

# Money in Politics Lobby Kit



**COFFEE CAMPAIGN  
FOR FAIR ELECTIONS**

This guide contains an assortment of information to help you make your case for passing a number of reform bills. Note: There are far more actions list here than any single chapter could possibly execute. Chapter members are encouraged to read this document and decide which actions fit the needs and resources for their particular areas. The bills covered:

- **Fair Elections Now** ([in a separate document](#))
- **A Constitutional Amendment to reverse Citizens United**, which would ensure corporate money does not overwhelm our democracy and to clarify that Congress must have the ability to regulate spending that is designed to affect the outcome of political races and the legislative process.
- The **Shareholders Protection Act (SPA)**, a bill that would require corporations to attain shareholder approval on any political activity that is financed from their treasuries.
- The **Democracy is Strengthened by Casting Light on Spending in Elections Act (DISCLOSE) without the 500,000-member-org exemption**. Coffee Party members voted 66% in favor of supporting the bill in its original form, (only 15% thought it should be supported with the exemption).

## Local Strategy

All Coffee chapters are encouraged to find and make the best use of local resources. This includes local member skills and connections, events organized by other activist groups, political campaign rallies, civic forums, even Tea Party rallies. This is at the local chapter's discretion -- CP national only stipulates that **alliances with other organizations and groups should pertain to passing legislation, and are not endorsements of any group's broader scope**. It is entirely consistent with Coffee Party values if a chapter in one part of the country is working with members a faction of the Tea Party to build support for a Constitutional Amendment (to reverse Citizens United), while another chapter is working with MoveOn to lobby a member of Congress to sponsor Fair Elections.

One thing often forgotten in volunteer organizations: **Make your actions FUN**. Grassroots efforts run on shared passion. Get together for potluck dinners. Hold phone call parties. Invite speakers from other orgs. Mix a few "lightweight" things in with the heavy lifting.

Also, at your planning meetings, embrace new ideas with this response: "That sounds great. Now, what are you willing to do to put legs on this idea?" For any idea that comes with proposed action by its author, embrace it with, "Great – here's what I can do to help you make this happen."

**Here a list of CP's lobbying efforts on specific bills and proposals. They are listed in order of urgency. Chapter lobbying goals should center around the following items:**

- **Shareholder Protection** has 47 cosponsors in the House. So far, there is no Senate companion bill. This bill will continue to gain sponsors. Here is a strong rationale from someone who was inside the industry:
  - *"... shareholders are footing the bill for corporate political expenditures and deserve an opportunity to vote on the expenditures. The British have a model that we could emulate. In the U.K. managers propose a political budget to shareholders at the annual general meeting. The shareholders vote up or down on the budget. If the management wins the vote, they are free to spend the budget. If they spend without shareholder authorization, then the directors are personally liable to repay the company for the misused funds. The Shareholder Protection Act (H.R. 4790) contains both of these protections. It provides for both shareholder notice and consent. I urge you to support this legislation and to incorporate its language into any bill which seeks to address the problems caused by Citizens United."*

*Sincerely,*  
*R. Warren Langley*  
*President (ret), Pacific Stock Exchange*
- Several **Constitutional Amendments** have been proposed that would more precisely define that Constitutional Rights are for living, breathing humans, and artificial entities such as corporations are completely subject to the rule of law. See <http://movetoamend.org/democracy-amendments>. A Constitutional Amendment will be a huge undertaking, but the good news is that public polling indicates that there would be support for it. For now, activist organizations are discussing which amendment makes sense and has the best chance of passage.
- **Democracy Is Strengthened by Casting Light On Spending in Elections (DISCLOSE)** was voted down in late July, but may come back for a vote in September. It imposes new transparency requirements on political spending. It also prohibits contributions by corporations primarily owned by foreign governments or foreign shareholders. The House has already passed the measure, but only after tacking on an exclusion for organizations with more than 500,000-members. In the Coffee Party Summit Vote, 66% voted for supporting the measure without any exemptions. Only 15% of Coffee Party members thought it was still worth supporting the bill with the exemption. (Note: the Senate bill was refiled in late July and was assigned a new number – S.3268. For more information:  
[Common Cause](#)  
[Public Citizen](#)  
[OMB Watch](#)  
[OpenCongress - H.R.5175](#) /  
[OpenCongress - S.3295](#) \*\*  
[GovTrack - H.R.5175](#)  
[GovTrack S.3628](#) \*\*

**Here a list of general lobbying tools and ideas that are not related to any specific proposals:**

- Now thru Aug 20<sup>th</sup> – Chapters **prep** for "[Coffee with Congress](#)." For background information, a long list of great informational sites can be found in the Coffee Party [Democracy Toolbox](#):
- August 9th-Sept. 9th: Congressional Recess: **Coffee with Congress** events for local chapters.
- August 10: MoveOn is organizing nationwide rallies to deliver an urgent message to Washington: lead the fight against corporate corruption and stand with the Other 98% of us who don't have corporate lobbyists. They will publicly thank any members of Congress or candidates who have signed their pledge by then.
- After the Coffee with Congress meetings, members will report to [Stewart Snider](#), who will post information from participating chapters so all members can see the results. These reports will include the responses they get from their elected officials, media (photos & video), lists of events, letters to reps, letters to the editor, and anything else that could be shared with the CP nation.
- Call/Fax Your Congressman/Senator Day - Have members ask their reps to meet with our CP citizen lobbyists!
- In September, we will hold a Lobby Day in DC: CP citizen-lobbyists will deliver our members' messages to congressional offices on the Hill. This will largely be our letters to members of Congress about any of the initiatives we support, and happenings in our Coffee with Congress events.
- Coffee Party Letter Writing and Petition Campaign (to urge reps to vote, to encourage them to meet with our citizen lobbyists)
- Netroots Nation is holding a campaign where Senate leader Harry Reid is accepting questions from the public via Twitter & Facebook. Send out this opportunity to address the Senate leadership via all outlets - email, Facebook, Twitter - and encourage chapter and regional leaders to notify members of this action. <http://penniesfordemocracy.org/>

**The next two sections provide a starting list of organizations that are politically active in "Money in Politics" issues:**

**Reform organizations** that are conducting online campaigns:

- Public Citizen has a petition [www.citizen.org](http://www.citizen.org)
- Public Campaign [www.publiccampaign.org](http://www.publiccampaign.org)
- Change Congress [www.fixcongressfirst.org](http://www.fixcongressfirst.org)
- Common Cause [www.commoncause.org](http://www.commoncause.org)
- U.S. Public Interest Research Group [www.uspirg.org](http://www.uspirg.org) is primarily online, but occasionally organizes groups of students to canvas neighborhoods.

**Reform organizations** that host events and conduct physical campaigns:

- MoveOn [www.moveon.org](http://www.moveon.org) is participating in “The Other 98%” campaign, which cleverly refers to those of average means who want their government to listen more to them and less to the 2% who appear to have disproportionate influence in public policy.
- Tea Party [www.teapartypatriots.org](http://www.teapartypatriots.org) There are several “Tea Party” groups, this one appears to be the most open and active. A thoughtful approach could create some agreement on the erosion of democracy from special interests. Look for common grounds. Walk the walk.
- League of Women Voters [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org) is a national organization that has well-informed, long-serving members who know how and whom to lobby. They are highly respected, and can get the attention of lawmakers. They tend to be quite organized and purposeful, and are fiercely non-partisan and have a healthy respect for civil discourse. They are in favor of FENA and DISCLOSE. They often have speakers who could present information on local, state, or national issues. Active leagues host numerous educational and civic events.
- Democracy for America [www.democracyforamerica.com](http://www.democracyforamerica.com) has a solid online presence and activist groups across the country that hold regular meetings.
- The Federalist Society [www.fed-soc.org](http://www.fed-soc.org) is a “group of conservatives and libertarians interested in the current state of the legal order”. Thoughtful blog. Hosts a number of regional events.

**Other institutions** which may have members interested in “**Money in Politics**” reform:

- Local Chambers of Commerce
- County and state political party organizations
- Faith groups – particularly those that were active during the Health Care debate last year.
- The Unitarian Universalist Church – often quite active politically and willing to provide venues for events.
- Educational institutions. Colleges and graduate schools may have research on local politics that provides ideas for outreach. They may also be willing to take on new research ideas.
- Music and Arts communities are often concerned about political matters, and can bring an audience and press to events.
- Many cities have groups that have organized against hefty tax rebates to large businesses. Such groups have activists who have deep concerns about corporate influence on government.
- Vote integrity groups have studied the corporate takeover of our vote and are likely to see MiP as contributing to their concerns.

**Websites with information** on politicians and legislation

- Follow the Money [www.followthemoney.org](http://www.followthemoney.org) provides information on the money spend in state government. Useful for background information and for creating handouts that describe this problem.

- Project Vote Smart [www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org) provides biographical information, voting records, issue positions, interest group ratings, position papers, and campaign finance information on federal and state officeholders.
- Politifact.com [www.politifact.com](http://www.politifact.com) analyzes statements from well-known public voices and analyzes them for accuracy. They will provide background and context on many controversial statements -- an important service for anyone who values accuracy. This is investigative journalism at its finest. They also accept suggestions from anyone who has heard a public figure make a strong statement.
- The Brennan Center [www.brennancenter.org](http://www.brennancenter.org) is a non-partisan public policy and law institute that focuses on the fundamental issues of democracy and justice. It has a well-earned reputation for producing useful background information and effective language on political matters.

**Messaging:** The Coffee Party is a national organization with a mission to return America to public and civil discourse. It creates a number of national campaigns (on-the-ground as well as online) in which local chapters and members may choose to participate. Chapters make their own decisions about how to recruit members and what issues they support. New Coffee Party members are encouraged to start their own group if they see a need in their communities. Here are some talking points to introduce yourself and the Coffee Party:

To individuals: "Hi, I'm \_\_\_\_\_. I'm a member of the Coffee Party of (city) and am here to meet people and to advocate for (legislation). The Coffee Party is always looking for new members to join our discussion groups." If there is interest, continue: "Our members are collaborating both in person and online to support our democratically-chosen legislative priorities. We want to build our membership as well as build working relationships with other organizations when it serves the purpose of strengthening our voice in government. The Coffee Party is now focusing on issues that deal with money in politics such as FENA, DISCLOSE, SPA, and a Constitutional Amendment to reverse *Citizens United v. FEC*."

To elected officials and candidates: "Hi, I'm \_\_\_\_\_. I'm a member of the Coffee Party of (city) and am here to discuss (legislation). The Coffee Party is growing a team of citizen-lobbyists that are focusing on our democratically-selected issues that deal with money in politics. This includes FENA, DISCLOSE, SPA, and a Constitutional Amendment to reverse *Citizens United v. FEC*. I'd like to know where you stand on \_\_\_\_\_. I'm advocating for all these issues because I believe they are essential to democracy."

To members of other organizations: "Hi, I'm \_\_\_\_\_. I'm a member of the Coffee Party of (city) and am here to discuss (legislation or issue). We are looking to build working relationships with other activist groups when it serves the purpose of strengthening our voice in government. We are growing a team of citizen-lobbyists here in (city) that is focusing on our democratically-selected issues that deal with money in politics, such as Fair Elections, DISCLOSE, SPA, and a Constitutional Amendment to reverse *Citizens United v. FEC*.. Could we talk about how our local groups might best work together?"