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So much for 'reform'

The so-called campaign finance reform bill passed by the lame-duck Ohio General Assembly last December, with strong support from corporate interests, deserved to be repealed. Unfortunately, the statewide grass-roots signature effort to force a repeal vote on this scandalous law fell short.

Almost no one opposed the law's central provision mandating greater disclosure of political campaign funding. Secret sources of political contributions have been a major problem at the state level for years. This should've been where the law started and ended.

Why many groups like ours opposed the law, however, had to do with all the additional anti-democratic "goodies." Two deserve special and resounding criticism.

First, the law quadrupled contribution limits to Ohio candidates from \$2,500 to \$10,000. By comparison, the contribution limit for U.S. presidential candidates is \$2,000. For most Ohioans experiencing financial challenges, this 400 percent increase in what an individual can politically donate is irrelevant. To the financial elite, however, it means an easier time buying access, if not favors. Only the politically naive would believe that the political voices of the wealthy won't now drown out all the more the political voices of Ohioans unable to make such obscenely large contributions.

Second, the law legalizes, for the first time in nearly a century, business corporations transferring corporate profits into certain political purposes, namely political ads. Was this provision really necessary? Were business corporations in Ohio before the law's passage unable to influence candidates for governor, too weak to communicate their needs to legislative candidates, and too inept to convey their wants to judicial candidates?

Corporations should have zero political rights, which was the case in Ohio for decades. By expanding the political rights of corporations, this law contracts the political rights of people.

The tactic of using enhanced disclosure of political contributions to shield these two antidemocratic provisions should have fooled no one. Yes, political donations are now more visible. The costs to democracy will, over time, become equally visible.

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