

PRICELESS

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Bullfrog Community Screening & Discussion Guide

Roll out the red carpet! Use your PRICELESS film screening as a tool to build community. Spark discussion and action to curb the influence of big money donors on government and join the movement to change how campaigns are financed. This guide offers some background information plus helpful tips and discussion questions for a stirring, informative, and rewarding screening. **Good Luck!**

For additional resources, visit priceless.bullfrogcommunities.com/pless_resources

About PRICELESS

PRICELESS examines the growing cost of federal elections, the impact of political campaign fundraising on members of Congress and on policymaking, and the citizen movement to limit the “undue influence” of large campaign donors. This non-partisan film includes a look at two national policies: agriculture and energy, both of which are shaped by a variety of interests including industry groups, political parties, lobbyists, citizen groups, candidates and officeholders. The film features Arizona’s pioneering clean election system as a possible alternative to the prevailing model — an optional reform attracting support from members of Congress in both parties.



About the Director

Steve Cowan founded Habitat Media in 1992 to produce films that inspire positive change. He has directed and produced several award-winning films, including two primetime PBS Specials: Empty Oceans, Empty Nets and Farming the Seas.

ready to watch!

Here are some ideas and best practices to help make your community screening of PRICELESS a success!

- 1. Publicize Your Event!** This is the most important step. Not only can you tell the world about your screening, but you can also let the Bullfrog Community team know about your plans so we can help you publicize your event. Visit priceless.bullfrogcommunities.com/pless_screenings to register your PRICELESS screening.
- 2. Visualize Your Goal!** What do you hope to achieve with your screening of PRICELESS? Your goal could be to generate a lively post-film discussion with your audience about consequences of special interest money on electoral politics. Or, perhaps you want to motivate members of your community to participate in a citizen movement to limit the influence of large campaign donors or push for fair elections. Or, simply provide an opportunity for families to watch and learn together.
- 3. Where To Host?** Consider which locations in your area would be ideal for accommodating a community film screening of the size you anticipate: churches, town halls, private homes and even high schools have been venues for many successful community screenings.
- 4. Find A Partner!** Give some thought to who is already investigating campaign finance reform issues and the health of our electoral system. Can they, or an affiliate, help sponsor the event? Spread the word? Speak on a panel discussion after the screening? Some potential partners include: instructors of political science at colleges and universities, public policy research institutions, citizens groups, and advocacy organizations. Links to organizations working on campaign finance reform efforts are available at priceless.bullfrogcommunities.com/pless_resources.
- 5. Invite A Guest Speaker!** Guest speakers and panels are a great way to encourage discussion and debate after a community screening. Contact local non-profit representatives, teachers, professionals, or government officials who have expertise or insight into the issues raised by the film, and invite them to attend and participate in a discussion or Q&A session. The filmmaker is available to appear in person or via Skype for a Q&A. [Contact Bullfrog Communities](#) if you are interested.
- 6. Engage Your Audience!** Included in this guide is a section called Ready to Act!, which links to relevant resources online, and can be used as a hand-out at your screening. It will help your audience know what they can do to address the effect of political money on U.S. elections.
- 7. Spread The Word!** Think about the best methods available to you for publicizing the film screening to people in your community. Sending emails, creating event notifications on Facebook or Meetup, using Twitter, and placing screening announcements in local newspapers and newsletters is a good start. Find the PRICELESS screening poster, discussion guide (includes handout), and press photos on priceless.bullfrogcommunities.com/pless_resources to help publicize your event around town.
- 8. Tell Us How It Went!** Visit priceless.bullfrogcommunities.com/pless_discussion to tell us about your event. Where it was held? Who attended? What went well, and what was challenging? Did the film have a positive impact and inform your community? Your feedback will help others in organizing their own successful events and will energize the Bullfrog Economic Justice Community as a whole.

ready to talk!

After watching the movie, your audience will be excited to discuss the issues raised by PRICELESS. Here are some questions that will help get people talking!

1. Do you think that your elected officials represent your interests? Why or why not?
2. What role do lobbyists play in government? How do they influence politicians and policy?
3. What role does money play in elections? How does money effect policy?
4. The recent Citizens United decision by the U.S. Supreme court allows donors to spend unlimited amounts of money (without disclosure) on campaigns for elected office. Does this give wealthy interests undue influence over politicians?
5. The Court decided that limiting donor contributions limits free speech. Do you think that money equals free speech?
6. Recent Supreme Court decisions have also given corporations 'personhood' under the law. Should corporations have the same rights as citizens?
7. Multinational corporations are primarily concerned with profit. Should elected officials prioritize corporate profit over the needs of people?
8. Elected officials spend a majority of their time fundraising. Do you think they should spend more time working on behalf of the people they are supposed to represent? How does this effect job performance and policy-making?
9. Do you think the current system corrupts elected officials? How does this threaten democracy?
10. How can 'We the People' separate money from politics? Do you support campaign-finance reform efforts and a constitutional amendment to reverse the Citizens United decision?
11. What are clean-elections systems and public financing of campaigns? How do they work?
12. Some cities and states, including Arizona, have clean-elections systems. Like public-financing systems in other states, Arizona's law does not force candidates to participate. It gives public campaign money to candidates who voluntarily agree to limit private contributions. Do you support elections systems that give candidates without big-money backing an opportunity to compete?
13. Until recently, Arizona's law included a trigger for allocating matching funds to publicly financed candidates when their privately financed opponents spent more than a certain amount. There was no limit to the money that could be spent or raised by privately financed candidates, and at a certain point, the public-financing system stopped matching private money. However, in the McComish decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the triggered-funds provision restricted the free speech of privately financed candidates by discouraging them from spending. Do you think that public funding restricts free speech?
14. Though the triggered-funds provision was struck down by the Supreme Court, public financing of campaigns was affirmed in the same ruling in Arizona and Maine and in a federal appeals court ruling in Connecticut. Los Angeles passed an anti-corruption/public finance measure in spring 2011. How can this model be spread to other cities and states?
15. What can we do about the issues illuminated in PRICELESS? Share the READY TO ACT handout and visit priceless.bullfrogcommunities.com/pless_resources for additional ideas and resources.

ready to act!

Share this handout with your
PRICELESS screening audience!

handout

1. Join the effort to pass a Constitutional Amendment to overturn “Citizens United” - affirming that only natural humans (not corporations) are people, and that money does not equal speech. www.democracyisforpeople.org
2. The Fair Elections Now Act (S. 750 and H.R. 1404) was re-introduced in 2011 in the Senate and in the House of Representatives. The bill allows federal candidates to run for office without relying on large contributions, making them accountable to the needs of people and communities rather than big money donors. Support efforts to get clean elections www.publiccampaign.org/ and let your representatives know that you want Public Financing of Elections.
3. Support other clean elections and public financing of campaigns bills at the ballot box.
4. Join or donate to a local or national organization working on campaign-finance reform efforts. See priceless.bullfrogcommunities.com/pless_resources for links to other organizations’ websites.
5. Arrange screenings of this film with other groups in your community to educate more community members. See priceless.bullfrogcommunities.com to host a screening.
6. Join Bullfrog Communities, an online center for news, discussion, and action. www.bullfrogcommunities.com/bc_join
7. Visit the Bullfrog Economic Justice Community to stay informed about the issues and the availability of new film releases: www.bullfrogcommunities.com/bc_economic_justice
8. Take action by joining Bullfrog Communities campaigns and signing petitions that help to create tipping points for change related to campaign-finance reform and economic justice at priceless.bullfrogcommunities.com and www.bullfrogcommunities.com/bc_economic_justice