

## Legal Alert: Supreme Court Decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*

**January 29, 2010**

On January 21, 2010, the U.S. Supreme Court decided *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* (No. 08-205), which significantly changes the legal landscape in political spending by corporations (and unions). The Court struck down a law prohibiting corporations (and unions) from using their general treasury funds to pay for advertisements, made separately from a political candidate's campaign, supporting or opposing a political candidate. The Court, by a 5-4 margin, overruled two prior Supreme Court holdings and also ruled that part of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 (the "McCain-Feingold Act") is unconstitutional. Justice Stevens wrote a vigorous and lengthy (90+ page) dissent, which was joined by Justices Ginsburg, Breyer and Sotomayor.

The case has attracted a considerable amount of media attention. Political and legal commentators from across the spectrum have offered their predictions as to how this ruling will affect the electoral process and the role of corporations in the political process. In this client advisory, we briefly summarize the facts and primary legal issues presented in the case, and we describe the significant ways in which the legal landscape has been changed by the Court's decision.

Please click [here](#) to view the article in its entirety.

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