

CITY OF  
CLEVELAND  
HEIGHTS 

January 31, 2017

**Via First-Class Mail**

Senator Sherrod Brown  
713 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Rob Portman  
448 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Congresswoman Marcia L. Fudge  
2344 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Senate President Larry Obhof  
Statehouse  
1 Capitol Square, 2nd Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215

Speaker of the House Cliff Rosenberger  
77 S. High St  
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Government Officials:

In November 2013, the citizens of the City of Cleveland Heights, Ohio voted in support of a Citizens' Initiative which enacted Chapter 183 of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Cleveland Heights, Ohio and calls for an amendment to the U.S. Constitution declaring:

1. Only human beings, not corporations, are legal persons with Constitutional rights, and
2. Money is not equivalent to speech, and therefore, regulating political contributions and spending does not equate to limiting political speech.

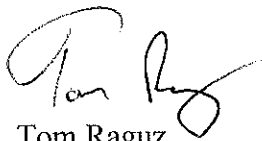
Chapter 183 requires an annual hearing before the City Council. Accordingly, on January 25, 2017, the City Council of Cleveland Heights held a public hearing to examine the impact on its

city, our state, and our nation of political influence by corporate entities and big money in connection with the most recent election. Corporate entities include business corporations, Political Action Committees, Super PACs, 501 c4 groups and unions. Members of the general public in attendance were afforded the opportunity to speak on these matters for up to five (5) minutes per person.

The public hearing started at 7:08 p.m. and finished at 9:01 p.m. on January 25, 2017, in the City Hall Council Chambers at 40 Severance Circle, Cleveland Heights, Ohio. Twenty-six (26) members of the public spoke. Mayor Cheryl Stephens, Vice Mayor Jason Stein, Council Members Mary Dunbar, Carol Roe, Kahlil Seren and Mike Ungar were in attendance. Minutes of the meeting will be available no later than March 1, 2017, on the Cleveland Heights' official website at <http://www.clevelandheights.com>.

There is also a letter attached that offers more details on this hearing.

Very truly yours,



Tom Raguz  
Clerk of Council  
City of Cleveland Heights

cc: Tanisha R. Briley, City Manager  
L. James Juliano, Jr., Director of Law

Information for the Letter to Elected Officials Summarizing  
the Public Hearing Held on January 25, 2017

About 70 people attended the hearing, and 26 addressed the Mayor and City Council.

Public testimony began with an update about the Move to Amend movement to amend the U.S. Constitution to end corporate constitutional rights and the doctrine that money is equal to political speech – 23 Ohio communities (out of more than 500 nationally) now support (12 municipal resolutions and 11 municipal ordinances by ballot and council passage) the campaign while in 2016, resolutions were introduced in Ohio Senate and House.

The hearing proceeded with testimony covering a wide range of policy areas, many of which impact the lives of Cleveland Heights residents every day. Here is just a sample of what was said:

- A resident described how citizens have lost faith in democracy and know their will counts for little when the price of a seat in the Ohio House has risen as high as \$1.6 million, and two races for the Ohio Senate clocked in at over \$2 million in recent years.
- State-mandated shifts of public education funds to subsidize charter schools and voucher programs have amounted to an attempt to privatize education that has become “a battlefield in the corporate world,” and “threatens our democracy.” (Two speakers.)
- Two residents addressed that fact that some Cleveland Heights neighborhoods remain ravaged by the effects of foreclosures, years-long vacancies and eventual demolitions creating empty lots on block after block; they connected these conditions to the political influence of the financial industry and asked, how can the City and residents deal with out-of-state corporations that buy such properties and don’t maintain them?
- One citizen described how the practice of rent-seeking by private industry continues to produce tragic consequences in such diverse areas as the nation’s health care system and local municipal services.
- Another resident explained how corporate-friendly state legislation mandating much more difficult certification requirements for building inspectors directly preceded an out-of-state corporation’s move into the Ohio municipal inspection “market” and the City’s recent need to privatize our building department by outsourcing it to that corporation.

- A resident outlined how the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) controls state legislative agendas across the country and particularly in Ohio by promoting laws that: suppress voting rights, institute school vouchers, privatize government services, curtail renewable energy, and chip away at home rule, sapping local control.
- A local bookstore owner gave details about the devastating impact of the Amazon monopoly on Main Street retailers of all kinds, noting that 2015 Amazon sales resulted in a net loss of 222,000 retail jobs nationwide, a cruel irony considering the fact that Amazon has received about \$613 billion in public subsidies for its distribution centers since 2005.
- A resident explained how and why the Cleveland Heights initiative, which reflects the national We the People Amendment, calls to end not only the constitutional doctrine of money as speech (which has resulted in unlimited campaign contributions and other abuses by wealthy individuals and corporate entities), but also requires the end of all corporate constitutional "rights," including the corporate perversions of the 4<sup>th</sup> (privacy), 5<sup>th</sup> (property), and 14<sup>th</sup> (equal protection) Amendments and the Commerce Clause (commercial).

Many other subjects were addressed; this letter can provide only a brief summary of the breadth, depth and variety of the testimony.

Respectfully submitted by  
Greg Coleridge and Carla Rautenberg  
for Cleveland Heights Move to Amend

1/27/17