

Soros in Vermont: Leftist billionaire behind state's call to keep money out of politics

By [Bruce Parker](#) / May 6, 2014 /

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MONTPELIER, Vt. — Despite the Legislature's intent to keep money out of politics in Friday's vote for a constitutional convention, the move was a victory for billionaire George Soros, whose financial backing of The Young Turks and Wolf PAC helped influence state lawmakers.

CON CON: George Soros is the billionaire behind the Young Turks and Wolf PAC, two prominent groups that seek to end corporate money in politics through a state-led constitutional convention.

"In Vermont we were told it was impossible ... but actually we did win on the Senate floor, and it was because volunteers from all across the country called in to constituents in Vermont, who then called their representatives. Now it has passed the Vermont House — this is a huge moment," Cenk Uygur, founder of Wolf PAC, said during a weekend broadcast of the Young Turks.



The House of Representatives on Friday voted 95-43 to pass [JRS27](#), a joint resolution to "limit the corrupting influence of money in our electoral process ... by overturning the Citizens United decision." The resolution cleared the Senate in March by a 25-2 margin.

Since its formation in 2011, Wolf PAC has led the push for a 28th amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would undo [Citizens United](#), the 2010 Supreme Court ruling that allows corporations, organized labor unions and others to donate money to campaigns.

Uygur's Young Turks program, which promotes Wolf PAC's agenda, is part of a [George Soros-funded](#) network of nearly 70 progressive media outlets — [the Media Consortium](#) — that includes AlterNet, Mother Jones and Democracy Now. According to the Media Research Center, the Soros media empire [reaches more than 300 million people each month](#).

Dan Gainor, vice president of business and culture for the Media Research Center, told Vermont Watchdog that Soros has donated "\$675,000 from the Open Society Foundations ([Soros.org](#)) to the Media Consortium."

"They are funded by the granddaddy of left-wing funding," Gainor said.

According to Gainor, the push to get money out of politics affects only right-wing organizations.

"What the left is trying to do is de-fund the right. Look at how left-wing organizations are funded — they get money from unions and they get money from the government ... They know their money won't dry up, so this is a very calculated move on their part."

The irony of a Soros-backed push to end money in politics wasn't lost on state lawmakers who voted against the resolution.

State Sen. Joseph Benning, R-Caledonia, told Vermont Watchdog that Wolf PAC appeared well funded when leaders Sam Fieldman and Ryan Clayton testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee earlier in the year.

“A couple of young guys from Wolf PAC spent a bit of time in our legislative committee, and I'm thinking to myself, ‘Well, somebody out there is obviously paying for their room and board to be here.’ I found it kind of ironic that there was a PAC out there spending money on politics, and that's what this resolution is all about,” he said.

State Rep. Andrew Donaghy, R-Rutland, who also voted against the resolution, explained his vote with a dose of sarcasm, noting that banning money in politics would mean Gov. Peter Shumlin would have to surrender his financial edge to rumored gubernatorial challenger Heidi Scheuermann, who is a state representative.

“This could possibly lead to a situation where Governor Shumlin would have to give half of his million-dollar campaign war chest to Heidi (Scheuermann). I don't think that would be fair,” he said.

JRS27's explicit reference to Citizens United shows that Vermont lawmakers view a constitutional convention as an appropriate way to advance traditionally blue-state agendas. State-initiated revisions to the Constitution have been endorsed most prominently in conservative states that seek a national balanced-budget amendment.

According to Article V of the U.S. Constitution, states may propose amendments if two-thirds of state legislatures call for a convention. Ratification of a particular amendment then requires approval by three-fourths of state legislatures. More than 20 states have passed resolutions in favor of a federal balanced budget amendment, but Vermont is the first state to call for an amendment outlawing corporate money in politics.

“The first step is the hardest. It's been so hard getting that first state on the board, and we have 33 others to go ... What we saw in Vermont is once you engage in the process, you pick up momentum,” Uygur said.

John Iadarola, a guest on Uygur's show and the co-host of TYT University, said the vote in Vermont would benefit all politicians.

“How do you like the idea of spending the rest of your life raising millions of dollars for every race? ... You don't want that — you want to be able to run based on your ideology, based on your ideas,” he said.

For Uygur, the push to eradicate Citizens United is about cleaning up politics.

“Americans know that money corrupts our politics and it's time to end it,” he said.

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