J O I N T   R E S O L U T I O N

URGING CONGRESS TO PASS AND SEND TO THE STATES A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT PERMITTING STATE AND FEDERAL REGULATION AND RESTRICTION OF INDEPENDENT POLITICAL EXPENDITURES

Introduced By: Representatives Fox, Blazejewski, Keable, Ajello, and Valencia

Date Introduced: March 06, 2012

Referred To: House Judiciary

WHEREAS, The growing influence of large independent political expenditures by corporations and wealthy individuals is a great and growing concern to the people of the United States and the State of Rhode Island; and

WHEREAS, In a democracy the assurance of a fair and uncorrupted election process is of the utmost importance, and the Rhode Island General Assembly believes that it is a legitimate and vital role of government to regulate independent political expenditures by corporations, unions, and wealthy individuals; and

WHEREAS, In fulfillment of this important role the government of the United States and a majority of states have regulated and restricted independent political expenditures by corporations; and

WHEREAS, In 2010, the Supreme Court of the United States decided by a bare majority in Citizens United v. Federal Elections Commission that the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States prohibits restrictions on the use of corporate and union treasury funds for electioneering; and

WHEREAS, Citizens United was a dramatic reversal of established Supreme Court precedent, and overturned decades of statutes enacted by Congress and numerous state legislatures; and

WHEREAS, Citizens United has served as precedent for further legal decisions harming our democratic system of government, including SpeechNow.org v. FEC, which allows wealthy
WHEREAS, In the wake of Citizens United there has been an exponential increase in large independent political expenditures by corporations and wealthy individuals which threatens the integrity of the election process, corrupts our candidates, dilutes the power of individual voters and distort the public discourse; and

WHEREAS, Article V of the United States Constitution empowers and obligates the people of the United States of America to use the constitutional amendment process to amend their constitution; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, That this General Assembly of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations respectfully urges the Congress of the United States to pass and send to the states for ratification an amendment to the constitution to effectively overturn the holding of Citizens United and its progeny and to permit the governments of the United States and the several states to regulate and restrict independent political expenditures by corporations and wealthy individuals; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and he hereby is authorized and directed to transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United States, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, the Majority Leader of the United States Senate, the Minority Leader of the United States Senate, and to each Senator and Representative from Rhode Island in the Congress of the United States.