

...Citizens United, 2 years old

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foster commerce," declared U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) in a Jan. 20 press statement.

Merkley is one of 22 co-sponsors of a resolution from U.S. Sen. Tom Udall (D-N.M.) that would amend the Constitution to overturn *Citizens United*. U.S. Sen Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) added his name as a co-sponsor Jan. 26.

On Jan. 10, U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) became the 12th co-sponsor of a companion bill in the House; his fellow Oregon Democrat Peter DeFazio is also a co-sponsor.

To amend the U.S. Constitution requires a two-thirds vote in the House and Senate and then ratification by three-fourths of the states.

Janice Thompson, executive director of the Oregon chapter of Common Cause, sees a Constitutional amendment as one of three approaches to address *Citizens United*. The other two are public finance, and public disclosure.

On public disclosure, there's been some movement. Last October, Center for Political Accountability reported that some of America's largest publicly traded companies are voluntarily mov-

ing to disclose their corporate expenditures on politics. Together with researchers at University of Pennsylvania Wharton School, the group reported that 57 of the largest 100 publicly traded corporations disclose direct corporate political spending on their websites, while 43 disclose some information about indirect spending through trade associations or other tax-exempt groups; and 24 have stated they will not make independent expenditures, even though *Citizens United* allows them to do so.

Some elected leaders, like Oregon State Treasurer Ted Wheeler, would like to make those disclosures mandatory. In October, Wheeler came out in support of a petition calling on the Securities and Exchange Commission to require public companies to disclose to shareholders the use of corporate resources for political activities. More robust reporting would increase accountability of companies to their shareholders, Wheeler said, including the state funds he's responsible for managing.

Last April, the Obama Administration announced it was considering an executive order to require companies with federal contracts to disclose their electoral spending. But the Administration backed off when the business lobby opposed it.

Delk, at least, remains undaunted. "I try not to involve myself in things that are impossible," he told the Labor Press.

"*Citizens United* is becoming a tipping point," adds Thompson. "Americans are really taking a look at amending the U.S. Constitution."

AFL-CIO launches new TV ad campaign

The AFL-CIO has launched a multi-million dollar television advertising campaign telling the country that union workers are just like everyone else — and that they deserve their rights.

The ads first aired in Austin, Texas, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and will soon be airing in Portland.

The cost of the initial ad campaign is pegged at \$1.5 million.

AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Liz Shuler said the ads are meant to rise above the daily controversies of the political world and show the connections of unions and unionists to the world of work — and how workers benefit from unionization.

"This campaign showcases the values that America's unions share with all working people: Hard work, quality work, and how every one of us is connected," she elaborated.

The ads feature workers from a wide range of occupations. The ads are accompanied by messages over social media, online advertising and an interactive website, www.WorkConnectsUsAll.org.

The ad campaign also emphasizes the divide between the 99% and the richest 1 percent of the population and emphasizes the decline of the middle class — while laying that development at the feet of the rich. The ads also refer to the new activism in the labor movement in response to Big Business/Republican schemes to rob workers of their rights and their livelihoods.

The ads' punch line, in English and Spanish, is: "As work changes, we change with it. Work doesn't separate. It's what binds us together. I teach your kid, you fix my car, he builds my city, she keeps it safe...work."

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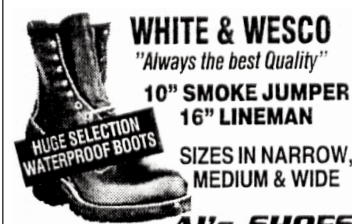
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