

Ending Corporate Rule Begins at the Grassroots

by Jim Tarbell

Move to Amend (MTA) came together as the impending Supreme Court Citizens United decision portended a tsunami of corporate money and power overrunning our elections. With Congress evidently bought-off, MTA decided to begin the monumental effort of amending the US Constitution at the grassroots.

In Mendocino County, on the Northern California Coast, our local AfD group initiated an educational campaign aimed at getting the four city councils in the county to pass resolutions supporting a US Constitutional amendment to end illegitimate, court-granted corporate rights. From there we will move on to the county and the state to either get legislative resolutions or pass popular referendums supporting this effort.

We started with David Cobb barnstorming the county for Move to Amend, and then got down to the community level, presenting a workshop called "End Environmental Destruction, War, and Political Corruption by Eliminating Corporate Rule" at local festivals and schools.

Once faced with the task of approaching the city councils, however, we had to address how corporate personhood restricts city budgets and annihilates local control. We put together a brochure on the local impacts of corporate personhood and put a notice in the paper calling for volunteers to address the Fort Bragg City Council. Much to our delight, our first meeting collected an unlikely cross-section of the community—people who had never been political, but who were determined to end illegitimate corporate rights that were meant for humans.

With help from allied city councillors, we created a strategy and list of locally relevant topics that different people could speak about in front of the

City Council. The impacts of corporate power on self-governance, labelling, local health and environmental concerns, city budgets and planning headed the list.

In a series of pre-rehearsed, three-minute speeches during the public comment section of a January, 2011 City Council meeting, twelve of our volunteers—several of whom felt they could never address the City Council—made a spectacular presentation. The mayor said it was the most informed presentation he had ever seen at the City Council and it swayed him to support the cause. The Fort Bragg Resolution eventually garnered a 4-0 vote. Several of the councillors had said that they would only support resolutions that directly impacted city business and after the presentation, they were convinced that it was. You can see a video of the presentations at <http://blip.tv/file/get/Alliancefd-PreservingSelfGovernment486.mov>

Now we are moving to the other cities in Mendocino County. We met with a group of concerned citizens in Ukiah, the county seat, who are determined to carry the issue forward to their city council. We are happy to help other communities across the country succeed in the same sort of campaign. We can provide you with the brochure we created, the speeches we made and the myriad letters to the editor we wrote. Contact tw@mcn.org or go to the www.MovetoAmend.org for lots of helpful information.



Corporate pirate entices crowd with Big Money in campaign to get the County of Mendocino and its four cities to support a resolution banning corporate personhood. photo: Frank Hartzell



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