

Service Employees International Union, you have a pretty good idea who that is. You can find them in the phonebook. You probably know somebody who is a member. They are active in the community. It is no mystery. But how about American Future Fund? The way this is set up right now, ExxonMobile could take its billions of dollars and start laundering that money through shell organizations and shell corporations. By the time the slammer ad gets put on television attacking a political candidate—it could be Americans for Peace and Puppies, as far as we knew—and nobody would have the time in the hectic last days before an election to figure out who it is who is really behind these attacks.

That is no way to run an election. That is no way to run a democracy. That is not transparent. These corporations are not even humans. What they are doing, involved in these elections on this scale, is unimaginable. What it does is it amplifies the political voice of CEOs dramatically.

The great thing about American democracy is that you and I and the pages who are here, when they are old enough to vote, and the police officers outside and the fellow driving by in the taxicab on Constitution Avenue, every American has a vote that counts the same. If you are the CEO of a big corporation, not only can you do your own politicking, but you can take that amassed treasury of wealth with what the Supreme Court called “the amassing of large treasuries warrants the limit on independent expenditures,” and you can spend it to push your own views and to drown out your neighbors, your friends, people who oppose you—anyone—with immense amounts of anonymous political spending.

I do not think that is right. I think that is a mistake. Justice Stevens had it right in his dissent in the Citizens United case. He said this:

At bottom, the Court’s opinion is thus a rejection of the common sense of the American people, who have recognized a need to prevent corporations from undermining self-government since the founding, and who have fought against the distinctive corrupting potential of corporate electioneering since the days of Theodore Roosevelt.

Justice Stevens continued:

It is a strange time to repudiate that common sense. While American democracy is imperfect, few outside the majority of the court would have thought that its flaws included a dearth of corporate money in politics.

So if you want the government of the United States of America—this great and sovereign Nation, this light of democracy in the darkness of this world, this government of Washington, of Jefferson, of Madison, of Roosevelt, of Lincoln—controlled by the same people who brought you a 30-percent interest rate on your credit card, well, the DISCLOSE Act is not for you because they will not be able to do it anonymously if this bill passes.

If you want the government of our country controlled by the insurance companies that took your child off the

insurance when he got sick, that wouldn’t provide coverage because he had a preexisting condition—if those are the people you want controlling the government—you don’t want this bill because you want them to be able to fund these anonymous organizations with no consequence, with no transparency.

If you want our government controlled by the people who brought you the gulf oilspill and who are polluting our atmosphere with carbon day in and day out in ways that are changing our world as we watch it, this bill “ain’t” for you because this bill wouldn’t allow them to do it sneakily, anonymously, unlimitedly.

If you want this government controlled by the big corporations that are taking American jobs and making the American worker pack up the machinery they have worked on into shipping crates to be shipped overseas, where a foreign worker will be hired to make that same product, which will then be brought back into America—if they are the folks you want controlling our government, anonymously, through money and expenditure—the DISCLOSE Act is not for you.

But let me tell you, if you are a regular American, who thinks everybody should have a fair voice at election time, who doesn’t want to see our American elections drowned out by lobbyists for international corporations, by huge corporate expenditures that aren’t even traceable back to the corporation but that come through phony-baloney organizations with names that sound like “The Make America Great Foundation”—if that is the kind of politics you want to put an end to—if you want to see real issues debated by real people, this DISCLOSE Act is important.

This isn’t just about fairness in one election. This isn’t just about a Supreme Court that handed to one political party a gigantic corporate checkbook that had previously been illegal and tells them: Get out there and spend, it is fine. Get out there and spend anonymously, it is fine. If you are an international corporation—if you are not even an American company—get out there and spend, we don’t mind. Every day we make choices about whether corporations or people are going to have the upper hand in this society. Our Supreme Court just gave corporations the upper hand, and we have to fight back because it is not just about who wins this election, this is about a democracy that has been through over 200 years of stress and strain. This is about an idea the Founders put together that was unheard of at the time. It was radical, it was exceptional, and it created a society that has shown a light in this world that is brighter than any other government in the history of humankind.

This government has lasted through Civil War and world war, through depression. It has lasted through every kind of stress. Its value is, as probably

our greatest President said, very simply, that it is a “government of the people, by the people, for the people.” Our purpose is that it not perish from this Earth. This is not a government of the CEOs, by the big corporations, and for their shareholders. It is not an anonymous government where you don’t know who is on the air with millions of dollars in advertisements slamming away. It is not a government where a candidate would be embarrassed to have a big corporation on their side that laundered their money through corporate screens so when it finally appeared in the waning days of the race it was all phoned up with a name such as “Americans For Peace and Love” or whatever the group is going to be called. That is not what America is all about.

So this may seem like a small issue about reporting of corporate expenditures, but I would submit that when corporations make more in a week than an entire U.S. Presidential election costs and they can throw that kind of money around, there is a lot at stake in trying to make sure American elections are honest and honorable ones. To allow the big corporations, even the international corporations, to continue to spend unlimited amounts of money in our elections, with no reporting requirement, with the ability to launder through phony-baloney shell organizations before people see it, the risk of damage is very great.

So I know it is easy for me to say, because the money is coming in 85 percent against Democrats and for Republicans, and it looks like this is what that is about, but it is not. It is about making sure that a government of the people, by the people, and for the people does not perish from this Earth.

I thank the Presiding Officer, and I yield the floor.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that morning business be extended until 6 p.m. with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEMIEUX. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator from Florida.

TAX RELIEF

Mr. LEMIEUX. Mr. President, we are having difficult times in this country, difficult times in my home State of Florida—the highest unemployment