

SB-311

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 3:53:46 PM

Testimony for JDC on 1/30/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael EKM Olderr	Individual	Comments	In Person

Comments:

Citizens United's damage to our country and our state cannot be understated. Time and time again, that ruling has undermined policy-making and real change in this country. It shifted the focus of elected officials from their constituents to special interests, which has led to the Oligarchs who now whisper in our president's ears. It has eliminated trust in our democracy and the value of our institution and created an air of legal bribery. So, I support this bill, but I also want to ensure it lasts and is effective. So, I have some concerns about the bill's current language.

For instance, the wording 'to influence elections' could be less broad. This could mean spending money on someone's campaign. However, would this wording affect non-profit voting advocacy groups like the ACLU, RideShare2Vote, Vote-Prochoice, Progressive Turnout Product, or Resistbot?

In a worst-case scenario, could an interpretation of this amendment be used to persecute supporters of a grassroots organization instead of the millions spent by conglomerates?

Might I suggest perhaps a cap on how much money could be sent to one person's campaign or PAC? Australia recently proposed a limit of \$20,000 for a single candidate. Something to consider going forward in this session.

To be clear, I absolutely support this bill. But I want to ensure no hiccups or unforeseen consequences that could lead to its death in committee or abuse once it becomes law. This could transform how our elections in this state are run, and I don't want to see our democracy fall anymore than it already has.

SB-311

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 11:18:49 AM

Testimony for JDC on 1/30/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ted Bohlen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT!

SB-311

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 10:45:42 AM

Testimony for JDC on 1/30/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Victor K. Ramos	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I OPPOSE this bill. As mentioned in this bill, the United States Supreme Court has already ruled. Therefore, any justification to propose a change (ammend) to our State of Hawaii Constitution must be more than just a cermonial gesture.

SB-311

Submitted on: 1/27/2025 1:02:35 PM

Testimony for JDC on 1/30/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrew Crossland	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I STRONGLY OPPOSE this Bill to curtail freedom of speech which is enshrined in the First Amendment of the US Constitution. I urge all members of the Committee to **VOTE NO** on this Bill.

SB-311

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 12:07:55 PM

Testimony for JDC on 1/30/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stephen Munkelt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this proposal to limit the effects of the *Citizens united* decision of the US Supreme Court. It is essential for the states to do what they can to return full control of the election and voting process to persons, rather than corporations. Although SB 311 could not have any immediate effect on federal elections, it may well play a role in state political contests, and return some measure of power to the people.

SB-311

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 5:23:56 PM

Testimony for JDC on 1/30/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
B.A. McClintock	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this important bill. Mahalo.

SB-311

Submitted on: 1/28/2025 7:49:16 PM

Testimony for JDC on 1/30/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nanea Lo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Nanea Lo, and I am writing in strong support of SB 311, which rightfully asserts that free speech does not equate to unlimited spending to influence elections.

I sit on the Sierra Club of Hawai‘i’s Executive Commission, serve as a board member for the Hawai‘i Workers Center, and am a Kanaka Maoli, a lineal descendant of the Hawaiian Kingdom. In my work advocating for workers’ rights, environmental justice, and Indigenous sovereignty, I have seen firsthand how big money in politics silences community voices and skews policymaking in favor of wealthy special interests.

The ability to participate in democracy should not be determined by who has the deepest pockets. When corporations and PACs pour massive sums into elections, it drowns out the voices of everyday people and erodes trust in our government. SB 311 is a crucial step toward restoring fairness and integrity to our electoral process by reaffirming that money is not speech and should not buy political influence.

I urge you to pass SB 311 to help ensure that Hawaii’s democracy is shaped by the voices of its people, not just those with financial power.

Me ke aloha ‘āina,

Nanea Lo**Mō‘ili‘ili, HI 96826****Sierra Club of Hawai‘i Executive Commission Member****Board Member, Hawai‘i Workers Center****Kanaka Maoli / Lineal Descendant of the Hawaiian Kingdom**

SB-311

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 1:36:35 AM

Testimony for JDC on 1/30/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Kuzmier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I am writing in strong support of this amendment to our state constitution. I really would like to get back into the idea of one vote for one person regardless of financial status and an amendment stating that codifies free speech as not being contingent on unlimited campaign spending is absolutely necessary for a healthy democracy. Mahalo.

SB-311

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 9:08:44 AM

Testimony for JDC on 1/30/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Chiwa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Senator Rhoads and Members of the Committee on Judiciary.

Please support SB311.

Mahalo.

Jennifer Chiwa

Makiki



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Thursday, January 30, 2025
Senate Committee on Judiciary

LATE

Senate Bill 311 Proposing an Amendment to the Hawaii State Constitution Regarding the
Freedom of Speech
Testifying In Strong Support

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard Committee:

Perhaps more than any other decision handed down by the U.S. Supreme Court in my lifetime, their ruling on *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* can arguably be pointed to as the beginning of an accelerated unravelling of basic democratic principles and systems in our country.

We are becoming an oligarchy. A terrifying drift that has been accelerated by the Supreme Court's ruling on *Citizens United*.

The notion that money is speech and that "corporations are people" are equally offensive and maddening. Corporations don't breathe. They don't feel pain, don't need sleep nor sustenance. They have no need for health care and, perhaps most importantly, corporations do not vote.

Yet their "voice" drowns out those of ordinary Americans who are actually people. Real people who have no money for campaign contributions or campaign advertising. When members of congress need to at least a couple million dollars a year to run a competitive campaign for reelection, its no wonder that far too many of them pander both to their constituents who can vote and the corporations who bankroll them.

As a result, our election system is broken. Completely broken. While the passage of a U.S. Constitutional amendment on this issue may be a long way off, it is nonetheless desperately needed to correct the horrific imbalance of power that exists in our election and governmental systems.

This proposed constitutional amendment may do little to address these critically important issues, but can provide an opportunity for Hawaii to lead the charge on rolling back the apocalyptic consequences that have resulted from the seemingly nonsensical ruling on *Citizens United*.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

LATE

SB-311

Submitted on: 1/29/2025 8:50:42 PM

Testimony for JDC on 1/30/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Patricia Blair	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE ON PRISONS

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LATE

Today's Inmate; Tomorrow's Neighbor



COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair

Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

Tuesday, January 28, 2025

9:15 AM

Room 016 & VIDEOCONFERENCE

STRONG SUPPORT FOR SB 311 - CON AM - MONEY IS NOT FREE SPEECH

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard and Members of the Committee!

My name is Kat Brady and I am the Coordinator of Community Alliance on Prisons, a community initiative promoting smart justice policies in Hawai'i for more than two decades. This testimony is respectfully offered on behalf of the 3,717 Hawai'i individuals living behind bars¹ and under the "care and custody" of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation on January 20, 2025. We are always mindful that 928 of Hawai'i's imprisoned male population are serving their sentences abroad -- thousands of miles away from their loved ones, their homes and, for the disproportionate number of incarcerated Kanaka Maoli, far, far from their ancestral lands.

Community Alliance on Prisons appreciates this opportunity to strongly support SB 311 that proposes an amendment to the Hawai'i State Constitution to provide that freedom of speech protected under the Hawai'i State Constitution does not include the expenditure of money to influence elections.

Citizens United has certainly done a lot of damage to democracy, where one person; one vote had been guaranteed. Sadly these days, national elections are trumped (pun intended) by money. The result has been robber barons taking the reins

¹ DCR Weekly Population Report, January 20, 2025

<https://dcr.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Pop-Reports-Weekly-2025-01-20.pdf>
Citizensunnn

of the federal government to further their own bottom lines at the expense of the hard-working people of America.

This bill is a constitutional amendment that will go onto the ballot on which the public can decide. It is important that Hawai'i's people decide if they want to be ruled by billionaires or if they support democracy where every voice matters.

This last federal election has shown what happens when we put democracy aside and let the elite decide what is best for the rest of us.

Community Alliance on Prisons respectfully asks the committee to pass this measure that will let the people decide who will govern by putting this on the ballot in 2026. Mahalo nui!