

Fowler Tribune

Another Supreme Court Decision Favors Big Spenders

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By Stephanie Carroll Carson
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The 5-to-4 ruling in *McCutcheon v. the Federal Election Commission* means instead of a total of \$123,000, a single donor who gives to all Congressional candidates and one-third of Senate candidates in an election cycle can give as much as \$3.5 million.

Clare Smith-Larson, a retiree, worries that those contributions will drown out voices of voters like hers.

"And it's been made very clear by a number of our senators that when you do campaign finance soliciting for donations, that the person who rises to the top of the list is the person who gives the most money," she points out.

There are 12 states and the District of Columbia that passed a law that was similar to the one struck down by the Supreme Court.

Groups such as the Cato Institute applauded the ruling, which says restricting the total amount a donor can give violates the donor's First Amendment rights and doesn't prevent corruption.

But Paul Ryan, senior counsel with the Campaign Legal Center says the *McCutcheon* ruling, combined with the *Citizens United* ruling of 2010, opens the floodgates wider to give the wealthy more influence over politicians.

However, he does see a small silver lining.

"The court did in fact leave the door open for more narrowly tailored corruption-preventing policies that Congress might pass, and that state legislatures and city councils across the country could certainly pursue," he says.

Marge Baker, vice president of People for the American Way, says the McCutcheon decision, which she sees as a major threat to democracy, is bound to generate a wide range of responses.

"From amending the Constitution to small-donor public financing proposals," she says.

Other critics of the decision say the Court is ignoring previous laws passed by Congress, past presidents' decisions to sign those laws and even the Court's own precedents.