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## A Quest to End Spending Rules for Campaigns

By DAVID D. KIRKPATRICK

James Bopp Jr. likes to begin speeches by reading the First Amendment. He calls opponents, including President Obama, "socialists." He runs a national law practice out of a small office in Terre Haute, Ind., because he prefers the city's conservative culture.

And for most of the last 35 years, he has been a lonely Quixote tilting at the very idea of regulating political donations as an affront to free speech.

Not anymore. Mr. Bopp won his biggest victory last week when the Supreme Court ruled that corporations, unions and nonprofit groups have the right to spend as much as they want supporting or opposing the election of a candidate.

Mr. Bopp was not present in the courtroom. His client -- not for the first time -- replaced him with a less ideological and more experienced Washington lawyer when the case reached the justices.

But it was Mr. Bopp who had first advised the winning plaintiff, the conservative group Citizens United, about using its campaign-season film "Hillary: The Movie" as a deliberate test of the limits on corporate political spending. And he shepherded the case through appeals to the Supreme Court as part of a long-term legal strategy that he says he has just begun.

**"We had a 10-year plan to take all this down," he said in an interview. "And if we do it right, I think we can pretty well dismantle the entire regulatory regime that is called campaign finance law."**

"We have been awfully successful," he added, "and we are not done yet."

The Citizens United case "was really Jim's brainchild," said Richard L. Hasen, an expert on election law at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles.

**"He has manufactured these cases to present certain questions to the Supreme Court in a certain order and achieve a certain result," Mr. Hasen said. "He is a litigation machine."**

The same week the court issued its ruling, it agreed to hear Mr. Bopp's next appeal: seeking to prevent the public release of the names of people who signed a Washington State petition opposing same-sex marriage, on the ground that gay rights supporters might harass them.

For Mr. Bopp, it is a chance to chip away at some of the disclosure laws left intact by the Supreme Court's ruling in the Citizens United case.

Then there is his suit on behalf of the Republican National Committee, pending in the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, seeking to overturn some of the limits on direct corporate contributions to the political parties. When Mr. Bopp filed it a few years ago, many legal scholars considered the suit almost pointless because of Supreme Court precedents. But the court's opinion last week -- from a slightly different set of justices -- has cast it in a far more favorable light.

"If you cannot ban corporate spending on ads, how is it that you are allowed to ban corporate contributions to candidates?" asked Nathaniel Persily, a professor at Columbia Law School. "That is the next shoe to drop."

Mr. Bopp, for his part, said he had no complaints about being removed from the case before the Supreme Court, even if the lawyer who argued it, Theodore B. Olson, a solicitor general in the Bush administration, won with an approach Mr. Bopp originally left out. (It was Mr. Olson who decided to go after the ban on corporate spending; Mr. Bopp hoped to challenge disclosure rules, which the court upheld last week.)

"I understand that law is art," Mr. Bopp said. "Picasso, Van Gogh, Michelangelo -- they are all very different, but all create masterpieces."

Mr. Bopp also makes no apologies for his partisanship. A veteran member of the Republican National Committee, he is the leader of a movement to deny party support to any candidate who fails to affirm at least 8 of 10 principles, including opposition to "government-run health care," "amnesty" for illegal immigrants and "Obama's socialist agenda."