

Money Talks: Limits on Individual Political Donations *by Holden Temple*

Monetary contributions to political campaigns should be treated as speech, and as such contributions by individuals should be less limited, though corporations and unions should have much harsher regulation. In *Buckley v. Valeo*, the Supreme Court determined that political donations are a form of speech, and as such are protected under the first amendment. In *McCutcheon v. FEC*, the Court determined that the total amount that an individual can donate cannot be limited, but upheld individual donation limits to specific candidates.

The rights of individuals to support their views through political donations has been consistently defended by the court, but I believe could be expanded further still. The imposition of donation limits prevents extraordinarily wealthy individuals from donating large amounts of money, giving them a greater effect on the electoral process. While limiting donations is necessary, I believe that the amount that can be donated to individual candidates should be increased. If money can be considered speech, then it follows that increasing the amount that an individual can give allows for greater expression. Similarly, donation limits should be increased every election to account for inflation. The cap has been raised from \$2700 to \$2900 since 2014, but certainly not enough to account for inflation of 20% since its advent.

Donations from corporations and unions, unlike those of individual voters, should be more heavily regulated. While legal entities have rights, they should be kept from exercising undue influence over elections in the same manner that individuals are. Voters within the organizations already have avenues open to them to donate, so there is little need to give them more of a say thanks to their organization's work.

I believe that the League of Women Voters should advocate for greater individual freedom and further regulation for organizations donating to campaigns by raising awareness of the issue with voters. Incorporating the issue of donation limits more heavily into the league's goals and messaging to increase voter concern would be an important step towards solving the issue.

Citations

“Buckley v. Valeo.” *FEC.gov*,
<https://www.fec.gov/legal-resources/court-cases/buckley-v-valeo/>.

“Contribution Limits.” *FEC.gov*,
<https://www.fec.gov/help-candidates-and-committees/candidate-taking-receipts/contribution-limits/>.

“McCutcheon, Et Al. v. FEC.” *FEC.gov*,
<https://www.fec.gov/legal-resources/court-cases/mccutcheon-et-al-v-fec/>.