

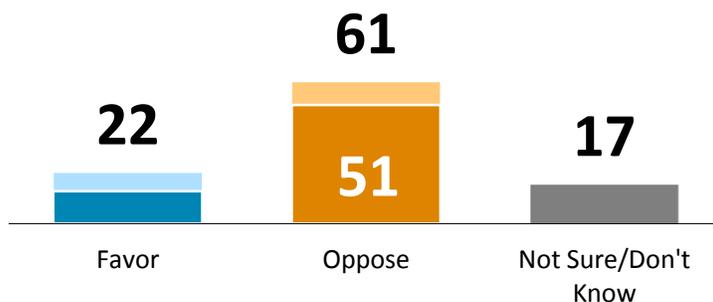
To: Interested Parties
 From: Celinda Lake, David Mermin, Brittany Stalsburg, and Matthew McDermott; Robert Carpenter, Chesapeake Beach Consulting
 Re: Recent research on the amendment to overturn *Citizens United*
 Date: August 14, 2014

Recent survey research of likely November 2014 voters¹ finds solid opposition to the Supreme Court’s *Citizens United* decision, and support for a constitutional amendment to overturn it. Importantly, the arguments made against the amendment are unconvincing to voters. The issue of reducing the influence of money in politics is very important to voters, who are ripe for reform.

Key Research Findings

Voters are overwhelmingly opposed to the *Citizens United* decision. When voters are given a simple description of *Citizens United*, as a Supreme Court decision that ruled corporations and unions have a constitutional right to spend unlimited money to support or oppose political candidates, more than three in five voters are opposed and intensity is high (51% strongly opposed). Opposition stretches across party lines, with 61% of Democrats, 62% of Independents, and 58% of Republicans against the court’s decision.²

Solid opposition to *Citizens United*



Voters also have a strongly unfavorable impression of special interest and lobbyist spending on elections. More than three-quarters (76%) hold an unfavorable view towards this spending and intensity is high (56% very unfavorable). This includes 76% of Democrats, 74% of Independents, and 79% of Republicans. Only 12% of voters have a favorable impression of special interest and lobbyist spending on elections.

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¹ Lake Research Partners and Chesapeake Beach Consulting conducted a telephone survey of 800 likely 2014 general election voters nationwide. The survey was conducted from July 26-29, 2014 and the margin of error is +/- 3.5%. This research was conducted on behalf of Public Citizen. Darker graph colors denote intensity.

² Question asked of half the sample: Before the decision, the law imposed limits on corporate and union spending to support or oppose political candidates. In the *Citizens United* decision, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned this previous law and ruled that corporations and unions have a constitutional right to spend unlimited money to support or oppose political candidates. Do you favor or oppose the *Citizens United* decision, or are you not sure?

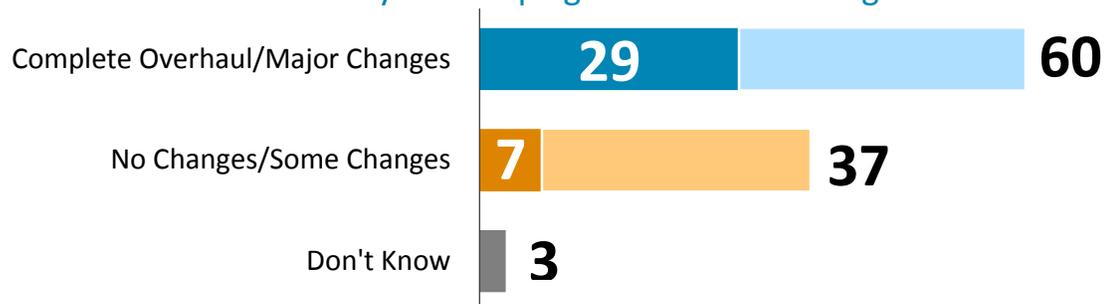
Overwhelmingly, voters believe reducing the influence of money in politics and elections is an important issue. More than three-quarters (78%) of voters feel this issue is important.

Voters of all parties assign importance to the issue—81% of Democrats and Independents and 71% of Republicans think this issue is important.³ Independents are particularly motivated by the issue of reducing the influence of money in politics and elections, with over a third (42%) rating it a 10—extremely important— on a 0-10 scale, and a mean rating of 8.1.

How important is reducing the influence of money in politics (0-10 scale; 10 means an extremely important issue)	
Independents	8.1
Democrats	7.7
Republicans	7.0

When it comes to the way election campaigns are financed in this country, 60% of voters (including 65% of Democrats, 61% of Independents, and 53% Republicans) think we need either major changes or a complete overhaul of our campaign finance laws.⁴ Only seven percent don't think we need any changes to our campaign finance laws.

Voters ready for campaign finance law changes



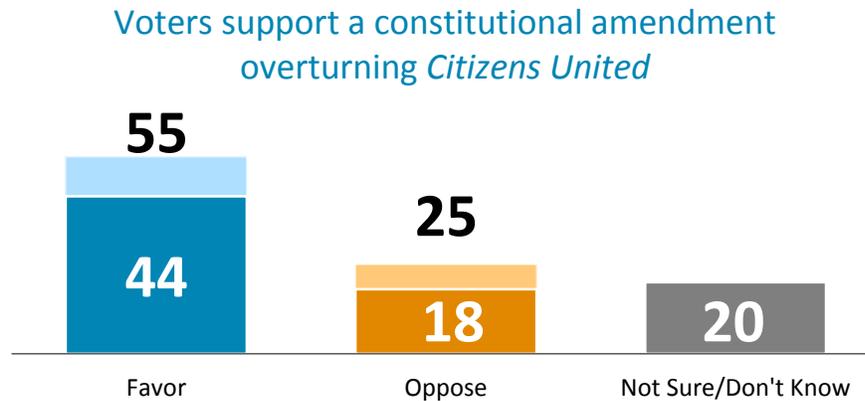
To counteract the influence of money in politics, **over half of voters favor an amendment to the United States constitution to overturn and do away with *Citizens United*** and other related campaign finance decisions. Voters support a description of the amendment that would give elected representatives the ability to pass laws that regulate and limit campaign spending, makes clear that money does not equal free speech, and allows limits on how much money can be spent on elections.

Democrats are strongly in favor of this amendment, with 62% in favor and intensity is high (52% strongly favor). Even a majority of Independents and Republicans (50%

³ Question asked of half the sample: Thinking about the issue of reducing the influence of money in politics and elections, please rate how important this issue is to you on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means it is not an important issue at all and 10 means it is an extremely important issue. You can be anywhere in between, but please use whole numbers.

⁴ Question Text: When it comes to the way election campaigns are financed in this country, do you think we need to completely overhaul our campaign finance laws, make major changes, make some changes, or should we not make any changes to our campaign finance laws?

and 54%, respectively) favor the amendment to overturn the Supreme Court’s campaign finance decisions. Only 25% of voters are opposed to the amendment.⁵



As the public debate about the merits of the constitutional amendment picks up, voters reject arguments made against the amendment by wide margins.⁶ Only 25% of voters align with the belief that the proposed amendment is an assault on our right to free speech and that it would be the first time our constitution has been altered to repeal part of the First Amendment.

Instead, a full 62% of voters—including more 6 in 10 Independents (64%) and nearly a majority of Republicans (48%)—believe that our current system allows the voices of a few to drown out the many using million-dollar megaphones, and that the amendment is necessary to realize fundamental First Amendment values and ensure our democracy is of, by, and for the people.

Voters are ready to reward candidates and elected officials that support the amendment to overturn and do away with *Citizens United* and other related campaign finance decisions. Nearly half (46%) of voters say they are more likely to

⁵ Question Text: The constitutional amendment aims to overturn and do away with *Citizens United* and other related Supreme Court campaign finance decisions. It gives elected representatives the ability to pass laws that regulate and limit campaign spending. The amendment makes clear that money does NOT equal free speech, and allows limits on how much money can be spent on elections. Would you favor or oppose an amendment to the United States constitution to overturn and do away with *Citizens United* and other related campaign finance decisions, or are you not sure?

⁶ Question asked of half the sample: Now I’m going to read you two different statements some people have made about the amendment to the U.S. constitution to overturn and do away with the *Citizens United* ruling and other campaign finance decisions. Please tell me which statement comes closer to your own views. [ROTATE STATEMENTS]

A. The First Amendment is meant to encourage a democracy where all points of view can be considered, and all voices heard. But when a few can drown out the voices of the many using million-dollar megaphones, we can’t have real political debate. The amendment is necessary to realize fundamental First Amendment values and ensure our democracy is of, by, and for the people.

B. This proposed amendment to the constitution is an assault on our right to free speech and would be the first time our constitution has been altered to repeal part of the First Amendment. It would allow the government to decide what we are allowed to say and how we are allowed to spend our own money, and that’s wrong.

[IF BOTH/NEITHER/DON’T KNOW]: Well, which statement comes closer to your views?

vote for a candidate that supports the amendment, compared to only 15% that are less likely (39% are unsure, or say supporting the amendment would make no difference in their vote).

As voters learn more about the *Citizens United* ruling their support for a fix to our money in politics problem, including a constitutional amendment to overturn the decision, increases. The *Citizens United* ruling sparked a strong, bipartisan call for campaign finance reform—and voters strongly support Congress taking action to reduce the influence of money in politics and elections.

For more information about this research, please contact Celinda Lake by e-mail (clake@lakeresearch.com) or by phone (202-776-9066).