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## NEWS RELEASE

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For more information:  
CB Pearson 406-544-0032

### **Reformers Applaud Temporary Reinstatement of Montana's Campaign Money Limits**

#### *Note Need for I-166 to Bolster Permanent Protection*

HELENA – Campaign finance reform advocates welcomed action by the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals to stay a lower court ruling that struck down limits on campaign contributions to Montana state candidates just days before Montana's ballot were mailed. The action means that the limits will be reinstated through the election.

"While it's good to see this awful ruling blocked temporarily, the long term danger to Montana elections remains," said C.B. Pearson, treasurer for the Stand with Montanans ballot committee that is promoting initiative I-166. "To permanently protect our democracy from the influence of big money interests, we need a constitutional amendment that will prevent courts from recklessly striking down laws aimed at creating a level playing field with campaign contribution and spending limits helping eliminate big money from our elections. That's what voters can demand by voting FOR I-166."

"It is encouraging to see both the Democratic and Republican candidates for attorney general of Montana vowing to defend the existing contribution limits," noted Bob Edgar of Common Cause. "Montana has emerged as the most important battleground in the country in the effort to reign in huge campaign spending by corporations and SuperPACs."

"The threat to Montana's campaign contribution limits is just another step down the road that some judges are taking toward a bizarre world where corporations are considered people and unlimited campaign spending is considered free speech," said John Bonifaz of Free Speech for People, which had earlier this year submitted an amicus brief in support of Montana's ban on corporate spending in elections.

Candidates who had received donations above the level allowed by the law in the brief window when it was suspended must now return them to their donors and abide by the limits through the election. The groups call on all candidates to abide by the current limits and immediately return those contributions.

Initiative I-166 would establish an official Montana policy that corporations are not people with constitutional rights and charge all Montana elected officials to support a federal constitutional amendment that would clearly authorize laws such as Montana's contribution limits that serve to establish a level playing field and Montana's previous law that banned corporate spending in state elections. It has won the backing of Montana's Governor Brian Schweitzer (D) Lt. Governor John Bolinger (R) and former Montana Secretary of State Verner Bertelsen (R). It has also been endorsed by two of Montana's leading small business organizations and nearly 100 small business owners throughout Montana.

American Tradition Partnership, formerly Western Tradition Partnership, was the primary plaintiff in the challenge to Montana's *Corrupt Practices Act*. The group has been involved in a series of legal challenges and complaints related to Montana campaign finance law including the contribution limit case. In 2011, the Montana Commissioner of Political Practices found that the group violated Montana law by soliciting unlimited contributions, refusing to disclose those donations, and spending that money on independent attack ads and mailers targeting candidates in the 2010 election.

"Montana has a long, proud tradition of clean and fair elections," said Pearson, "But American Tradition Partnership has nothing but disdain for this tradition. In fact, if they have their way, our elections will be bought by unlimited, secret, and untraceable money flowing from big, out-of-state corporations and wealthy individuals."

"Now is the time for all Montanans to stand together by voting for I-166 and making sure our system of fair elections is not lost," said Pearson.

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