



LATE TESTIMONY

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COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND LABOR

THURSDAY, JAN. 21, 2016, 9:00 A.M., CONFERENCE ROOM 016  
SB217  
TESTIMONY

Beppie Shapiro, League of Women Voters of Hawaii

Chair KEITH-AGARAN, Vice-Chair Shimabukuro, and Committee Members:

**The League of Women Voters of Hawaii supports SB217 which proposes an amendment to the Hawaii State Constitution regarding freedom of speech.**

We are grateful to Senator Keith – Agaran and Senator Shimabukuro for demonstrating their support for campaign finance reform through this measure.

It is well-known and widely deplored that a relatively few individuals and organizations, many of which do not disclose the source of their funds, provide an overwhelming dollar value of campaign contributions. This is true within the state of Hawaii as well as nationally, as documented by both the Star Advertiser and Civil Beat after the 2014 elections.

The Supreme Court's decision known as *Citizens United* is widely "credited" with removing any remaining limits on these outside, untraceable campaign contributions. The Court's decision was based on a chain of prior decisions and rationales, one of which was the seemingly illogical claim that spending money to influence political outcomes is constitutionally protected free speech.

SB217 would amend the state constitution to state specifically that the right to free speech does not include expenditures to influence elections

The League of Women Voters is deeply committed to reforming our nation's campaign finance system to combat corruption and undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office and allow maximum citizen participation in the political process. We encourage the Committee to support SB217.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.