

VIDEO: U.S. Laws Rated Worst Value Per Dollar

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A new international survey rates U.S. federal and state laws the worst legislative value in the world. The study considered laws' impact on human lives, and the price paid for laws in campaign contributions, issue advertising, lobbying, and bribes. While these expenses have provided an unequaled return on investment for some U.S. and international corporations, their value for the U.S. public turns out to be negative, and more severely negative the greater the expense. The study was conducted by an imaginary U.S. media outlet over a period of 60 seconds, during which it extracted its rostrum from its rectum.

In related news, the Sun News of Myrtle Beach, S.C., began [an article](#) on Friday with these words:

"Brad Dean arranged a meeting last year with gubernatorial candidate Gresham Barrett in which he gave Barrett an envelope of cashier's checks from local corporations linked to a former chamber board chairman, Dean and Barrett confirmed Thursday. There is no indication that Dean, president of the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, did anything illegal by delivering about \$84,000 in campaign contributions to Barrett."

Because you'd need an indication. Just passing \$84,000 from the corporate lobby to a political candidate, all by itself, without any indication of anything improper, is just the wind blowing through the palmettos, or the cherry blossoms.

I know I'll be back in Rome, Italy, someday, because the last time I was there I threw a coin over my shoulder into the Trevi Fountain. But the way to get back to Washington, D.C., as far as I can tell, is to dump a briefcase of cash from a congressional gallery. Are tourists informed of this? It could become a major attraction, particularly among those interested in whether money really can buy you love.

Senator John McCain was recently spotted raising funds with the same institution that had fought and largely defeated his supposed efforts to ban election bribery: the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. McCain's only comment was: "[I love the Chamber!](#)" And you'd have to, not to think this was ugly: it's the Chamber's [new website](#) to prevent the creation of a Consumer Financial Protection Agency, and I can't find an honest word on it.

Speaking of Karl Rove, he and his Republican buddies are [organizing](#) to raise and spend massive amounts of corporate money, and taking advice on how to do it from Democratic raisers of massive amounts of corporate money. Most of the money on both sides of this arms race will, of course, be devoted to hyping any differences that can be detected between the two sides. And while most of this activity has been legalized, those engaging in forms of bribery that remain outlawed will tend to [blend right in](#).

We've just seen a struggle over financial reform in Congress, in which the mega banks fielded [five lobbyists for every congress member](#) and our financial system stands largely unreformed.

The good news is that Comcast may merge with NBC, which should result in frequent prolonged outages for NBC. Also encouraging: Congress is again giving the Pentagon everything it's asked for, [plus all the stuff](#) it explicitly asked not to have. It turns out, in fact, that U.S. energy is also the worst value on earth, given the [costs of wars for oil](#) and the environmental costs. On the environmental side, we now have members of Congress arguing for both more offshore oil drilling and a public bailout to pick up the tab for cleaning up BP's latest oil spill. Ironically, BP's right to recklessly destroy our environment is based on the idea that BP is a person, but [if BP were a person](#) it would have long ago died in prison.

In other hopey changey developments, our government is trying to [privatize all public housing](#). The right to housing is not one that corporate persons have much concern for. And, if actual persons don't stop Captain Peace Prize, you can take this to the bank: Social Security will get [privatized](#) as well. It was labor opposition that prevented Bush from doing this, and we all know how likely labor is to oppose Democrats.

The other day, [Craig Barnes](#) pieced together a number of other cheerful developments, including these: coal mine owners ensuring the deaths of workers, oil corporations making certain our oceans are poisoned, mega banks apparently defrauding ratings agencies, Goldman Sachs defrauding investors, and this oldie but goodie from earlier this year:

"Five justices of the Supreme Court of the United States ruled in Citizens United in January, 2010, that corporations, as persons, have the constitutional right to spend unlimited amounts in political campaigns, at every level, including in state legislative and judicial races. Billions of corporate dollars will now therefore flow into TV ads, leaflets, sloganeering for the 'free market' and against 'socialism.' That 'socialism,' of course is the very government regulation that might have prevented the Massey mine disaster, the BP oil spill, and the Goldman derivatives scandals. But with the Supreme Court's ruling in Citizens United, corporations such as Massey, BP and Goldman will be authorized to invest in elections at every level to insure the future election of representatives and judges who will protect the unregulated market, or that is, defend corporate irresponsibility in opposition to the public good."

Of course, we now run candidates for public office who campaign on a platform of placing the corporate good, not the public good, above all else. Kentucky candidate for U.S. Senate Rand Paul says he's not a big fan of racial discrimination but would rather have it than deny corporations their right to engage in it. This is taken as a principled stand by millions of the very misinformed morons who are losing wealth, income, health, security, and control over their own lives to the advancement of the corporate good. And most U.S. politicians place the corporate good above all else most of the time. They just aren't as principled as Paul is.

Those putting the corporate good above the public good also include five of our nine Supreme Court justices, and soon perhaps six. That anyone is even debating the qualifications of Elena Kagan for the Supreme Court is rather disgusting, given her disqualifying [support for lawless imprisonment](#).

But Andrew Breitbart's position on Kagan is worth mocking for a minute. This is the guy who

paid someone to pretend he'd gone into ACORN offices dressed as a pimp, resulting in the destruction of the largest community organization in the United States. Breitbart's [argument](#) against Kagan is that she herself gave money to the congressional election campaign of John Bonifaz. I've worked with Bonifaz when I was at ACORN, at AfterDowningStreet.org, and now at [Free Speech for People](#). Bonifaz would make an excellent supreme court justice. Would Kagan? We're supposed to think we can't know, so let me repeat: she was willing to throw away habeas corpus despite its guarantee in our Constitution. Do you need to know something more? Jeff Clements [appreciates](#) her job of arguing the losing side in Citizens United, but that was her job, just as supporting lawless imprisonment was. Should we appreciate both? There are [reasons](#) to suspect she disagreed with her own losing argument. I appreciate her giving a campaign contribution to Bonifaz, but he is an alumnus of Harvard Law School and I expect she saw it as routine. It's difficult to imagine her having done so had Bonifaz been a candidate for some party other than the Democratic.

Among the states that have already [passed laws](#) pushing back slightly against the brave new Citizens United world are South Dakota, Iowa, home of mining murders West Virginia, and — of all places — Arizona, with many others in the works. Public sentiment against corporate control is widespread across the country. Resolutions calling for a remedy, including a Constitutional amendment, have been passed by state legislatures in California, Hawaii, Idaho, Kentucky, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Washington, and Oregon. Some of these states have begun [talking about](#) calling for a U.S. Constitutional convention, and some about holding new state constitutional conventions.

And what about Washington, D.C.? Well, last Monday a few thousand people marched and protested against lobbyists on K Street. The same media that can ignore a half million peace advocates and blow 1,500 teabaggers into an historical movement was perfectly capable of ignoring this effort. And the labor unions that organized it have zero interest in investing in progressive media or in opposing Democrats in elections even if they take their orders from the lobbyists being protested.

Congresswoman Donna Edwards's [amendment proposal](#) has 24 cosponsors, Senator Dodd's has [three](#), and others, including one [just introduced](#) by Kurt Schrader, have none.

Advancing in Congress, on the other hand, is the watered down agenda approved by the man elected to execute the will of Congress but serving as director of its activities. The DISCLOSE Act, sponsored by Congressman Chris Van Hollen and Senator Chuck Schumer, would require that corporations funding our indoctrination identify themselves rather than hiding behind front groups. The bill has just passed the House Administration Committee, upon which development President Obama released this misleading statement: "Today, the House Administration Committee took another important step toward putting in place critical protections to control the flood of special interest money into American elections." That depends on your definition of "control," because the flood would still be permitted. Excluded would be some foreign corporations. And the rest of the deluge would be properly labeled so we knew where it was coming from.

Jerry Ortiz y Pino, a [candidate for](#) lieutenant governor in New Mexico, has expressed the approach we ought to be taking as well as anyone:

"We are too late to prevent the end of democracy in the United States; it's already happened. Now the task is to recover it, a far more formidable challenge. How we allowed

our precious democratic enterprise to get hijacked and morphed into what we have today, a plutocracy masquerading as a democracy, can only be explained by our collective carelessness and inattention.

“We literally went asleep at the wheel while the enemies of democracy, the super-rich, stole our inheritance right from under us. So slick was that picking of our pockets that many (perhaps most) Americans still aren’t aware that we’ve been fleeced. But make no mistake: we have been taken to the cleaners, and the final confirming evidence of that con job is the recent mind-numbing Supreme Court decision averring that corporations are people.

“As for our political leaders, their woeful weakness under enemy fire could be a training manual for ‘How not to protect Democracy’. Those who haven’t surrendered completely and thrown-in with the plutocrats have been reduced to an ineffectual chorus of compromisers, intent on ‘making the best of a bad situation’. Pitifully few heroes have stood against the stealth conquest.”

Ortiz y Pino, like John Bonifaz, pushed hard and early for the necessary impeachment of George W. Bush. There are heroes, including the majority of the American public that polls found in support of that impeachment. They aren’t nearly as pitiful as our communications system that fails to tell you about them.

One way that you can make a difference is by raising awareness of the crisis we are in and solidifying support for fixing it at the local or state level. Whether Constitutional amendment(s) — denying personhood to corporations and speechhood to money — are passed through Congress and then ratified by the states, or created by a convention and then ratified, the movement that makes it happen will have to be driven at the state level.

So it’s excellent news that organizations, towns, cities, and states are passing resolutions in support of such an amendment. Here is a [model resolution](#) you can ask your local and state representatives to pass.

Here is [one that has](#) already been passed by the state legislatures in Hawaii and Oregon. Here are [more resolutions](#) from states including California and Washington. State legislators will have a hard time claiming this does not affect them, given the number of [state laws](#) that Citizens United puts at risk. Passing a resolution costs legislators nothing. But resolutions from all 50 states in support of a government of the people, by the people, and for the people could create a new birth of freedom.

Want some inspiration? Watch this [new video](#) of Jeffrey Clements and John Bonifaz. Then [invite them](#) and others from [FreeSpeechforPeople](#) to come speak in your state capital.

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