**Massachusetts Citizens Commission** **Concerning a**

**Constitutional Amendment for Government of the People**

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| ***Commissioners*** *Costas Panagopoulos, Co-chair* *William Kilmartin, Co-chair**Jeff Clements, Secretary* | *Noval Alexander**Nikolas Bowie**Cheryl Clyburn-Crawford**Rep. Carmine Gentile**Michael Harrington**Matthew McKnight* | *Bopha Malone**Jay Marsden**Scott McDermott**Dominick Pangallo**Joyce Sanchez**Jennifer Taub* |

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Commission Recommends Constitutional Amendment to Combat Undue Influence of Spending in Elections**

***Online press conference & briefing scheduled for Constitution Day, September 17, 2020 12:00 Noon Via Zoom***

[***https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9639299384?pwd=aGVSa3crYmlhKzd0aUtvNEY5RElXZz09***](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9639299384?pwd=aGVSa3crYmlhKzd0aUtvNEY5RElXZz09)

BOSTON, Massachusetts—TheMassachusetts Citizens Commission will hold a virtual press conference [via Zoom](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9639299384?pwd=aGVSa3crYmlhKzd0aUtvNEY5RElXZz09) **at 12:00 PM on September 17, 2020—Constitution Day**-- to launch its second report on a Constitutional Amendment for Government of the People. The Commission’s report includes specific recommendations for advancing a proposed amendment to the US Constitution to protect the voice and representation of all Americans by regulating and limiting concentrated money in elections.

In the November 2018 election, 1.8M Massachusetts voters (71%) approved a law to establish the Commission. After extensive research and testimony at 20 public hearings the Commission issued its first report in January, making findings about the damage to democracy and representation of the people since the Supreme Court invalidated many campaign finance laws on a theory that unlimited election spending was “free speech” under the First Amendment.

In accordance with the law passed by the voters, the second report addresses specific recommendations for one or more constitutional amendments to protect the free speech rights of all Americans and address the undue influence of concentrated money in elections. The Commission was also asked to recommend sound constitutional amendment language to affirm that artificial entities—such as corporations and unions-- do not possess the inalienable Constitutional rights of the people.

Members of the Commission will discuss the Report and its recommendations that were recently submitted to Governor Charlie Baker, Attorney General Maura Healey, Secretary of State William Galvin, House Speaker Robert DeLeo, and President of the Senate Karen Spilka.

Attorney General Healey commended the Commission’s work and pledged to help advance the constitutional amendment through Congress and ultimate ratification in the States: “We must stop the undue influence of money in our elections and government, and make sure all Americans are represented on equal terms.  I thank the Commissioners for their efforts and thoughtful work on this report and look forward to working with them to pass a constitutional amendment to ensure that everyone has a fair voice in our elections.

Numerous studies, and the Commission’s first report earlier this year, have documented how most of the money in American elections now comes from a very small elite, less than 1% of the American population, and that the most Americans believe that they are not represented and have little voice in government. And the amount of spending has increased exponentially. In 2010, before the US Supreme Court decision in the Citizens United case opened the floodgates for spending in elections, so-called “indirect expenditures” (think of PACS and SUPER PACS) amounted to just $33M; in 2016 “indirect expenditures” amounted to over 1.4B, a fifty-fold increase in six years that was 21% of all spending.

“Our democracy is in danger,” said Costas Panagopoulos, co-chair of the Commission and professor and chair of the Department of Political Science at Northeastern University. “I can think of no better way to celebrate Constitution Day this year than by taking the next steps necessary to strengthen our Constitution and to rescue American democracy from the stranglehold of corporate money,” he added.

“With this report, the citizens of Massachusetts continue our legacy as pioneers in American democracy,” added William Kilmartin, co-chair of the Commission. “From the Mass Bay Charter which established the rule of self-government, to 1779 when we created the first-in-the-nation Citizen’s Convention to write our state constitution, to today’s problems with money in elections, the citizens of the Commonwealth mobilize when democratic principles are threatened,” he added.

Jeff Clements, secretary of the Commission and president of American Promise noted: “On this anniversary of the Constitution today, the time has come for all Americans to pull together to bring this constitutional amendment to renew our American democracy over the finish line.”

A link to the full report can be found [here](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ErT9ufTYh5Z6Y-EYjVReGE7vefO6oFRp/view?usp=sharing). A link to the Commission’s first report, dated December 31, 2019, is available [here](https://www.mass.gov/doc/citizens-commission-2019-report/download).

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