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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **It's Official: Montana First State to Vote on a Statewide Initiative** **That Advocates Ban on Corporate Money from Elections** *Initiative 166 Qualifies for the November Ballot*

HELENA - The Montana Secretary of State today made it official, Initiative 166 - the "Prohibition on Corporate Contributions and Expenditures in Montana Elections Act," will appear on the fall ballot. Several other initiatives were proposed and circulated but I-166 is the only initiative circulated this spring that has made it on the fall ballot.

"Montanans want clean and fair elections and don't want corporations to use their checkbook to buy our elections," said C.B. Pearson, treasurer for I-166 and a long-time Montana campaign reform advocate. "For nearly a century, Montana had elections free of corporate money. But now our fair elections system is compromised. The recent controversial decision by the US Supreme Court on Montana's Corrupt Practices Act makes this initiative even more important and significant."

The proposed ballot measure would make it state policy that corporations are not human beings with constitutional rights, that money is not speech, and would charge Montana's congressional delegation to support an amendment to the United States Constitution to nullify the Supreme Court's ruling in *Citizens United v. FEC*.

"Now the people of Montana get to speak on this important issue," said Pearson. "In addition it is important that all elected representatives and candidates in Montana declare how they stand on I-166 and whether they will honor the wishes of the people to have fair elections."

The initiative has received broad support, including endorsements from prominent political leaders from both the Democratic and Republican parties. At a May 3 signing ceremony and endorsement event in Helena, Democratic Gov. Brian Schweitzer joined Republican Lt. Gov. John Bohlinger and Republican former Sec. of State Verner Bertelsen in endorsing I-166. Many Montana small businesses have also endorsed I-166.

“Montanans are leading the way in the fight to restore government of, by, and for the people,” said Pearson. “We led the way 100 years ago when we passed the Corrupt Practices Act, and we are once again leading the way as Montanans stand up against the bad *Citizens United* split decision by the U.S. Supreme Court.”

The U.S. Supreme Court, in its 2010 *Citizens United* decision, and recent refusal to hear Montana’s history, has ruled that corporations have the same rights as people and that unlimited corporate political spending equates to constitutionally protected free speech.

“It’s crazy, every Montanan knows corporations are not people,” said Pearson. “They do not breathe, they do not have children, they do not die fighting in wars for our country, and they do not vote in our elections. Now this November, Montana voters will have the chance to clarify that corporations are not people, that money is not speech, and once again act to get big money out of our elections.”

Montana law requires that petitions for statutory initiatives receive at least 24,337 valid signatures and qualify at least 34 house districts by receiving signatures from 5% of registered voters in those districts. County elections offices, which have until July 20 to file verified signatures with the Secretary of State, are continuing to process I-166 petitions. But the petition to place I-166 on the November ballot already has 25,146 verified signatures and enough signatures to qualify in 42 of Montana’s 100 house districts.

The Stand with Montanans: Corporations Aren’t People – Ban Corporate Campaign Spending campaign submitted more than 40,000 signatures, and should end up with over 30,000 verified signatures and qualify in more than 50 house districts.

“In just two months, hundreds of Montanans have joined together to fight political corruption,” said Pearson. “This level of support enabled Stand with Montanans to collect over 40,000 signatures and qualify in a majority of the house districts. Montanans from all parts of the state have shown their support and interest in preserving fair elections in our state.”

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