

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

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January 3, 2012
Start: 11:10 a.m.
Recess: 11:14 a.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers
City Hall

B E F O R E:
GALE A. BREWER
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Inez E. Dickens
Erik Martin Dilan
Domenic M. Recchia, Jr.
Peter F. Vallone, Jr.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Good morning.
3 I'm Gale Brewer, City Council Member for the west
4 side and head of the Committee on Governmental
5 Operations. I'd like to thank Seth Grossman and
6 Tym Matusov for their support, both as counsel and
7 as policy analyst. We've been joined today by
8 Council Member Inez Dickens and by Council Member
9 Peter Vallone.

10 We are to vote on Resolution No.
11 1172. It's sponsored by Council Member Lander,
12 Melissa Mark-Viverito, the Speaker, myself, and
13 others. It opposes the U.S. Supreme Court's
14 interpretation of the Constitution in Citizens
15 United regarding the Constitutional rights of
16 corporations, supporting an amendment to the
17 Constitution to provide that corporations are not
18 entitled to the entity of protections or rights of
19 natural persons, specifically so that the
20 expenditure of corporate money to influence the
21 electoral process is no longer a form of
22 Constitutionally protected speech, and calling on
23 Congress to begin the process of amending the
24 Constitution. We had a hearing on Resolution 1172
25 on December 16th of last year. At this hearing,

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2 the Committee received thoughtful testimony in
3 support of the resolution from Amy Loprest,
4 executive director of the Campaign Finance Board
5 and Susan Lerner, executive director of Common
6 Cause. The Citizens United decision granted
7 corporates the same first amendment rights as
8 individuals and in effect, prohibited the
9 government from regulating independent corporate
10 spending on elections. The consequences of the
11 ruling have been staggering. In the 2010
12 congressional elections, the first national
13 elections to be affected by the decision, spending
14 by outside groups increased by four times from the
15 previous midterm elections, reaching 30 million.
16 Half of this money came from just ten groups, of
17 which seven did not disclose all of their donors.
18 We are already seeing similar patterns of outside
19 anonymous spending in the lead up to the 2010
20 presidential elections. This kind of anonymous
21 spending by large corporate interests seriously
22 risks averting our democratic and domestic
23 institutions by disenfranchising the average voter
24 and corrupting our political system.

25 The resolution calls upon Congress

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2 to begin the process of amending the Constitution
3 so that unlimited corporate expenditures on
4 elections are no longer sheltered as protected
5 Constitutional speech. By passing this
6 resolution, the New York City Council would join
7 other municipalities, specifically Los Angeles,
8 whose city council adopted a similar resolution in
9 early December. I hope our efforts to pass this
10 resolution will build additional momentum in the
11 rest of the country and force Congress to act
12 immediately to save a democracy. I want to thank
13 Will Colgrove from our office because the Times
14 yesterday has an op-ed on the slush funds of Iowa,
15 indicating the same kind of corporate input in the
16 elections, straw poll in particular that's taking
17 place as we speak. I also want to indicate that
18 we all have different opinions on Occupy Wall
19 Street, but they too were mentioned in this as a
20 big issue that needs to be addressed. So without
21 further ado, I'd like to hear if there are any
22 comments from my colleagues. Alright, we can take
23 the vote.

24 COMMITTEE CLERK: William Martin,
25 Committee Clerk. Roll call vote Committee on

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Governmental Operations, Reso 1172. Council
Member Brewer?

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I vote aye.

COMMITTEE CLERK: Vallone?

COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: I frankly
don't know enough about this issue to take a
position at the moment, and I'm going to be
abstaining.

COMMITTEE CLERK: Recchia?

COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Aye.

COMMITTEE CLERK: Dickens?

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Aye.

COMMITTEE CLERK: By a vote of
three in the affirmative, zero in the negative and
one abstention, item is adopted. Members, please
sign the Committee Report.

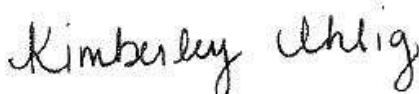
CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you very
much. I believe that's it on this particular
hearing. The hearing is closed. Thank you all
very much.

[gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Kimberley Uhlig certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

Signature



Date _____ 1/16/12 _____