



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF OHIO**

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Testimony on S.B.240
CAMPAIGN FINANCE STATEMENTS
Before the Senate State and Local Government
and Veterans Affairs Committee

Presented by Nancy G. Brown on behalf of
The League of Women Voters of Ohio
May 18, 2009

The recent Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United* is a source of concern to the League of Women Voters of Ohio. That decision permits corporations and unions to spend their funds to promote candidates and issues—without full disclosure. At a time when many citizens are concerned that money plays far too big a role in influencing electoral outcomes and the legislative process, the prospect of significant amounts of additional money flowing from corporations and unions without full transparency and accountability is troubling.

While special interest money has always been a concern in elections, unions and corporations—including foreign corporations—may now intervene directly in elections, taking power away from voters. To mitigate the corruption that will inevitably increase following the *Citizens United* decision, the League strongly supports legislation that will require complete and timely disclosure. It is critical that voters be fully informed about the true sources of the funds supporting candidates, as well as ballot and legislative issues.

Accordingly, the League of Women Voters of Ohio supports Senator Husted's effort to ensure that there is full and timely disclosure of funds used to promote candidates and issues, whether the funds come from personal contributions, from PACs, or from corporate or union treasuries. Making this information available promptly through the internet would further improve voters' receipt of timely information.

In fact, while we support S.B. 240, the League believes more must be done to ensure that Ohio voters understand the ultimate funding sources of campaign messages and the charges and countercharges that come during elections. It is particularly important that S.B. 240 include provisions requiring enhanced disclosure—that is, the ultimate source of funding—so that Ohio voters are able to gauge the accuracy of campaign statements. This is especially true in the case of huge expenditures that could drown out other political speech. With such disclosure, if the contributing entity is a non-profit corporation funded by corporate or personal contributions, the

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voter will learn the true source of the funds. For example, if an entity calls itself “Ohio Citizens for a Happy Tomorrow,” voters should know exactly who those “Ohio citizens” are--or are not.

In addition, the League believes prohibitions on contributions by corporations or unions which are the recipient of significant governmental loans are worthy of consideration. It seems undemocratic for taxpayer dollars to finance electioneering communications without taxpayers’ knowledge or approval.

Moreover, like Sen. Husted, the League believes foreign corporations should not be participating in Ohio political campaigns. S.B 204 prohibits electioneering communications by foreign corporations, and we believe this is appropriate.

Finally, the League of Women Voters of Ohio encourages adoption of provisions which ensure that electioneering communications by corporations and unions reflect the views of these bodies. Corporate boards of directors and union boards should be required to approve the spending of money for each electioneering communication.

With the November election only a few months away, we urge the Senate and House to work together to pass strong, effective legislation promptly.

I will be happy to answer any questions.

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