

Citizens United Allows Foreigners to Buy U.S. Elected Officials

by Julian Sereno

Talk about the law of unintended consequences. The Supreme Court's 2010 Citizens United decision allows corporations, labor unions and various other institutions to spend unlimited money on political campaigns. The winning argument, presented by the Conservative plaintiffs, was that limits on donations violated their First Amendment rights under the Free Speech clause of the U.S. Constitution. Of course, the Supremes had already ruled that corporations, labor unions and other institutions have the same Constitutional rights as human beings. However the Supremes forbade Political Action Committees funded from this raging revenue torrent from coordinating with candidate campaigns. Ha!

At the time I thought it was legalizing bribery, nothing less. But it turned out much worse. Donors can remain anonymous, so there is no

telling those paying the bribes. That means wealthy citizens of the world can buy influence in U.S. elections, everybody from Vlado Putin and his oligarchs to Crown Prince Salman of Saudi Arabia and everyone in between. Foreign money is forbidden in U.S. elections. Ha! Ha! Ha!

The reason is that non-profits do not have to disclose the names of their donors. While these non-profits are not supposed to engage in partisan politics, they can have an "educational" mission that does exactly that.

How does it work? Here is a real world example. The National Rifle Association is a non-profit, due to its educational mission. Nonetheless it electioneers all the time — endorsing and denouncing various candidates. In the 2016 election, the National Rifle Association adored Donald Trump and reviled Hillary Clinton. It and its lobbying arm donated \$30

million to the Trump campaign.

The Russians also supported Trump and opposed Hillary. So they gave money to the National Rifle Association, which had developed a close relationship with one of Putin's oligarch buddies, Alexander Torshin, over the past six years. What the NRA did is under investigation, but it went something like this. They used the Russian money in their educational mission, which freed up money from domestic sources for electioneering. Money is fungible.

How does all this money buy influence? In 2014, winning Senate candidates had to raise an average of \$3,300 a day, or \$7.27 million over a six year term; for the House of Representatives, it was \$1,800 a day, or \$3.14 million over a two year term.

Getting elected to national office means hustling money; that's why the high rollers

own so many of our elected officials. Their payoff comes in the form things like the recent "tax reform" which benefits them greatly but adds another trillion dollars to the national credit card, which the rest of us, and our children and grand children, will be paying off.

The old saw, that money is the mother's milk of politics, is true, and no one can keep it out. But it is possible to end the anonymity of super rich donors.

The Supremes could and should do it.

I can't imagine any of the majority who ruled in favor of Citizens United realized they were allowing the Russians to buy the National Rifle Association.

It's sorry enough that our elected officials are for sale. It's scary that the Russians are buying them up.

Julian Sereno is editor and publisher of Chatham County Line

Consequences

by Don Lein

Some of us can remember hearing the game show "Truth or Consequences" that began in 1940 and aired for more than a decade. It was hosted and founded by Ralph Edwards. The contestant would be asked a question and if she/he answered incorrectly they would suffer the "consequences". In those days we were always reminded that we should weigh heavily the consequences of an act before we took any action. Alas, times have changed and consequences are seldom considered, especially in the political arena.

There is, at least among progressives, the eternal search for justice and equality, not just of opportunity, but more importantly, of results. If there is not equality of results, then some group is being deprived and has a legitimate grievance against the majority. In this never-ending search, what was seen as progressive on Monday becomes intolerable on Tuesday. Perfect justice is the ever-changing goal, as illustrated by the French and Russian revolutions. Reformers removed the absolute rulers, but were accused of being too timid, and were replaced by radical revolutionaries, who, in turn were beheaded as being too dangerous.

We see this phenomenon in the global warming scenario, which, 20 years ago, both sides debated. This then changed to the effects of human induced climate change 10 years ago and five years ago we were debating the cost benefit analysis of dealing with the issue. Today you either accept that there is a man-caused existential threat to the planet or you are labeled a "denier" and should be ostracized more fully than

Hester Prynne. We also saw it in our past President, Barack Obama, who in 2008 opposed gay marriage on religious grounds and had already voted for 700 miles of new fencing along the Mexican border. By 2012, these positions were labelled homophobic and nativist.

It should come as no shock that the search for absolute equality was also debated among the Greek philosophers, with Socrates opining that in Athens non-stop search for equality, soon the horses would have to be given the same rights as humans. Are animal rights groups not far from that today? Whereas the former examples were deliberate and the result of deluded people (progressives, et. al.) pursuing an unreachable goal, we have unintended consequences in some instances, as well.

The recent Parkland school shootings illustrate where good intentions went wrong. An Obama administration policy begun in 2011 was aimed at the school to prison path that many young black men travelled and to ensure that blacks were not suspended/arrested at a higher rate than the general school population. The program incentivized lower arrest rates and was aimed at the "zero tolerance" rules then in place in many states/school systems. The program was called PROMISE (Preventing Recidivism through Opportunities, Mentoring, Interventions, Support and Education). Its guidelines listed "assault without use of a weapon", "battery without serious injury" and "disorderly conduct" as misdemeanors that should not be reported to police. In 2017 school administrators, after suffering physical attacks from students who knew they couldn't be expelled and wouldn't be arrested, pleaded with the Trump administration to reverse the policy.

Historically, in 2013, Broward County school system rewrote

its discipline policy to make it more difficult for administrators to suspend or expel students for a variety of misdemeanors, including assault. The Broward County School Superintendent signed an agreement with the county sheriff and other local jurisdictions to "trade cops for counseling". Students charged with various misdemeanors, including assault, would now be disciplined through "healing circles" and other self-esteem building exercises. Principals were incented with cash bonuses to keep suspension rates low and the school system expected to receive tens of millions of grant money from the federal government. Although Nikolas Cruz, the gunman, was internally disciplined for a variety of offenses, including assault, he was never taken into custody nor expelled, but he was counseled. Although the school had a history of his anti-social behavior, Cruz had no record externally and easily passed the federal background check.

However, with school shootings being as prevalent as they are, shouldn't something be done?? Actually, although school shootings are dramatic, they are very rare occurrences as proven by research done by Northeastern University, the Washington Post and other publications. Actually, homicide rates are down dramatically from the 1970s to the 1990s. The research shows that in the early 1990s four times the number of children were killed in schools than today. Also, when the facts show that in the last 35 years there have been only five cases where someone age 18 to 20 used an assault rifle in a mass shooting, should we be talking about doing something drastic about assault rifles? Is the weapon REALLY the problem?

Don Lein is a regular contributor to Chatham County Line. A Chatham resident, he is involved in a variety of civic organizations.

A Middle-of-the-Road Voter Attends CPAC 2018

by Jeff Davidson

The idea to attend CPAC (the Conservative Political Action Conference) occurred to me after I had been watching C-SPAN and seeing videos of the previous two year's worth of CPAC presentations. Messages from speakers on the Right don't otherwise get covered by the mainstream media — which has exercised a powerful form of censorship on American society for many decades — unless it is in a derogatory way.

The views of the Left, however, appear every single day on the front pages of the New York Times, L.A. Times, Chicago Tribune, Washington Post, Raleigh News & Observer and hundreds of other newspapers across the U.S., as well as on CBS, NBC, ABC, PBS, MSNBC, and most assuredly on CNN.

WELCOME STRANGER

The CPAC attendance fee is quite reasonable. I registered on site, in cash, so that I wouldn't be placed on a ton of mailing lists. I arrived a day early and attended some of the sessions they had for college students and young Republicans and it was quite an eye-opener. These were good sessions, on target, with humor, and willing to address any question.

The entire event was very friendly, quite like my National Speakers Association conventions, but with even better speakers, I have to say. For a first-timer, I felt right in the swim of things, and I had a great time. The funny thing is I'm not even a conservative — I'm a registered independent—but for years and decades several now, the Left's worldview and socialist bent has been bordering on insanity. There are some issues on the Right that certainly I don't agree with, but overall, they've got the more well-rounded view of the world, the nation, and what needs to be done.

The media hallway, which extends for more than 50 yards, is open to anybody. That's where I saw most of the luminaries. In the hallways, I personally greeted and exchanged words with Dr. Sebastian Gorka, Eric Bolling, Katrina Pierson, Dan Bongino, Katie Pavlich, the political editor of the Washington Times, the editor of Judicial Watch, and editors of several lesser-known publications. I

also stood within five feet of Ted Cruz, Libertarian Gary Johnson, Sheriff David Clarke, and former UN ambassador John Bolton.

MAINSTREAM MEDIA PROPAGANDA

It was quite heartening to see a significant number of African Americans, Asians, Jews who are likely Orthodox with their yarmulkes, and other minorities in attendance. The mainstream media goes out of its way to ensure that minorities never appear on camera, but I can tell you that they were there in good numbers and embraced by everyone. They played a significant role, many in leadership positions, and they will be there again next year and the next.

The way that the U.S. mainstream media manipulates truth makes me think sometimes that we are in the 1930s Soviet Union. Mainstream media propaganda, however, is much more than subtle lies and outright lies that they publish; it is also what does not get any coverage whatsoever. It is also camera angles, it is innuendo, it is dozens of subtle things, done almost reflexively now, to promote a socialist agenda.

TAKE THAT

For his first year in office, I cringed when President Trump said some of his crazy things and tweeted some of his outrageous tweets. Then I thought about what a kind and decent man George W. Bush was, and what a decent character and candidate Mitt Romney was, and how the mainstream media, and the Left in general, continually portrayed them as Hitler-types.

I've learned, after 14 months, to understand in some manner what Trump is doing. He keeps slamming those who do not wish him well, and they can't keep him down. It's strange that we have a President who sometimes acts like a 14-year-old, but at the same time, he hands out exactly what the mainstream media deserves.

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The Statue in Our Front Yard

by Steve Hutton

I visited some friends in Kinston in the summer of 1994. As we were walking through a nearby, upscale neighborhood, we noticed a vacant house for sale. We decided to peek through a window to view the interior. As we peered into the dining room, I was surprised by the wallpaper — a repeating pattern of a colonial mansion with a lush lawn and a long driveway down to an entrance with flowers trained across the trellised stone archway. In the surrounding fields, slaves were happily picking cotton, their skin color a dark black. The white family was nattily dressed in summer whites and was picnicking on the green. You could almost hear the slaves' joyful singing. It was an idyllic scene of a romantic South.

Or should I say a romanticized South? I asked myself, could I invite my friends to dine with me in that room — friends both African-American and white?

Could I invite friends to be greeted at my home by black-faced lawn jockeys? Could I serve dinner on a confederate battle flag tablecloth? Or with battle flag placemats? Or battle flag napkins? Or imagine a fountain punch bowl with an ice sculpture centerpiece of a confederate soldier. Should I top off my hospitality by serving something for everyone — mint juleps, fried-chicken, and watermelon for dessert?

My guess is that 99 percent of us would never be so uncouth to our guests in private. So I ask, why are we so lacking in public graciousness?

I am not an expert on southern history, but I have probably read more about the civil war and southern culture than most. History is complicated, and our feelings about it, complex. Those who choose to honor their southern ancestors can do so in the privacy of their homes, in cemeteries, in memorial parks and gardens, or in museums.

The courthouse circle is Chatham County's front yard and should be inviting to everyone who passes by. A front porch should be a welcoming invitation to enter. Today our courthouse circle is welcoming to only a few, not the many who live in the present and look to a better future. Memories of the civil war shouldn't be a bar to present day civility and a true southern hospitality. Let us commit ourselves to act in public with graciousness and grace.

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