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## Health Care Arena

An ongoing discussion on the health care debate

Jan. 22, 2010

Driving the Conversation:

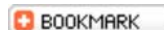
Arena Ref: [Fred Barbash](#)

### **The road ahead for the White House? Are the Clinton and Reagan lessons useful for Obama?**

### **Will *Citizens United* alter American campaigns and if so, how?**

On the Clinton example see [this piece](#) by John Harris. On Reagan, check out [Lou Cannon](#).

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#### **Roger Pilon**

Vice President for Legal Affairs, Cato Institute :

Will *Citizens United* alter American campaigns? Probably -- and for the good. Corporations, unions, and their officers will no longer fear criminal prosecution if they run afoul of inscrutable prohibitions on independent political campaign expenditures that not even FEC commissioners understand. There will be more political speech as a result, and more perspectives on the issues of the day. That speech will come from all sides -- after all, George Soros and Rupert Murdoch are not likely to be saying the same things, and with restraints prior to elections now lifted, differences like those will doubtless be reflected in great variety in the speech that comes from the rest of corporate and union America. And most important, the core function of the First Amendment, the protection of political speech, has been restored in important, if not in all, respects.

But other, more sinister, results may also flow from yesterday's decision. President Obama's

new populism surfaced immediately: He called the decision "a major victory for big oil, Wall Street banks, health insurance companies," and other "special interests." And **The New York Times**, in an all but unhinged editorial, pronounced that "with a single, disastrous 5-to-4 ruling, the Supreme Court has thrust politics back to the robber-baron era of the 19th century." Claiming that the decision "strikes at the heart of democracy," the Times tells us that "Congress must act immediately to limit the damage of this radical decision." How? By enacting "a law requiring publicly traded corporations to get the approval of their shareholders before spending on political campaigns." So much for corporate internal-governance rights. And get this: "Congress should repair the presidential public finance system and create another one for Congressional elections to help ordinary Americans contribute to campaigns." As if ordinary Americans could not contribute to campaigns without such congressional assistance. Concerning the "presidential public finance system," it's been in place for years -- you can check off a contribution when you pay your taxes. That fewer and fewer Americans are choosing to contribute through this "public" financing system speaks volumes, of course. And it tells us too why *Citizens United* has brought forth such rage among the decision's opponents: It's a major setback to their larger agenda. You see, the complex federal campaign finance system that has grown steadily -- until yesterday -- was never meant to be the final word. It was only a way station to public campaign financing. Once there, at that ultimate end, political speech in the form of campaign contributions would rest safely in incorruptible public hands -- save, of course, for those contributions that take the form of editorials coming from such corporate giants as The New York Times, which the First Amendment would continue to protect. Now there is a vision that warms the soul of the Great Gray Lady.

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Citizens United case: A "small revolution" in campaign finance? Plus, more on Mass: Do they get it?</b>	Jan. 21, 2010
<b>The message from MassachusettsWhat now for the Democratic agenda?</b>	Jan. 19, 2010
<b>Open Mic Massachusetts</b>	Jan. 15, 2010
<b>The 2010 race: a Republican House-real shot, long shot or no shot?</b>	Jan. 14, 2010
<b>Has Obama changed the way Washington works? Bonus babies: Are big banker bonuses "ridiculous and offensive," (as Christina Romer says)? What, if anything, should be done about them? Massachusetts: Does the the closer-than-anyone-expected race jeopardize the Democratic agenda?</b>	Jan. 13, 2010
<b>Dear Harold (Ford) Mass. Senate: Is a close call a victory for the GOP? "Game Change": Lessons of a much-hyped book</b>	Jan. 12, 2010