

# OHIO NOW TIMES

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Editor: Diane Dodge

## **Want Real Democracy? Abolish Corporate Personhood.** By: Greg Coleridge

Disenchantment of public officials spans the political spectrum. More people are frustrated that public officials, from their city councilperson to the President of the United States, don't do what they promise and don't represent them. If this is true, then who do public officials represent? The very wealthy? Absolutely. But also business corporations.

Corporations were created historically by the government via a license or charter to provide goods or services. As a creation of the state, they had no rights, only privileges. The State can revoke a corporate charter if it doesn't follow its terms. They were not equal to persons, but subordinate to them. They were not supposed to rule people. But, that's not how it is.

For the last 124 years, corporations have possessed constitutional rights that have empowered them to rule.

The US Supreme Court ruled 5-4 earlier this year to expand first amendment constitutional rights to business corporations. The Court decided in Citizens United vs Federal Elections Commission that business corporations didn't possess sufficient political influence, that the political "voices" of corporations weren't loud enough and that corporations need to have greater political power. Citizens United permits business corporations to take money directly from their treasuries and spend it on "independent" political educational campaigns to elect or unelect candidates.

Corporations are not human and possess no human traits. They have no inalienable rights. They shouldn't have constitutional rights.

The bizarre notion that corporations, nothing more than a pile of legal

documents, should possess the same constitutional rights, including the Bill of Rights protections, as people began in 1886 in Santa Clara vs. Southern Pacific Railroad when corporations were bestowed with 14th amendment equal protection rights.

This was the same constitutional amendment passed in 1868 to provide freed black slaves constitutional rights. Curiously, in 1874 when women argued before the Supreme Court in *Minor v. Happersett* that their right to vote could not be denied based on the 14th amendment, the Court rejected the argument stating the amendment only applied to black males.

"We the People" are supposed to be free, or sovereign. We're supposed to be in control of the government. Governments are not supposed to do anything without the people's consent. As corporations have gained the legal status of persons, they've accumulated rights and become rulers. They increasingly tell the government and We the People what to do.

It wasn't meant to be this way. A national and state movement has been launched to amend the constitution and abolish corporate personhood. [MovetoAmend.org](http://MovetoAmend.org) has collected over 80,000 signatures of people who are ready to join the modern day movement for self-governance by We the People.

What could change if corporate personhood was abolished? The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILFP) in a flyer "What Would it Mean to End Corporate Rule" lists: 1) Prohibit all political activity by corporations 2) Prevent corporate mergers and prohibit corporations from owning stock in other corporations 3) Inspect for environmental or health violations without a warrant or prior notice. 4) Revoke corporate charters by popular referendum. 5) Prohibit the erection of cell phone towers and chain stores from doing business in your town, county, and state. 6) Require labeling of genetically modified foods.

Constitutional amendments aren't easy. Ohio women throughout history know this. Women were pivotal in the abolitionist movement in helping runaway slaves escape to Canadian freedom through the more than 700 safe houses and "depots" across the state - thus paving the way for the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments. The National Women's Christian Temperance Union, founded in Cleveland in November 1874, eventually led to the 18th amendment prohibition of alcohol. The second National Women's Rights convention in Akron in 1851 helped pave the way for the 19th amendment and the right for women to vote.

Corporate Personhood is a disaster for democracy, people, communities and the planet as it has relegated human beings to subordinate status to the power and rights of corporations. We the People have not only the right but duty to abolish Corporate Personhood.

For information on or to become involved in the Ohio Move to Amend effort, email [gcoleridge@afsc.org](mailto:gcoleridge@afsc.org)