

SINGLE VOTER ELECTION REFORM FOR ALL

Having seen Bloomberg openly attempt to buy the Democratic Nomination with half a billion dollars, and now poised to throw a billion or two to get Joe Biden nominated, all this aided and abetted by the Corporate Democratic Establishment, **no one seems to have a word to say about Campaign Finance Reform.**

Don't blame Citizens United for the corporate media circus we are going through. That Supreme Court decision was icing on the cake. In 1976, money was paraded legally as speech thanks to *Buckley v. Valeo*. This was in response to a 1971 law, the **Federal Election Campaign Act, FECA**, passed at the height of the sixties revolution. It was actually signed by Richard Nixon who explained approvingly that it limited "the amount candidates for Federal elective offices may spend on advertising, not just on radio and television, but through all communications media. It limits contributions by candidates and their families to their own campaigns. It provides for full reporting of both the sources and the uses of campaign funds, both after elections and during campaigns."

Even without the deposed Nixon's support, Congress created the Federal Election Commission in 1974 which established **contribution and spending limits** with disclosure reporting requirements for candidates and political parties. This Act also "provided the continued legislative framework for *separate segregated funds*," more commonly known as Political Action Committees (PACs). Although the law still prohibited corporations and unions from making direct contributions to federal candidates, it allowed for PACs to solicit contributions to be used in federal elections.

In 1976, the Supreme Court ruled that limits on campaign contributions were okay but that concluded that **spending limits** "restrict the quantity of campaign speech by individuals, groups and candidates," were a violation of the First Amendment. The court decided the case 7-1 with Justice Stevens abstaining. James Buckley, millionaire and brother of William Buckley, was benefited by this ruling that bears his name in getting himself elected to a Senate seat. In the first hint of Money as Protected Speech the court ruled that, because modern political campaigns depend on mass media and require the raising and spending of money, the relationship between political communication and money demands the protection of money as speech.

According to the Congressional Research Service, "by the 1990s, attention began to shift to perceived loopholes" in the Federal Election Campaign Act. Two issues—**soft money** and issue advocacy/advertising—were especially troubling. **Soft money** came principally in the form of large contributions from otherwise prohibited sources, and went to party committees for "**party-building**" activities that indirectly supported elections. Similarly, issue advocacy was advertising that praised or criticized a federal candidate but did not explicitly call for election or defeat of the candidate (which would be advocacy).

To address these issues, Congress passed the McCain-Feingold Act in 2002 which prohibited national political parties, federal candidates, and officeholders from soliciting **soft money** contributions in federal elections. The law also barred corporations and unions from using their treasury funds to finance electioneering



communications, which are defined as "broadcast ads referring to clearly identified federal candidates within 60 days of a general election or 30 days of a primary election or caucus." In 2010, the Supreme Court struck again in its most famous transgression - *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* - declaring that this latter provision was unconstitutional. In response, **Move to Amend** with several prominent Humboldt Greens, Kaitlin Spoci-Belknap and David Cobb at the helm, sought to blunt corporate power by formulating a movement to amend the United States Constitution to end corporate personhood and state that money is not speech.

The Supreme Court was not finished however. In 2014, it ruled in *McCutcheon* that it was unconstitutional to require that an individual could donate no more than \$123,000 total to federal candidates in a two-year cycle. It was a 5-4 decision, with Chief Monetzler Roberts writing that "spending large sums of money in connection with elections, but not in connection with an effort to control the exercise of an officeholder's official duties, does not give rise to quid pro corruption. Nor does the possibility that an individual who spends large sums may 'garner influence over or access to' elected officials or political parties." In response to such egregious nonsense, one can only say Wow.

So here we are with a stacked deck. Is the only option is 52 card pick-up? Though the Green Party is worthless as an opposition party because of its fear of offending the corporate Democratic Party, the Greens have done the thinking on this issue. Like the Socialist Party spending years writing the agenda for the New Deal, the Greens have been doing the same for the Green New Deal, offering a big picture of campaign reform and many of the details as well.

At a 2016 General Assembly the Greens embraced *Move to Amend*. **Greens also supported public financing in many ways.** For instance, equal free time for candidates on the public broadcast spectrum, and on other media would provide all voters with a baseline of information about all candidates running. Combined

with this, Greens supported public financing of campaigns and elections via a system where small donations are matched with public funds at a multiple ratio where small donations are matched with public funds at greater than one-to-one ratio. This would increase the importance of small donations and increase the incentive for a broader base of voters to participate in funding elections. It would also enable grassroots candidates with strong community ties to run competitive campaigns even if they do not have personal wealth or access to major donors.

Large, legislative districts require large expenditures to be competitive. **Top Two elections** make this even worse by making the primary election as expensive as the general one. **Greens support legislative elections by multi-seat districts with proportional representation, which lowers the cost of campaigns,** by lowering the threshold to receive representation, and enabling candidates to be elected by their natural constituencies in proportion to their numbers. Greens supported eliminating all "dark money" which does not legally have to be disclosed.

A Sanders victory for the Presidency would mainstream Green thinking. Any other political outcome would **require a grassroots rebellion** establishing the coming Democratic Socialism by means of a Working Peoples Party. This would end the farcical lip service to Middle Class values that in fact enrich the 1%. To bring about Democratic Socialism, we have the European and South American models which loyally serve the bottom one third of the population not served at present. It would have the dimension of directly serving the people who make up the party with cooperative and self-help institutions, created to cope with the disasters of the coming Noir Age. A welfare state inside the predatory corporate state. One way or the other, Bernie's election or a new beginning, we will have an American Peoples Spring, or else.

A radical Greenfuse remix with a bit of sowbug

← LIES, DAMN LIES, → & THE CORPORATE MEDIA ACCOUNT OF THE COUP IN BOLIVIA

President Evo Morales won re-election in Bolivia's presidential election last October 20, as pre-election polls predicted. He **received 47% of the vote** in an election with **88% turnout**. He beat his nearest rival by just over 10 percentage points, which meant a second round was not required. But the day after the election, the Organization of American states (OAS), whom Morales had allowed to monitor the election, put out a press release claiming there had been a "*drastic and hard-to-explain change in the trend of the preliminary results.*"

Even though it was pointed out that the OAS's analysis overlooks that precincts that report early can be different from ones that report late—the OAS continued to claim that the change in trend was evidence of fraud. The think tank co-founded by Mark Weisbrot persisted in exposing the OAS deception, but the OAS—which gets **60% of its funding** from the US government—refused to allow evidence challenging the OAS's final report on the election.

In the meantime, the OAS's disparagement of the election ignited violent protests that, combined with the treasonous behavior of Bolivia's military and police and the interference of Bolivia's security forces which "suggested" Morales resign, allowing him to be run out of the country (with his house ransacked). These same armed forces then sprung murderously into action to consolidate the coup. Within two weeks, 32 people were killed protesting against the dictatorship that took over after he fled. The dictatorship openly says it will arrest Morales if he returns to Bolivia.

MIT researchers meanwhile published an analysis of the election results in the very **Washington Post** which had supported the coup when it counted. The MIT

researchers concluded that there "*is not any statistical evidence of fraud that we can find,*" and that "*the OAS's statistical analysis and conclusions would appear deeply flawed.*" That's a scholarly but overly polite way to put it. The OAS repeatedly made statistical claims about Bolivia's election that were clearly false. In layperson terms, that's called lying.

Between the October election and December 26, **Reuters** regurgitated the false OAS claims in 128 articles. The **Washington Post** days after the Bolivian election backed the OAS uncritically, featuring an editorial headlined "*Bolivia Is in Danger of Slipping Into Anarchy. It's Evo Morales's Fault.*" The always amenable NYT, the day after Morales fled Bolivia, editorially described the coup as a risky but necessary step towards restoring democracy: "*When a leader resorts to brazenly abusing the power and institutions put in his care by the electorate, as President Evo Morales did in Bolivia, it is he who sheds his legitimacy, and forcing him out often becomes the only remaining option. That is what the Bolivians have done, and what remains is to hope that Mr. Morales goes peacefully into exile in Mexico and to help Bolivia restore its wounded democracy.*"

On December 2, the **Guardian** published a letter signed by 98 economists and statisticians asking the OAS to retract its false statistical claims. At this point, the OAS report on Bolivia's election should have been discarded. In a just world, jobs would be lost, and OAS General Secretary Luis Almagro would resign. But it is the OAS and US' fabrication and they are sticking by it. When you have election monitors beholden to the US government, and a corporate media willing to cover for them, it is only duly elected officials in poor countries that need fear consequences.

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