
NEXT KCDW MEETING APR 23

Location: Hale's Alehouse.

Our speakers will be Dolores Gilmore, Candidate for County Auditor; Paul Andrews and Garry Sobeck, Candidates for County Assessor. NO RSVP required.

LET'S START A DISCUSSION

By Jo Fox Burr

At a recent Kitsap County Democratic Central Committee meeting, we were asked to endorse signature gathering for the Move to Amend Initiative 1329. The initiative urges our Congressional delegation to propose a Constitutional amendment declaring corporations do NOT have the same rights as people; that Federal, State, and local governments DO have the right to regulate all political contributions and expenditures; and that there should be full disclosure of ALL political contributions and expenditures. While I wholeheartedly concur with the general sentiments of this initiative, three questions caused me to pause. First, I wondered if this would have a negative impact on unions and non-profits. Second, I was concerned about other unforeseen ramifications. Finally, I wasn't sure this was the right process.

I have long been a strong supporter of campaign finance laws that regulate contributions and require full disclosure. It is evident large campaign contributors are frequently behind legislation that adversely affects the common good. They are also usually the source of political corruption. One attempt to fix the problem was the Clean Money legislation enacted in Arizona and Maine. I thought that might be the answer. Candidates who collect a set number of small contributions were eligible for Clean Money (i.e., campaign financing from the state) equivalent to what was spent in the last cycle of the same election. If candidates who did not accept Clean Money managed to raise more than their opponents who did, Clean Money candidates were entitled to an equivalent amount more. At one point in Arizona, 10 out of 11 statewide offices, 58% of the House, and 23% of the Senate were elected using Clean Money. In Maine, even larger percentages of both houses were elected with Clean Money. Then in 2011, the Supreme Court declared key provisions of these laws unconstitutional. At the Federal level, the McCain-Feingold Campaign Reform law had helped control some campaign spending, until the Supreme Court declared a major portion of it unconstitutional in *Citizens United v. FEC* and then added insult to injury with the *McCutcheon v. FEC* decision.

James Madison said that the Constitution should only be amended on 'great and extraordinary occasions.' With these recent Supreme Court decisions on campaign financing, we may well be faced with just such an occasion. Bush not only left us a failed economy, he left us an incompetent Supreme Court more inclined to protect the rights of the wealthy than those of the common person. It scares me to tinker with the Constitution, but with the way this Court interprets it, it may be that more explicit language is needed. I accept that. What that language should be and how we get there is what concerns me. How will declaring that corporations are not people affect unions and non-profits? At present, unions and non-profits cannot compete financially with major corporations. If a constitutional amendment limits their participation in campaigns, it will at least level the playing field with corporations. So this may be OK. Given that corporations were declared to be people long ago, I assume regulations and rules have evolved based on that status. What effect will declaring corporations non-people have on the financial world in general? That worries me some.

What gives me the greatest pause about I-1329, though, is the process. All this initiative does is urge our Congressional delegation to propose a Constitutional amendment focused on a set of objectives. How would this be enacted? Given the divide between parties, it seems an agreement on specific wording would be impossible. Then we have the problem that other state delegations where similar initiatives have passed will have their own versions. It seems rather messy. We need something more

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specific, universally accepted across state lines. Still, I did ultimately vote to endorse gathering signatures for I-1329. Why? Because it is currently the only game going and, if nothing else, it will serve to keep the discussion and movement alive. Something must be done. We are in danger of becoming an oligarchy, if we aren't one already. If we don't keep talking about this, we will never sort out a more specific and real solution. And Congress needs to understand this matters to the electorate.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Kitsap County Democratic Women

Date: Apr. 23th (Wednesday)

Time: 11:30 a.m. lunch; 12:30 meeting.

Place: Hale's Alehouse

Speaker: Democratic Candidates for
County Assessor & Auditor

Kitsap County Democratic Central Committee

Date: Apr. 20th (Monday)

Time: 6:30 p.m. Desserts; 7:00 p.m. mtg

Place: Eagles Nest

23rd Legislative District Democrats

Date: May 23rd (Tuesday)

Time: 6:30 social; 7:00 p.m. mtg.

Place: Poulsbo Library

26th Legislative District Democrats

Date: May 1st (Thursday)

Time: 7-9 p.m.

Place: Kitsap Rm, Givens Center
1026 Sidney Rd, Pt. Orch

35th Legislative District Democrats

Date: May 3rd (Saturday)

Time: 1 - 2:30 p.m.

Place: N. Mason Timberland
Library Belfair

OTHER FUTURE EVENTS

Kitsap County Democratic Women's Picnic

July 12th (Sat.) at Jo Fox Burr's House

Kitsap County Democratic Central Committee Picnic

August 17th (Sun.) Jarstad Park, Gorst

Kitsap County Democrats Annual Dinner & Auction *formerly the Jefferson Jackson Dinner*

May 31st (Sat.) Olympic College, Bremer Center

More information on all these events will be provided later.

"People who say the public shouldn't have to pay for elections are missing the point: The American people already pay for elections - in ways that favor incumbents and special interests and in a Congressional agenda spawned too many times by those who finance our campaigns. Public financing will cost us only a fraction of what the current system costs." - Senator Richard Durbin (D-Ill.)

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