

Supremes Could Decide Sky's the Limit for Campaign Donations

WASHINGTON - Another major Supreme Court decision on campaign finance could come as early as next week. In *McCutcheon v. Federal Elections Commission*, Alabama businessman Shaun McCutcheon said his First Amendment rights are violated when he cannot give a \$2,600 donation to as many parties and candidates for federal office as he pleases. Many groups working to get money out of politics hope the high court rules against McCutcheon.

Others, such as Republican Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and the libertarian Cato Institute, favor an end to all restrictions on political donations.

Trevor Burrus is a research fellow with the Cato Center for Constitutional Studies. He explained Cato's position on the issue.

"I do not think the danger of protecting the voice of the little guy is something the federal government, or any government, should be involved in. It's not a First Amendment concern that there are people out there who speak louder than other people and have more influence," Burrus said.

He contended that all of the time that politicians must devote to fundraising keeps them from doing their job. Therefore, he would like to see an end to all limits on donations to candidates, parties and political action committees, he said.

Efficient as it might be for a very few donors to fund much larger portions of campaigns, Emma Boorboor, democracy associate, U.S. Public Interest Research Group (USPIRG), said the current overall limit is "plenty" already - in fact, it is almost double the median family income.

"Absent this limit, one wealthy donor would be permitted to contribute more than \$3.5 million to a single party's candidates and party committees in one election cycle," Boorboor warned.

Support is building to keep limits in place, she said, from labor, faith, environmental and other groups.

"The more that special interests and corporations are able to spend money to influence the outcome of elections, the harder it's going to be to make progress on the issues that people really care about," Boorboor said.

These groups also would like to see the Supreme Court's 2010 decision in *Citizens United*

overturned. That ruling said corporations and unions are "people" under the law, and therefore money they spend on elections is a form of protected free speech.