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Two Questions about the Path to a Constitutional Amendment

Yesterday, I called for a Constitutional amendment that would restore public trust in our government, and I asked everyone to join this effort through my organization, [Change-congress.org](#).

The response has been extraordinary -- but many people, for good reason, have questions about how an amendment could happen and about what that amendment should be.

First: What should that amendment be?

There are many now calling for an amendment to overrule last week's Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United* that gave corporations, unions, and special interests unprecedented power to control our electoral process. But in my view, these calls are missing an important opportunity. It is not enough for us to get back to the world we had the day before the decision came down; that world was already corrupted by a Congress dependent upon special interest funding. Our Framers wanted a Congress dependent not upon foreign powers, or upon the President, or upon anything else save upon the People. Yet that is not our Congress today.

Amending the Constitution is a profound endeavor, and drafting the text that we would put before the American people for their consideration can't be done by a single person or in a single week. But our shared objective must be an amendment that gives Congress the power to restore its independence, and I am working closely with others now to help craft exactly that amendment.

Second: How would this amendment get enacted?

Our Constitution allows itself to be amended in two ways: through Congress, or through a Constitutional Convention. Neither is easy, but both are possible -- when a movement of organized, dedicated people comes together to insist on a change to their government.

I don't believe that now is the moment to close doors or limit options. Both paths have their advantages and their challenges, and there will come a time to assess the risks of each and commit to one. But what we need to do first -- loudly, tirelessly, and with the firmness of our convictions -- is persuade America of two very simple facts: that this reform is necessary, and that this reform is possible if we do our work correctly.

Yesterday, as the President in his State of the Union address was affirming his commitment to legislation that would curb the influence of special interests, I was giving a speech of my own.

I was invited to give a speech to the Cato Institute, a prominent conservative think tank made up of the kind of people you might not think I'd agree with very often. I told them what I often say to my conservative friends and colleagues: that policies like heavy regulation and the complicated tax code -- so many of the things that millions

and millions of people dislike about the laws of this country -- are the product of special-interest intervention into the legislative process. There's only going to be more of that if we don't do something about our system -- just as there will only be more frustration on progressive issues like health care and climate change.

What I found was a group that, nearly universally, saw the same problems I did. Though we disagreed about the substantive policies each of us would pursue, there was a shared view, at least among many, about what blocked those substantive policies. There was agreement that 20 years of conservative Presidents in the last 29 did not produce less government or simpler taxes, and that's not because these conservatives were fake. It is because of the system they were facing -- a system that keeps the status quo in place.

I hope you'll watch my presentation to Cato, and share it with someone you know -- someone whose politics differ from your own:

<http://action.change-congress.org/CATO>

And challenge them as I have, because we agree about the problems; now we need to agree about the solution. It is not enough for us to talk to those we agree with -- we need to build an understanding much broader than that.

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