



AMERICAN PROMISE

**Action Sheet for February 2018
Mobilizing Candidate Support for a 28th Amendment**

Our Action: Our action this month is focused on generating support for the [American Promise 28th Amendment Candidate Pledge](#) through well-written, compelling letters to the editor. By championing the Candidate Pledge in the media, our elected officials and candidates will more likely respond to the political will we, as citizens, create. It's up to us to encourage those in office and those running, to announce their support for a 28th amendment overturning *Citizens United*. **With the 2018 election upon us, we will begin this campaign by celebrating the Pledge in our letters to the editor and urging all political candidates, to sign the 28th Amendment pledge.** The Pledge is an opportunity to begin or continue a dialogue with elected officials on the 28th Amendment, and can be a good gateway into developing a productive relationship.

The Problem:

Money isn't speech; it's power. Supreme Court decisions such as *Buckley v. Valeo* and *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* created radical new "free speech rights" for corporations, unions and special interests at the expense of the rights of all Americans and the interests of the country. The concentrated financial influence of special interests in our politics is the number one problem our nation faces, and the survival of American democracy is in jeopardy if we fail to act. The 28th Amendment is more urgent than ever. The Supreme Court won't fix its catastrophic mistake, so it's up to the people to ensure that our elected representatives fix it.

We have been living through a decades-long trend where global corporations and special interests have been gaining "super-citizen" status. *Citizens United v. FEC* is a 2010 Supreme Court ruling that says: 1) corporations have the same rights as humans, 2) limitless political spending is the same as free speech, and 3) Americans cannot set limits on political spending.

The *Citizens United* decision has fueled elections dominated by record-breaking spending by Super PACs and unaccountable outside groups funded by corporations and a tiny, extraordinarily wealthy sliver of the American public. In 2012, the first presidential election cycle after *Citizens United*, 3,318 donors, amounting to less than .01 percent of the U.S. population, accounted for 93 percent of Super PAC funding.

Laser Talk: Eight out of 10 Americans agree that our political system is out of control. Billions of dollars are pouring into campaigns from corporations, unions and the wealthy. A 28th amendment would overturn the 2010 Citizens United Supreme Court decision which gave human constitutional rights to corporations and struck down laws that provided limits on campaign spending with increasingly frightening consequences. Here are a few examples:

- When Wall Street firms buy politicians, and financial corruption brings our economy to the brink, too many citizens lose their jobs, homes, and life savings and Wall Street goes unpunished.
- When millions of political campaign dollars flow across state lines anonymously, state's rights are infringed and transparency is sold away.
- Special interests do not pour excess sums of money into political campaigns just for the sake of it – they expect favors returned, which they receive.
- Americans see the urgency of passing a 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which would allow us to place reasonable limits on campaign contributions and reserve human liberties for people, not corporations.

Write a Letter to the Editor:

1. Identify the candidates you will encourage to sign the Pledge (e.g. this could be all candidates running for Congress and/or the state legislature). [Ballotpedia](#) is a great resource for identifying all candidates in your state.
 1. On the Ballotpedia home page, click 'Federal' on the left-hand side Pick your state on the map click '[State] Elections 2018' click 'U.S. House/U.S. Senate' (your choice) Declared candidates for each seat will be listed Click on specific candidate Campaign website link should be displayed on right-hand side under their picture. Contact info will be found here.
2. Review the text of the [American Promise 28th Amendment Candidate Pledge](#).
3. Find the local newspaper you will write to and learn what is required for letters to the editor, Google the following: "(Name of the paper) letters to the editor submission criteria." Note the number of words they allow and how a letter is submitted (Do you submit it on the newspaper's website or do they provide an e-mail address to use).
4. If you are writing a letter to a larger newspaper, find an article or editorial that provides a good angle for the 28th amendment and the Candidate Pledge your letter (e.g. I read with interest the article on the Senate health care proposal and saw how the avalanche of money in our political system excludes the voices of citizens from the health care debate). If you are writing a smaller local paper, you don't have to reference an article, just write it in a way that makes it clear why local readers would be interested in and care about this issue. (e.g. In such a heated political environment, residents of _____ are more likely to be interested in learning what we can do to get the corrosive influence of money out of our political system.)
5. Next, find a few already published letters to the editor in the newspaper you are writing to to see how they are started and the general tone.

6. Write your letter using the guidelines the newspaper has provided. Share what values or experiences move you to work to have a government run by people not money. Refer to the laser talk for other ideas.
7. Urge readers to contact elected officials and candidate running for office and encourage them to sign the Candidate Pledge supporting a 28th Amendment. Let readers know that [Ballotpedia](#) is a great resource for identifying all candidates in your state.
 1. [Here's a fantastic example of this type of letter to the editor](#) written by an American Promise member.
8. If your letter is published, be sure to let us know via email at azorc@americanpromise.net or wambuig@americanpromise.net
9. Celebrate! You're on the path to creating champions in Congress, the media and the general public for a 28th amendment!