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April 3, 2014: Now Get Rid of the \$2600 Limit

Bruce Ledewitz

Duquesne University, ledewitz@duq.edu

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Title: Now Get Rid of the \$2600 Limit

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4/3/2014—News came yesterday of the decision of the Supreme Court to overturn aggregate limits on campaign contributions. The typical responses were that conservatives hailed the change and liberals bemoaned the effect of money on politics. These overall limits on money contributed to federal candidates in a 2-year cycle do not affect the \$2600 limit to an individual candidate in one election cycle. So, it would already have been complicated to actually reach the aggregate limit and few people did so. What is missed in the reaction is that we already have unlimited spending on campaigns. That spending comes from independent groups, usually super PAC's, that are free to raise money and spend it as long as they do not coordinate their spending with any candidate's campaign. Thus, we now have the worst of all worlds—unlimited, irresponsible and invisible spending by rich people infecting our politics, creating obligations that candidates understand and that the voters do not understand. The simple answer is counterintuitive—get rid of the \$2600 limit, which now actually only affects regular people. In one act, independent spending would begin to ebb. The voters would see which candidates received money from people whose politics they do not like. If independent spending went on, voters could ask why a candidate could not control his or her own supporters. Politics would become transparent, which is even more important than controlling how much money is spent.