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Supreme Court got it wrong: Corporations are not human beings

As an aspiring candidate, [Barack Obama](#) was a formidable speaker, engaging personality and stellar campaigner, but his victory would not have come about were it not for the unprecedented outpouring of donations from individuals through PayPal and other previously untapped resources.

But, with the Supreme Court's recent ruling in Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission, citing that corporations should be treated the same as "natural persons," Americans can pretty much say good-bye to the concept of empowerment from small individual donors, businesses and organizations.

The clear irony is that corporations had been stuffing campaign reserves long before this ruling.

They do this largely through "bundling" of individual contributions and corporate PACs or political action committees formed by business, labor or other special interest groups to raise money and make contributions to political campaigns.

Yet, even PAC donations, which Obama took none of, can be traced to the original donor because of federal disclosure filing requirements.

And every contributor must be a U.S. citizen.

Now, under the Supreme Court's ruling, corporations can support candidates with virtually no limits.

Yes, our current president did receive corporate money during his campaign, but he also gained support from the average citizen in unprecedented ways.

Unsurprisingly, it was former President Bush's solicitor general, Ted Olson, who argued the case on behalf of Citizens United, a corporate group that helped fund a negative campaign against Hillary Clinton during the 2008 primary.

According to Tara Malloy, attorney with the Campaign Legal Center of Washington, D.C., corporations will now have more rights than people. She added that under present law, human individuals, as distinguished from hedge-fund billionaires, for example, who often operate through a variety of corporate vessels, may now give unlimited sums.

Only U.S. citizens can donate or influence campaigns, but under some views of the decision, a foreign government, if veiled behind a corporate treasury of a U.S. subsidiary, can put money

into a ballot battle.

"The danger of foreign loot loading into U.S. campaigns ... was the first concern raised by Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg, who asked about opening the door to 'mega-corporations' owned by foreign governments," writes Greg Palast, author of "The Best Democracy Money Can Buy."

"Hidden money funding, whether foreign or domestic, is the new venom that the court has injected into the system by its expansive decision in Citizens United."

Corporations are not human beings and should not be treated as such when it comes to deciding who is placed into public offices that are supposed to serve human citizens.

Corporations do not shed tears when they've lost a loved one because they couldn't afford health care, for example.

Generally, they do not think in terms of striving toward "personal" ambitions against societal, political and economical obstacles.

Sponsorships, notwithstanding, corporations do not write novels, plays or poetry, they do not attend Little League baseball or soccer games. They do not care for impaired family members on a limited income. They do not struggle with owning a small business or volunteer at a soup kitchen.

They, as an entity, don't go to jail, even when they have wronged countless innocent people.

They also have unimaginable ways to avoid paying taxes. And even though they finance and profit from war, they don't serve our country on the battlefield, in the usual sense.

Could there possibly be such a thing as corporate personhood?

Does this mean that the defense industry will be able to hand-pick a legislator who will bolster the defense budget, banks can pump advertising dollars into dissing a bank-reform candidate, or health-insurance companies can out-promote a single-payer advocate? So, why should they be allowed undue influence in our voting booths?

Will all our future elections be plagued by even more heavily financed Swift-boating, countless media advertisements and the like?

"It's not just un-Americans we need to fear, but the Polluter-Americans, Pharma-Americans, Bank-Americans and Hedge-Americans that could manipulate campaigns," writes Palast.

As conservative journalist/commentator David Brooks recently implied on PBS, big corporations like government subsidies and the ability to put smaller competitors out of business.

This Supreme Court decision implies that money can amount to free speech.

I can't think of any notion more threatening to American democracy than further allowing corporations to act in their own interests to the extraordinary detriment of the common citizen.

Leigh Donaldson is a Portland writer whose book, "The Written Song: The Antebellum African-American Press in the Northeast," is due for publication this year. He can be contacted at:

leighd@lycos.com