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2012 Finalist

Justice Louis Brandeis must have a time machine hidden in his chambers because his quote embodies the atmosphere of the 2012 Republican nomination process. It's been an upside, inside out, zingy ride of Romney, Gingrich, Cain, and Bachmann. If America has learned anything from the nomination obstacle course, it's that money equals speech. With the implementation of the Citizens United vs. the Federal Election Commission ruling, GOP nominees and their corporate friends stretch democracy past its limits.

In 2008, the Supreme Court ruled that corporations and unions were allowed to support candidates indirectly, most popularly through unregulated super PACs. These super PACs use their unlimited funds to create and run ads either for or against a candidate. Newt Gingrich's sponsor, casino owner billionaire Sheldon Adelson, gifted more than \$20 million to the Winning our Future Super PAC; allowing his super PAC to lambaste Mitt Romney's character through a series of television ads across the country. The question remains - is Gingrich still in the race because of his political skills and character or is Adelson's money keeping him afloat?

Even before the Citizens United case, candidates used their financial resources to their maximum. Past experience has shown the candidate who wins usually spent more money than their opponents. In the 2008 election, President Barack Obama spent nearly \$730,000,000 during his campaign as opposed to his John McCain's \$330,000,000. In 2004, George W. Bush spent \$360,000,000 while John Kerry raised less than \$330,000,000. With the help of their independent super PACs, candidates try to raise enough funds so they are known from sea to shining sea. With more than 200,000,000 eligible voters in America every billboard, television, radio, internet, and newspaper advertisement counts.

The founders of the Constitution created only two requirements to be president: he or she must be natural born American citizens and at least thirty-five years of age. However, with the intense competition of today's Grand Old Party race, wealth might as well be included on the list. American citizens should vote for a candidate based on their character and stance on issues, not how many ten second television advertisements they can produce.

Super PACs and their unlimited fundraising create an unfair advantage, as exemplified by Gingrich's and Adelson's relationship. America's democracy is a hoax if the amount of money the candidate invests in their campaign equates to the odds of winning. Supreme power should be vested with the people, not from the size of someone's wallet. Americans should know who they are voting for and how they are being represented to the rest of the world.

Wealth bestowed upon candidates by Super PACs and opaque donors hinder democracy. The government is supposed to be run by the people, for the people, and wealth should

not be the deciding factor of a presidential election. Americans must regain what they have lost: a fair presidential election.