limits



### Say major donors have too much influence



### Rate reducing money's influence as a top priority



**Takeaway** The public case is straightforward: voters already believe money has too much power.

Sources: Pew Research Center, "7 facts about Americans' views of money in politics" / "Money, power and the influence of ordinary people in American politics" (survey of 8,480 adults, July 10–16, 2023); Pew, "Americans' Top Policy Priority for 2024" (survey of 5,140 adults, Jan. 16–21, 2024). U.S. adults; not Washington-specific.