

Spread the Word



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Spread The Word

There is no “right way” to talk about the importance of a 28th Amendment.

There are certainly strong facts that we can share, and using clear and concise points is important for conveying our goals – but people respond best to authenticity. Be clear about why this issue matters to you personally when spreading the word to family, friends, neighbors, elected officials or your broader community.

We will only grow this movement through organic citizen leadership. American Promise will be working hard to raise awareness of the Citizen Uprising, because conversations led by citizens like you are more powerful than any type of manufactured messaging.

This toolkit is meant to provide you with tips on how to inform others about the Citizen Uprising, effective ways to promote the message, and some examples to guide you along the way.

Telling Others About The Citizen Uprising



There is so much information about money in politics that it's important to be selective when starting a conversation. From neighborhood acquaintances to elected officials, you may only have a short window of opportunity to describe this effort, so here are a few bullet points that you can use to get started.

- ▶ **8 out of 10 Americans agree that our political system is out of control. Billions of dollars are pouring into campaigns from corporations, unions and hidden private interests.**
- ▶ **This is a real and present threat to our democracy and ultimately to the future of our nation.**
- ▶ **If you feel that the voice of the people should not be overshadowed by the influence of billionaires and corporations, consider learning more about the 28th Amendment and how we're convening a nationwide network of citizen activists who are passionate about this cause. This movement is already winning with 18 states and 800 cities and towns (as of 4/8/2017) having already passed resolutions to eliminate big money and special interests in our elections and government.**



A 28th Amendment will overturn the 2010 *Citizens United v. FEC* Supreme Court Ruling that gave human constitutional rights to corporations and struck down laws that set limits on campaign spending. The consequences are frightening:

When the oil and gas industry makes large campaign contributions, gains access to officials and ghost-writes our laws to their advantage, all action on climate change and protecting our land, air and water stalls in its tracks.

When Wall Street firms pour money into elections, candidates return the favor by removing financial oversight. When those power influencers bring the American economy to the brink, average Americans pay in the end: lose their jobs, homes, and life savings.

When large corporations purchase political favor, small businesses can't compete in a rigged market, Main Street is devastated and the great engines of job creation disappear.

Americans of all different backgrounds and political ideologies see the urgency of passing a 28th Amendment to the US Constitution, which would allow us to set reasonable limits on campaign contributions and reserve human liberties for people - not corporations.

If you are interested in supporting a 28th Amendment to overturn Citizens United you can find more information at www.AmericanPromise.net.

You are the best judge of your strengths as a communicator. Being genuine is the strongest way for you to share information about this effort, but keep in mind a few important things while interacting with others:

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- ▶ Information is important, but conversation is key. Start with a brief description of the issue and the movement, then ask questions to create a dialogue. You'll find out what matters to them and can tailor your conversation to the part of the movement that best resonates with them.
 - ▶ Your goal is not necessarily to persuade them to join you in the movement right away. Gauge their interest and ask if you can follow up with them in a few days to answer questions or email them a link to more information. At that time, you can ask if they are interested in signing on to join you in the movement.
 - ▶ The best conversations are personal. Why is this so important to you? Don't be afraid to share what drove you to this movement, it will often inspire others.
 - ▶ It's okay not to have all the answers. Whether you are new to citizen action or an experienced community organizer, people may ask questions you didn't expect. No problem! Finding answers is a great way to follow up with someone who expresses interest during your conversation.
 - ▶ Leave some literature. If you're having a planned conversation – attending an event or a meeting with an elected official – bring some written materials to share and leave behind.

Other Ways To Get The Word Out



There are many great ways to tell this story, and it's up to you to decide what will work best for your comfort zone and intended audience. Here are a few suggestions for ways to communicate your passion for fixing democracy:

EMAIL

Email is one of the easiest ways to share your involvement with the Citizen Uprising with a large and diverse group of people. It allows people to explore the information on their own time, creates the chance to share links to extra information, and provides an easy way to follow up and see if they're interested in joining you.

It's also an effective tool to let local elected officials know that the 28th Amendment is important to you. Whether your state is making change through a legislative resolution, a ballot initiative, or is ready to ratify the Amendment, politicians need to hear clearly and consistently about this issue from their constituents.

A few helpful tips when preparing your email:

- **KEEP IT CLEAR AND BE CONCISE.**
For the strongest impact, try to stick with your key points and stay on a specific topic. There will be plenty of time once you've gained someone's attention to get further into the details.
- **SHOW RESPECT.**
Keep email addresses private. If you are sending a message to a group, address the email to yourself and put all other email addresses on the BCC line to blind copy the group. Many people do not like their email addresses to be shared without permission and you may lose them as a reader if they are upset by this.
- **IDENTIFY YOURSELF AS A CONSTITUENT.**
If you are emailing an elected official, it helps to remind them that you are a constituent. Include the neighborhood you live in and whether you voted for them!

Here is a sample email to provide a little inspiration as you craft your own:

New Message — ↗ ✕

To John Doe Cc Bcc

Subject Imagine a government run by the people

Dear Friends,

As you know, I tend to keep to my political views to myself. Lately that has seems like a pretty good idea as our political climate is getting more and more intense. But recently I learned about an important movement that I think is worth speaking out about. It is called the Citizen Uprising and you can learn a little more about it by [CLICKING HERE](#) to see their website.

The goal of this national Uprising is to pass the 28th Amendment to the Constitution and end the tyranny of big money and special interests in our elections and government. That's right, this is an effort to get our democracy back on track by overturning the Supreme Court ruling in Citizens United v FEC. That decision was the beginning of runaway election spending that has put our American democracy in the hands of Global corporations.

I'm really proud to be part of this growing network of local leaders and groups across the country. We are partnering with American Promise, a national non-partisan group that provides citizen tools and training, and Constitutional expertise when needed. This issue is winning support across the aisle and across the country: 80% of Democrats, Republicans and Independent voters are behind it and 18+ states and 800 cities and towns have already won!

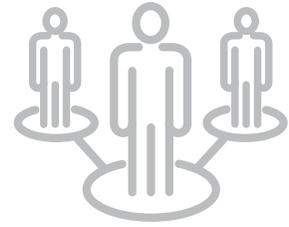
I'm trying to do my part and I'm hoping I can count on you to sign on too, or let me know if you would like to learn more. You can email me for more information or sign up at the American Promise website by [CLICKING HERE](#).

Thanks so much for your time and I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

Ben G.

Using Social Media



Social media networks are a primary way that many people learn about news and stay tuned in with current events. The peer-to-peer conversations that begin on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Snapchat can be a great place to have an informed debate and spread the word about the Citizen Uprising.

For the most up-to-date information on the efforts of American Promise, follow us on Facebook [facebook.com/ouramericanpromise](https://www.facebook.com/ouramericanpromise) and Twitter [@usapromise](https://twitter.com/usapromise)

A few important reminders about social media before you begin posting:

Social media is designed to share information and ideas, and people may bring many different perspectives to the table. Language that is too negative or non-inclusive can cause tension and push people away. Focus on crafting posts that provide an overview of what you're up to, why you're excited about it, and how people can learn more. Engage with questions in a friendly and constructive manner.

There are many issues to highlight around money in politics – in addition to posting about the Citizen Uprising, provide some variety by sharing articles and other resources that illustrate the importance of a 28th Amendment.

The power of social media is that it's an ongoing conversation you can always join. Learn from the conversations you see and be a contributing member, and you'll find that your digital network begins to grow.

On Facebook this might mean visiting news pages or commenting on articles, on Twitter it may mean finding threads about money in politics or utilizing hashtags # to connect

Avoid long and divisive threads. Arguments happen. But long back and forth debates rarely change minds and often scare people away who would like to learn more.

If you're just getting started with social media, here are a few Facebook posts and tweets to get you started:

TWITTER

“Imagine a government run by people, not money. #28thAmendment
www.americanpromise.net”

“It's time to pass the #28thAmendment and end money in politics!
www.americanpromise.net”

“The #28th Amendment will create a gov't for people – not corporations
and special interests. www.americanpromise.net”

FACEBOOK

“If you believe that the will of the people should matter more than
corporate money and special interests, you should check out the work of
American Promise.”

“Did you know that the US Constitution has been amended 27 times
before by a group of unified citizens? It's time for a new amendment
that will restore balance to our democracy!”

“I've been learning about a new movement for a 28th Amendment to the
US Constitution to get big money out of politics! This is important to
me because _____.”

Raising Awareness In The Media



Today's media environment is more accessible than ever before, and it is incredibly valuable to get information and opinions published on both local and national platforms.

Letters to the Editor or guest columns in local papers are a great way to impact public opinion and get the attention of citizens and politicians alike. Every letter to the editor is read – so even if yours isn't printed, it will still influence the selection of other letters that are printed. (For example, if there are several letters submitted against an issue, and one only letter for the issue, that will influence how many letters are printed for each side.)

Your letter or editorial is more likely to be printed if it is timely (addressing a recent article or event), local, and makes a clear point. Use the other tips below to write an effective letter:

Find out if there is a word limit on your letter or editorial.

Most publications have clear guidelines regarding word limits. Make sure you identify them before you write.

In the first sentence, state your point and why it is timely.

If responding to a news article this is the time to say so, otherwise, just make it clear the subject of your letter right away.

When possible, use facts to back up your point.

Make sure you get the data from an original source, not from another article or editorial. State your source. American Promise can help you identify the right ones to share, just email them at uprising@americanpromise.net.

Give the letter a human spin.

Discuss the impact on your community, on democracy, and on the future.

Limit your argument to one main point.

Do not use unnecessary words like “I think” or “I believe.”

It is already understood that this is your opinion.

Do not criticize or attack another person or organization.

Stick to the issue.

Do not use acronyms or jargon.

Make sure the average person not informed on the issue would understand your language.

Do not exaggerate or overstate your point.

Read over and edit your letter several times, trying to make your points as clear and concise as possible.

Include your full name, city, and affiliation information.

Follow-up with a phone inquiry

If you don't see your letter printed 3-4 days after you submit it, call the publication.

SAMPLE OP-ED

For some inspiration, take a look at this letter that was published within two days:

Maybe money runs the show because I let it – that was my thought after working unceasingly on the Ohio Together campaign after graduating in May.

So instead of committing my life to debating with strangers on Facebook about the Trump Administration and Hillary’s emails, I proudly took my political science degree and the V.A.L.U.E.S I learned in undergrad to Boston to work on something that was bigger than Trump and Hillary: Corporations having human rights and money being considered free speech.

American Promise, a cross-partisan organization, along with several organizations are working to overturn the Citizens United v. FEC Supreme Court Ruling and to pass a 28th Amendment.

A 28th Amendment would put the power back into the hands of the people, requiring Federal, State, and local governments to regulate, limit or prohibit contributions, placing reasonable limits on campaign spending. It would also establish that the rights protected by the Constitution of the United States are the rights of natural persons only.

To the everyday student, this may seem like a lost cause but let me state a fact: Americans are more divided on gay marriage, health care, and abortion than campaign finance.

According to a Bloomberg National Poll, 78 percent agreed that the Citizens United ruling should be overturned, compared to the 17 percent who called it a good decision.

That 5-4 Supreme Court Ruling is essentially allowing money to choose who your elected officials will be. These are the same elected officials who raised your tuition in 2015. These are the same elected officials who cut deeply into the Pell Grant budget in 2015. These are the same elected officials who were in favor of concealed guns on campus and were disappointed in Governor Deal’s veto in 2016.

So I say all that to say that these elections are what you make it, these marches can’t happen alone, and if you are not in the fight in some way, I ask you today fellow eagle, why are you on the sidelines?

The power was yours to begin with.

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

THE CONTROVERSY over election fraud (“Trump discredits America’s brand,” Opinion, Oct. 21) is a red herring. When candidates take millions of dollars in campaign contributions, it does not really matter if the machinery of our election system works or not, because whoever wins the election will be obligated to serve his or her major donors rather than the general public.

It’s been almost seven years since the Supreme Court’s *Citizens United v. FEC* decision opened the floodgates to the corrupting influence of big money in politics. A constitutional amendment is needed to reverse *Citizens United* by establishing that artificial entities such as corporations are not entitled to the same inalienable constitutional rights as living human beings, and money is not a form of First Amendment speech.

However, as long as we the people meekly accept domination by those with enough money to bend government policies to their own advantage, it won’t matter whether our votes get counted or not. We will continue to get the best government money can buy.

Paul L, Sharon

Talking To Elected Officials



An important part of the Citizen Uprising is sharing our concerns and solutions with local, state, and national elected officials. The most effective way to do this is to communicate directly and let them know how much this issue means - not only to you, but to them. There are a few ways to get in touch with your elected officials, including: attending a town hall, writing a letter or email, or just picking up the phone.

You can find some great tools at American Promise that will help you identify your local officials and even help you draft a powerful email they can send on your behalf.

Regardless of how you communicate with them, here are a few tips:

State your constituency status and what specifically you want your public official to do, including identifying the specific bill or ballot initiative you are working on.

State your personal credentials and why this issue is important to you.

Talk about why the legislation or initiative you support would help you and others in the state or district and why the ultimate goal – the 28th Amendment – is necessary.

Restate what you would like the public official to do. Your final statement should be a request, to support a specific bill, or your ballot initiative, or confirm their support of the issue in general.

Thank them for their time. If and when they show support for the 28th Amendment, follow up to acknowledge that too!

OTHER TITLES AVAILABLE IN OUR TOOLKIT:

Ballot Access Guide

Building Your Campaign

How to Build Strong Team

What You Can Do Today

Citizen Uprising in Your State



www.americanpromise.net