

Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (ESRA) Summary

The [Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment to the U.S. Constitution](#) is a tool to raise consciousness about the influence of money in our political system and a means to democratize both our political and economic systems so the needs of the people and planet are primary. Like the Equal Rights Amendment, the ESRA is a means by which to instigate conversations about the kind of world we want and how we might get there. We are aware this is a long-term effort and it begins with small steps, such as getting endorsements from local city and county councils, faith communities, social change organizations, and the like. We have sample resolutions that you can use for these efforts. You can read them [here](#). And if you want to get involved in these efforts, please email cat.zavis.

Why the ESRA?

Most of the proposals currently being floated to overturn Citizens United give Congress the authority to decide how much money they can take in campaign contributions. In December 2014, Congress raised the limit by 500%. Congress cannot be counted on to limit the amount of money they can receive from individuals or corporations because it is against their interests. Furthermore, even if such an Amendment passed (i.e., giving Congress the authority to regulate money in elections), we would have to mobilize resources every time there is a change in Congress to push for greater restrictions on funding or fight against efforts to overturn previous restrictions. Our Amendment calls for publicly funding of all state and federal elections—solving the problem once and for all.

Another way corporations exercise power over elected officials is by threatening to move their businesses out of communities and states that are not economically favorable to them. Simply limiting campaign contributions is therefore not enough. Our Amendment requires that all corporations with incomes over \$50 million a year have to receive a new corporate charter every 5 years and to obtain that charter they have to prove a satisfactory history of environmental and social responsibility to a jury/panel of ordinary citizens who can hear testimony from people throughout the world impacted by that corporations behavior. In addition, if a corporation closes its plant or business to avoid the consequences of the ESRA, it can be held liable for compensatory damages to the community.

Finally, our Amendment addresses the need for people to be educated about environmental sustainability, peace, nonviolence, civic engagement, empathy and compassion so as to build the foundation for change consciousness.

Short Summary:

1. Money is not speech. Corporations are not people. Require public funding of all national and state elections (prohibiting monies from any other source).
2. Corporations with incomes over \$50 million per year have to get a new corporate charter every 5 years, which would only be granted to those that could

prove a satisfactory history of environmental and social responsibility to a panel of ordinary citizens.

3. Environmental and peace education required at all grade levels.

Longer Explanation:

1. Require public funding of all state and national elections and ban all other monies (not only from corporations, but from political parties, non-profits, and individuals) – in short, a real Money out of Politics amendment. Declare that money is not speech and corporations are not people.

2. Require corporations with incomes above \$50 million/yr to get a new corporate charter once every five years which would only be granted to those that could prove a satisfactory history of environmental and social responsibility to a panel of ordinary citizens (after hearing testimony from people all around the world whose lives have been impacted by that corporation's products, services, advertising, treatment of workers and workers in firms to which the corporation sub-contracts, and environmentalists).

3. Require environmental and peace education (including teaching empathy, generosity, and environmental sustainability) for every grade level from kindergarten through graduate and professional schools.

4. Preventing corporations from moving their assets out of the places where they have been employing more than 500 people until they have compensated the communities they are leaving for the environmental, economic and/or social damage they are causing by moving those assets.

5. Overturning all parts of the US Constitution that are deemed by the Supreme Court to be in conflict with this amendment, but only to the extent that they are in conflict (so those parts are hereby modified to not be in conflict with this amendment, but in other respects are still in force).