



photo: Backbone Campaign

Move to Amend

The Campaign for Constitutional Change

by Jim Tarbell

Come ye, come ye,
from far and wide.
The time has arrived to
take away all court-granted
corporate rights. Over
fifty grassroots assemblies

of pro-democracy citizens have allied together to accomplish this task under the Campaign to Legalize Democracy (CLD) and its initial project, Move to Amend (MTA). Their efforts are aimed at transforming our Constitution from a document used to protect the power and wealth-hoarding of the elite into a manifesto strengthening the rights of citizens and communities.

Their website, www.MoveToAmend.org, initiates a bold project to confront the hostile takeover of American democracy by corporate America. Its allied groups represent a diverse alliance of geographic, racial and economic communities.

It is a movement that looks beyond the tragedy of the Supreme Court decision against the Federal Election Commission. However, it uses the wrong done on 1/21/2010 to coalesce a grand coming together of righteous citizens determined to take back their communities and their planet. As a starting point, MTA is collecting signatures on a petition for a

comprehensive change to the US Constitution that:

- Firmly establishes that money is not speech, and that human beings, not corporations, are the only persons entitled to constitutional rights;
- Guarantees American citizens the right to vote and participate, and have their votes and participation count; and
- Protects local communities, their economies, and democracies against illegitimate "preemption" actions by global, national, and state governments.

To accomplish these goals, CLD will not follow the typical amendment process of depending on Congress to begin the effort

by passing an amendment with a 2/3 majority. Instead, MTA will orchestrate a grassroots, state-led initiative to convene a national constitutional convention. At least two-thirds of the states will need to call for a national constitutional convention in any number of ways including legislative action and public initiative. Three-quarters of the states will then have to approve the convention results for the amendments to become law. MTA is determined to make sure that the three objectives outlined above are included in the final wording.

Launched on 1/21/10, MTA has been spread by internet, broadcast and print media across the country. It started in the *Washington Post* and spread to small-town papers like the *Eureka Times Standard* in California and the *Lincoln Journal* in Massachusetts. MTA organizer Ben Manski was quoted in the *Grand Junction Colorado Sentinel* saying, "This ruling was not about the First Amendment, it was about the entire Bill of Rights," which led the columnist to finish his piece with "Let the revolution begin."

Over 70,000 people have joined this revolution by signing the petition. Nine thousand fans have signed onto the Move to Amend Facebook page.

Beyond all this media and cyber outreach, MTA is hitting the streets. On February 16, a coalition of democracy reform groups in coordination with MTA organized a "March to Overrule the Court" at the Wisconsin State Capitol. Hundreds of people showed up to join the charge. Addressing the gathering, Lisa Graves assured the crowd that "together, we can change the direction of this country and we can do it if we unite across the country." You can see a video of the rally at www.thealliancefordemocracy.org

Check out "Upcoming Events" on the Move To Amend website for presentations and demonstrations on this issue across the country. Of particular interest will be a Move To Amend presence at the US Social Forum in Detroit in June and at the National Lawyer's Guild "Law for the People" convention in New Orleans in September.

Meanwhile, you can get to work in your community with activities listed in the Take Action section of the website. It empowers citizens with ideas and tools for educating, mobilizing and carrying the message about changing our Constitution to all Americans. It is time to take control of our democracy and our future.

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A People's Convention

Another approach is being taken by the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund (CELDF). On February 20, citizens from more than a dozen Pennsylvania counties met in Chambersburg, PA to initiate plans to convene a Pennsylvania People's Constitutional Convention of delegates from municipalities across the state to rewrite the Constitution to preserve the right of local, self-governance in the face of the corporate minority's imposition of "political, legal and economic systems that endanger our human and natural communities." This comes after more than a dozen communities over the past few years, assisted by CELDF, adopted local self-governing ordinances to challenge corporate and state authority to preempt local decision-making. In an attempt to undo this self-governance, the state and corporations often attempted to use the courts to sue these communities into submission. As Ben Price, CELDF Projects Director stated: "In January 2008, attorney general Tom Corbett's office declared in Commonwealth Court that 'there is no inalienable right to local self-government.' Pennsylvanians overwhelmingly think he is wrong, and it's time for our Constitution to reflect the will of the people." See www.celdf.org