



NEWS RELEASE

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Montana Supreme Court Rejects I-166 Challenge *Voters Will Still Have the Opportunity to Declare that Corporations Aren't People and Money Isn't Speech with November Vote*

HELENA – The people of Montana won the right to vote on I-166 this November when in a 6 to 1 decision Montana's Supreme Court rejected an attempt by opponents to remove it from the ballot.

“This frivolous lawsuit was nothing more than corporate hired guns trying to deny the people of Montana a chance to vote on a citizen initiative, one that clearly states corporations aren't people and money is not speech,” said C.B. Pearson, Campaign Treasurer, Stand with Montanans: Corporations Aren't People – Ban Corporate Campaign Spending. “Thankfully, the Montana Supreme Court recognized that this lawsuit was a cynical attempt by opponents to block a vote on one of the most important issues of our time.”

The suit was brought by a newly formed group called Montanans Opposed to I-166 as well as State Sen. Dave Lewis and Billings businessman and former Republican legislative candidate Phil Lilleberg, represented by Chris Gallus and James Brown.

In 2010, Mr. Gallus represented the payday and car title lending industry in two similar lawsuits filed to remove I-164 – an initiative to limit interest rates on these type of loans - from the ballot. Both of those lawsuits also failed.

Mr. Brown is an attorney for American Tradition Partnership, the group that challenged the Montana *Corrupt Practices Act*, and is challenging other Montana campaign finance laws in an effort to eliminate contribution limits, disclosure requirements, and campaign finance reporting.

“These secretive, large out-of-state corporate interests have contempt for Montana voters and our fair elections system,” said Pearson. “They don’t believe Montana voters should have a say in how our elections are funded and run, and they think big, unlimited, secret money should be allowed to buy our elections. They won’t say who is funding their campaign or this lawsuit.”

The lawsuit alleged that the ballot language and the initiative itself do not comply with Montana laws and, therefore, I-166 should not be allowed to appear on the November ballot. However, opponents declined to participate in the process that allows opponents to weigh in with the Attorney General during approval of a proposed initiative.

“They had their chance to weigh-in during review process and while the petition was circulating but they decided not to participate in the process,” said Pearson. “The Montana Supreme Court saw this lawsuit for what it was – a well-funded effort to disenfranchise every Montana voter.”

The lawsuit brought by opponents was filed against the Montana Attorney General and the Montana Secretary of State. However, Jon Motl, representing Stand with Montanans: Corporations Aren’t People – Ban Corporate Campaign Spending, filed an [amicus brief](#) with the Court, defending against the challenge to I-166.

“Montana can be proud of our unique and pure form of democracy, which affords every Montanan the right to direct democracy,” said Pearson. “The corporate interests may be able to buy politicians, especially in the post-*Citizens United* world, but they cannot buy the people of Montana. That is why they are so afraid of citizens’ initiatives like I-166, because the people’s use direct democracy undermines the control they have of our government.”

I-166 qualified easily for the November ballot. Though Montana law requires 24,337 valid signatures as well as signatures from 5% of voters in 34 legislative districts, the petition to place I-166 on the ballot received 32,112 valid signatures and qualified in 61 of Montana’s 100 legislative districts.

More information is available at www.StandWithMontanans.org, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/StandWithMontanans, on Twitter, @STANDwMONTANANS, and by calling (406) 356-NOV6 (6686).