

MOVE TO AMEND

“Move to Amend” is a national grassroots coalition which calls for a U.S. Constitution amendment ending corporate personhood and declaring that money is not free speech. It is largely in response to a Supreme Court ruling in 2010 entitled “Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission.” The ruling held that corporations have a First Amendment right to make expenditures from their general treasuries supporting or opposing candidates for political office. The coalition argues that the ruling disrupts the democratic process by granting disproportionate influence to the wealthy.

The coalition's strategy is to work at the local level before moving on to the state or federal level to build a grassroots movement organization powerful enough to force congress to act. A model resolution has been developed and attempts are being made to include it on as many local ballots as possible. To do this, the coalition is encouraging local groups to form affiliate groups to bring the issue before their governing bodies. It helps by sending speakers to various areas and by providing help in forming local groups and in providing information to the groups.

At the Unitarian Universalist Association General Assembly in June, 2013, a number of UUs got together and proposed a Resolution of Immediate Witness to encourage congregations to become active in this effort. The resolution was passed after a number of amendments. Copies of the final resolution are available in the folder I have prepared for the issue of the Month-please help yourself to a copy. Also, additional info is available on the web page for “Move to Amend” at <https://movetoamend.org/>.

So, why is this amendment so important? Large corporations spent billions of dollars at the last election to try to ensure that candidates who favored their activities would be elected at the national, state and local levels. Do we really want for-profit entities determining who our elected officials are? The amount of money they can spend is far more that most candidates are able to get from donations by individual persons. Does this seem like a Democratic process? The rich have always had a distinct advantage in our electoral system but between the spending by corporations and PAC's that are allowed to spend huge amounts of money with no identification of the contributors, the sad truth is that middle income and poor people are at a great disadvantage and it seems to be getting worse all the time.

So what can we do? The coalition does need funds to provide the help needed by the grassroots organizations so contributions are always welcome. Also, you can work to organize a local group with the goal of getting the local government to approve a resolution. It might be possible to get a speaker to kickoff the the program and have house parties to spread the word. We also are very fortunate because we have a local person who is very involve with the coalition-Kindra Muntz from Venice UU Church and the Florida Legislative Ministry-who probably would be available to help us get started.

At the very least, I hope some of you will find this topic important enough that you will help by spreading the word about it to your friends and perhaps be involved in any other way you can.

Al Usack, Social Justice Committee, Manatee UU Fellowship.