

MEDIA ADVISORY



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Press inquiries contact:
American Judicature Society
Seth S. Andersen
800-626-4089, sandersen@ajs.org

Statement of Carole Wagner Vallianos, President, American Judicature Society Regarding U.S. Supreme Court Decision in *Citizens United v. FEC*

Des Moines, Iowa – Today’s decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* poses another challenge for states that are struggling to insulate their judiciaries from the corrosive effects of money, interest group pressure and partisan politics in judicial elections. While the Supreme Court’s decision in *Citizens United* upholds disclosure requirements for independent expenditures in campaigns, it will open the floodgates of corporate and union treasury spending – particularly in state high court elections, which have come to be dominated by third-party spending in recent election cycles.

Fortunately, a clear and proven alternative to politicized judicial election systems exists. Merit selection and retention systems, with strong judicial performance evaluation components, virtually eliminate the need for judges to raise campaign contributions while reducing opportunities for interest groups to exert disproportionate influence over the selection of judges. In the 32 states that currently use a form of merit selection to choose some or all of their judges, community-based nominating commissions with lawyer and non-lawyer members ensure that professional qualifications for judicial office are the most important criteria in the selection process – not the preferences of a small and unrepresentative group of corporate executives or union officials.

As it has for nearly a century, the American Judicature Society continues to offer models and advice on developing effective merit selection systems, along with supporting research and analysis, to states seeking alternatives to judicial elections. AJS is currently working with partner organizations in the Justice at Stake Campaign to promote the adoption and expansion of merit selection in all regions of the country. For more information on state judicial selection methods and issues, visit the AJS Judicial Selection in the States website at <http://www.judicialselection.us>.

The American Judicature Society joined an amicus brief in *Citizens United* filed by the Justice at Stake Campaign. Additional resources and information on *Citizens United* and related issues are available on AJS website <http://www.ajs.org> and the Justice at Stake Campaign website <http://www.justiceatstake.org>.

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Founded in 1913, The American Judicature Society is a nonpartisan organization with a national membership of judges, lawyers and other citizens interested in improving our nation’s courts and the administration of justice. The AJS mission is to ensure a fair, impartial, independent judiciary; improve the criminal justice process; educate the public; and build confidence in the justice system. For more information, please visit our website at <http://www.ajs.org>.