

# Clergy rap Court's ruling on campaign financing: Corporate personhood

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A coalition of religious leaders and a top Presbyterian official have blasted the Supreme Court's 5-4 ruling that would allow large corporations to give unlimited financial support to candidates during elections.

The group of more than 200 leaders, many affiliated with the National Council of Churches, also pledged to support legislation to limit the impact of the January 21 ruling by empowering voters, not special interest groups.

The letter, released February 4, was organized by Common Cause, a public-interest advocacy group whose president is Bob Edgar, a United Methodist minister and former general secretary of the NCC.

"We believe existing campaign finance laws already permit the unfair influence of persons and groups with extraordinary wealth over the political process by providing them with special access to elected officials," the leaders wrote to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. "This special access ultimately results in legislative outcomes that reflect the needs of those with the financial means to make political contributions, and not the needs of the poor or disenfranchised."

In a separate statement on February 3, Gradye Parsons, the top executive of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), said that the "egregious decision" by the high court's majority rejected 35 years of legislation to limit campaign spending by corporations. He cited "historic Presbyterian wisdom about the dangers of corruption" by special interests.

"This decision shows an innocence about human power and sin that Reformed Christians must question," said Parsons, who called upon Presbyterians to express concern to their own legislators.

The Common Cause letter, whose signers included current NCC general secretary Michael Kinnamon, urged Congress to pass the Fair Elections Now Act, a campaign-spending reform law that's backed by congressional Democrats and a host of left-leaning advocacy groups.