



The
**Citizen-Led
Movement**
for the
28th Amendment

Why I Care About the 28th Amendment:

Our 2018 National Citizen Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C., brought together citizen leaders from across the country to learn, be inspired, and join forces in order to further the fight for a 28th Amendment to get big money out of politics. We spoke with some of the conference attendees and asked them why this event and movement matter to them. Below are some of their responses.



“I saw the needs of citizens repeatedly ignored in legislation when massive spending by corporations and special interests was used to tip the scales of the political process.”

Marie HenselderKimmel
Cherry Hill, NJ



“Without a true form of a representative democracy, which we don’t have right now when there is big money in politics, we can’t make social progress.”

Farhad Choksy
Washington, D.C.



“Our politicians in this current environment have to spend too much of their time raising money ... such that they can’t work on the issues that actually drew them into politics.”

Jerry Lloyd
Olathe, KS



“I feel that nothing is ever going to change on any of the other issues that I really care about until we get this one done.”

Laura Knipmeyer
Long Valley, NJ



“I would like to see the 28th pass one way or another because no other issue can be addressed while there is money in politics.”

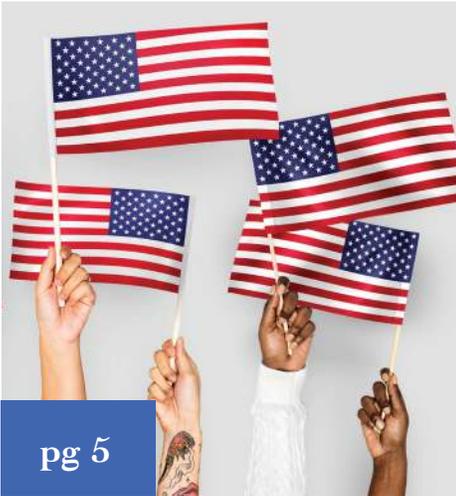
Josh Marshall, Trailblazers PAC
Ithaca, NY



“Big money in politics affects every single issue—no matter what side of the aisle you’re on. Every issue can be traced back to this one, so we’ve got to get at the root of the problem.”

Shelby Shadwell
Laramie, WY

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American Promise exists to empower, inspire, and organize Americans to win the 28th Amendment to the Constitution.

This lasting reform will re-balance our politics and government by putting the rights of individual citizens before the privileges of concentrated money, corporations, unions, political parties, and Super PACs.

A Letter from the AMERICAN PROMISE PRESIDENT

Friend,

I want to thank you for your commitment to the 28th Amendment—and share with you some of our many citizen-led successes. It's uplifting and inspiring to see the work our community has accomplished and their passionate words around what these accomplishments mean to them.

A passionate team of people across the nation is what enables our citizen-led nonprofit to organize, execute strategy, and achieve huge successes that make a real difference in moving the needle on the issue of big money in politics. Because you believed in and stood behind our powerful plan to bring Americans together to win historic, permanent and fundamental reform of our political system, we have made extraordinary progress.

Here are just a few highlights of the many amazing accomplishments our citizen leaders have made possible:

- 20 states—more than half of what we need to ratify an amendment—have now passed statewide resolutions calling on Congress to approve an amendment to address big money in politics.
- More than 800 cities and towns have passed local resolutions, formalizing the collective call for change.
- Our American Promise Associations saw 82% year-over-year growth, increasing our ability to educate and amplify locally.
- We saw more than 100 letters-to-the-editor and op-eds published across the country, amplifying our message in towns and cities throughout America.
- American Promise citizens held 137 meetings with their elected officials, collecting pledges to work for the 28th Amendment.
- 1,000+ volunteers in Massachusetts collected more than 100,000 signatures to win a ballot initiative establishing a Citizens Commission to advance the 28th Amendment in Congress.

These successes have laid the groundwork for the lead-up to 2020, which promises to bring us closer to passing the 28th Amendment.

We have established clear strategies to expand our programs, and we've already made lots of progress, launching new APAs; driving bipartisan support in Congress; working to develop program infrastructure for our Business for American Promise program; achieving major legislative victories; plus much more.

Thank you for joining us in this historic undertaking to make our shared beliefs a reality. Together, we have the power to rejuvenate our democracy and create a republic where citizens—not corporations and special interests—have constitutional rights; where every American is represented equally, regardless of wealth; and where we all take responsibility for making America's democratic vision a reality.

Jeff Clements,
American Promise President



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300+

Citizen-Led Victories

Across the nation, our intrepid American Promise Association volunteers are making huge progress—building community, fueling conversation, hosting events, winning support in Congress and passing local legislation.

It is the tireless work and commitment of our community of citizen leaders that will ultimately win the 28th Amendment and assert political rights are for people, not big money. American Promise Associations (APAs) are the local groups that bring the movement to life in communities across the country and bring Americans together to build support for the 28th Amendment. APA members educate their communities, spread the word about the amendment, gather signatures, meet with elected officials and much more.

This outreach makes APAs among the most critical components of the effort to build nationwide, grassroots support for the 28th Amendment. By establishing APAs in communities across the country, we can work together to connect Americans who are ready to get big money out of politics and have a real-world impact as civically engaged citizen leaders.

We're thrilled to say it's been a year of growth for our APAs thanks to the launch of more than a dozen new chapters.

The numbers below reflect our nationwide impact and highlight a few of the local successes we're ready to replicate.

- **A Growing Movement:** We're up to 22 APAs in 16 states: Delaware, Illinois, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia and Wyoming.
- **A Growing Voice in Congress:** In 2017, APA members had a total of 17 meetings with elected officials or their staff. In October 2018 alone, APA members had 11 meetings with elected officials or their staff, for a total of 130 meetings leading up to the 2018 midterms.
- **A Growing Voice in Communities:** In 2017, APA members published 26 media pieces. In 2018, APA members across the country were published more than 80 times.
- **Building Partners in Congress:** APA members developed relationships with candidates and secured dozens of American

Promise Candidate Pledge signers, who promise to use their offices to advance a constitutional amendment to get big money out of politics. In the 2018 election cycle, 27 pledge signers were newly elected to Congress.

- **Building Congressional Support in New York:** During the 2018 National Citizen Leadership Conference last summer in Washington, D.C., members of the New York City APA met with and got support from the offices of U.S. Sen. Chuck Schumer, U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, U.S. Rep. Jerry Nadler and U.S. Rep. Yvette Clarke.
- **Inspiring Fellow Citizens in Ohio:** In rural Ohio, the Port Clinton APA is having a serious impact: 55 published media pieces, 12 outreach events and 13 candidate pledges. Best of all, its members inspired their neighbors in Columbus, Cincinnati, and Northeast Ohio to start chapters. Now the four groups are actively working with Republicans and Democrats in the Legislature to make Ohio the next state formally calling for the 28th Amendment.
- **Passing Local Resolutions in Minnesota:** In April 2018, the Minnesota APA helped pass a local 28th Amendment resolution through the Sherburne County Board of Commissioners. The APA is working to duplicate this victory with the Wright County Board of Commissioners and has generated coverage from five newspapers in the process.
- **Building Cross-Partisan Support in Missouri:** The St. Louis APA helped organize an American Promise Writing the 28th Amendment event, convening more than 200 people for a night of debate and deliberation. The St. Louis APA turned that momentum into a citywide 28th Amendment resolution and is developing relationships with the Republican congressional delegation, a testament to the fact that this amendment will be won by red states and blue states, working together. 



Why I Joined American Promise

On the following pages, citizen leaders across the nation share why they believe the 28th Amendment is the cause of our time.



Support for the 28th Amendment GROWS IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

Citizens in New Hampshire worked diligently to make the Granite State the 20th state to formally call for a 28th Amendment to the Constitution. Since 2012, 82 local resolutions have been passed in support of the amendment in New Hampshire, thanks to the tireless efforts of its citizens across the state. On June 6, 2019, the New Hampshire Senate approved the resolution.

By Ella McGrail

I've lived in New Hampshire all my life. We are a state that revels in our freedom of speech. We have one of the highest voter turnout rates in the country, and while political disillusionment is high right now, when I participate in politics in our state the mood is celebratory. We are a swing state where Republicans, Democrats, and all the people in between live in close quarters, and I find that New Hampshire citizens usually embrace the spirit of bipartisanship. Not only are we a state full of opinionated voices, we are a state accustomed to and proud of the different viewpoints.

When I began to learn about money in politics and the threat it poses to the voices of the people, I was disturbed. Thanks to Supreme Court decisions like the 2010 *Citizens United vs. FEC* ruling, which found that money is a form of free speech and

WE ARE A SWING STATE WHERE REPUBLICANS, DEMOCRATS, AND ALL THE PEOPLE IN BETWEEN LIVE IN CLOSE QUARTERS, AND WHILE CIVIL DISCOURSE DOES OFTEN DEVOLVE INTO LESS PRODUCTIVE CONFLICT, I FIND THAT NEW HAMPSHIRE CITIZENS USUALLY EMBRACE THE SPIRIT OF BIPARTISANSHIP.



Ella McGrail is an American Promise Advisory Council member who sees the movement toward the 28th Amendment as another step in our nation's aspirations toward equality.

corporations are entitled to freedom of speech, corporations and the super wealthy are able to donate huge sums of money in lobbying funds and campaign expenditures and thus gain disproportionate influence over American politicians.

Exxon Mobil, for example, has shelled out millions of dollars to block climate change legislation. During the 2018 midterm elections billionaires Sheldon Adelson and Michael Bloomberg donated tens of millions of dollars to conservative and liberal candidates respectively.

In the United States House, approximately 90 percent of the candidates who spend the most money on their campaign win their elections. Approximately 80 percent of the biggest spenders in the Senate win their elections. It's not always the case that the person who spends the most wins, but it's a major factor, and to run a serious campaign at all a staggering amount of money needs to be raised.

The result is that elected officials have to answer to their donors more than they have to answer to their constituents. The super wealthy receive greater representation than everyone else. Not only is this a gross example

of income inequality, it is silencing the voices of the vast majority of the American people.

Luckily, there's something that can be done. House Bill 504 recently made New Hampshire the 20th state to demand a 28th amendment to the Constitution, an amendment that would call upon Congress to regulate the role of money in politics.

The fact that 20 states have already officially called for this amendment proves that Americans are sick of feeling powerless. Corporations are not citizens, the wealthy deserve no more or less representation than the rest of us, and while money may talk, in doing so it silences millions.

New Hampshire has not given up. We haven't succumbed to the detachment and low voter turnouts that so many other states have fallen prey to. We care deeply about the issues that impact our country and our communities, and we're loud about them. This is a moment where we have to defend our right to have a say in how our lives are run, and the right to correct the wrongs we see in the world, regardless of our party, opinion, or wealth. 

A FEW THOUGHTS ABOUT Veterans Day

Vietnam veteran Chet Hunt shares some of the reasons he is compelled to fight for our country again, this time against a growing threat at home: the unbridled flow of money that is strangling our political system. Thank you to Chet and all veterans for your service to our country.

By Chet Hunt

As Veterans Day approaches each year, I can't help but reflect on the great sacrifices our fellow Americans have made generation after generation to preserve our freedom and secure our precious constitutional rights. Indeed, it is a special time to honor those who rose to the challenge when the call to arms was sounded to become the bulwark against threats to our country's ideals and way of life.

As a Vietnam veteran, I often recall the many nights when these thoughts sustained me in the engulfing darkness of Qua Viet along murky shores of the Dong Ha River that snaked through Quang Tri Province. In those twilight hours I received strength of heart believing I was somehow in the company of those hallowed forbearers, protecting my country as the shining beacon of freedom before the world as they had before me. I could stand my post clenched-jawed with a sense of dignity much stronger than the fear that gripped me at times, and comforted in the knowledge that I was in service of a cause far greater than myself. Vietnam may have been a misguided war, but I still feel a surge of profound pride for my service when I read the inspiring legacy of Washington, Jefferson, Adams, Lincoln, Roosevelt, Anthony, King and the other giants that came before us, forging the foundations of our great nation with their words and deeds.

Unfortunately, once again there lurks a terrible menace. One that threatens the very ideals on which our country was founded. One that has harbored contempt for the vision of our forefathers from the very beginning. One that has been contained by the rule of law. However, in recent years, it has stealthily maneuvered itself free of its leash to wreak havoc on our republic. This menace is the consequence of the *Citizens United* ruling by the Supreme Court. This terrible error of judgment spawned a plague of greed and corruption that is now spreading throughout our governing institutions and infecting the very fabric of our society.

It is the unbridled flow of money from the wealthiest among us, with both foreign and domestic origins, that is strangling our political process. The relentless corporatization of our democracy, for the self-interests of the few, must be halted by "we the people" so that all can speak as free and equal citizens.

So, once again, I stand with a clenched jaw of determination against this threat to my country, and for which my forefathers paid so dear a price. I refuse to capitulate and avow to never give up the fight. We must, without waver, demand the 28th Amendment to restore political integrity and equality of citizenship now and forever. As Frederick Douglass taught us, "power concedes nothing without a demand." On this Veterans Day, I recommit to the demand for a 28th Amendment that will expel the corrupting influence of big money in politics, and I urge you to join me. 



Chet Hunt, a retired city manager and adjunct professor, is a member of the founding team for the American Promise Association of Knoxville (APAK).

ISSUES SURROUNDING BIG MONEY IN POLITICS

Take a moment to consider some of the current pervasive problems:

- The deadly opioid crisis, the big pharmaceutical contributions to our elected officials and their positions on desperately needed legislation to solve this problem.
- The assault on our education system as politicians continue to defund our public schools—when these schools flounder and ultimately fail, they are handed over to private interests that pocket public tax dollars.
- The existential threat of climate change, now the greatest challenge to humanity, and the lack of remedial action by Congress to meet that challenge—note who benefits from this inaction.
- The private prison system and its bloated incarceration rate of non-violent offenders, higher than any other country's system.
- Unsustainable health care costs approaching 18 percent of GDP, the highest ratio in the world, while millions of Americans are unable to access decent health care—who benefits from this state of affairs, and who in Congress takes money from the health care/insurance industry?

HELPING ADVANCE THE 28th Amendment in Ohio

Concerns about changes in her local environment encouraged Citizen Leadership Award-winner Ellen Greene Bush to take action, working toward systemic change and equal representation in our government by founding the Port Clinton, Ohio, American Promise Association.

Lifelong Ohioan and citizen leader Ellen Greene Bush grew up a block from the shores of Lake Erie, and professes an enduring love for her state's beautiful natural resources. Yet over the past several years, Ellen has felt increasingly disenfranchised as she's watched a decline in the quality of the natural environment around her.

Despite her desire to do something about this problem, "I felt inept to make change," Ellen says. "Corporations have more power than I do regarding the quality of Lake Erie and climate change. Decision-makers listen to those who have the money to persuade them. And my experiences are not that different from most Ohioans. We feel excluded because we ARE excluded. The political system is dominated by the resources of a few."

Ellen said her concerns over representation, the climate and a host of other issues—the opioid epidemic, net neutrality, tax reform

and gun reform, to name a few—caused her to seek a way to effect systemic change to our government and the way citizens are enabled to govern. "If we want democracy to thrive, changes must be made toward voting rights, fair electoral districts, reform of the electoral college, and especially reversing the disastrous effects of Supreme Court decisions leading up to and including *Citizens United*," Ellen says.

Finding Community

That's when Ellen discovered American Promise. In 2017, after a phone call with then-Citizen Empowerment Coordinator Azor Cole, Ellen helped found the Port Clinton, Ohio, American Promise Association. Today, her APA is working toward passing a state legislative resolution to add Ohio to the growing number of states calling for a 28th Amendment to get big money out of politics. "I chose to become involved in American Promise because of its cross-partisan approach to winning a 28th Amendment," she

says. "I also value American Promise helping me start our local group, providing one-on-one weekly consultation, connecting me with other citizen leaders, and including all of us at the grassroots level as partners."

Ellen received an American Promise Citizen Leadership Award at the 2018 National Citizen Leadership Conference. In her acceptance speech, she praised the community she's joined and encouraged others to take actions similar to her own. "American Promise provides a framework for me to accomplish step-wise goals toward solving a big problem with our democracy, along with citizen leaders in other states doing likewise," she says. "I can't say enough about the respect and support we get from the national office to make our local efforts successful. If you aren't a citizen leader yet, join us!" 

“American Promise provides a framework for me to accomplish step-wise goals toward solving a big problem with our democracy...If you aren't a citizen leader yet, join us!”

—Citizen leader Ellen Greene Bush, Ohio



A PATENT EXAMPLE OF Big Money Influencing Politics

People join American Promise and the movement to get big money out of politics for a variety of reasons. For Ron Epstein, years as a patent attorney opened his eyes to the world of Capitol Hill lobbying by corporations looking to pursue the newest technologies and increase profits. He provides a look at that experience and how it ultimately led him to join the work to advance the 28th Amendment.

By Ron Epstein

My journey to American Promise started with my nearly 30-year career working with patent holders and companies to negotiate patent licenses. After a lengthy career representing technology companies in these negotiations, I switched in 2003 and started representing patent holders. The reaction of these technology companies to increasingly being held to account for their use of other people's inventions gave me my first introduction to how politics really works and opened my eyes to the distorting effects of money.

There once was a saying that if you could build a better mousetrap, the world would beat a path to your door. It used to be that holding a patent on an important invention was a ticket to success in the United States. But that is less true today at the height of the innovation economy than ever in U.S. history.

Why? Because a handful of technology companies, enraged by patent holders demanding a fair price for their inventions, have used their wealth to "buy" politicians and convince them to change the law. These changes, fueled by professional lobbyists, have made it harder for inventors to get a fair price for their innovations and easier for companies to use third-party innovations without paying. By technology companies, I mean those in the computing, communications and related industries (not biotech and medical devices).

Some background:

- First, a patent is a property right that allows an inventor to charge royalties to those who want to use the patented invention.
- Second, patents must be enforced in court. You can't call the sheriff to remove a patent infringer like you can to remove a tenant who is not paying their rent.



Attorney **Ron Epstein** joined the movement for the 28th Amendment after witnessing the influence of big money on the legislative process in Washington, D.C.

- And third, about half of all U.S. patents are held by individual inventors and small entities. In my experience selling and licensing patents, I found that the patents held by these small parties tended to be more valuable than patents held by large corporations. The reason is straightforward: A patent can cost \$20,000 to \$50,000 or more, a big investment for an individual but a rounding error to a large corporation.

Driven By Innovation

Technology companies are ferocious consumers of innovations. To keep consumers buying new products, they must provide new features in each product generation to

lure consumers into upgrading. Some of the innovations come from internal research. Many more of these new features are the result of "innovation by observation"—that is, they see what other people are doing and copy them. The amount spent by one company on research in a field—say, mobile phone tech—will always be a small fraction of the total money spent by the rest of the world.

Obviously, getting these innovations for free is better for the bottom line than paying.

Some of these observed innovations come from competitors, suppliers and customers. With few exceptions, technology companies do not enforce their patents against each other,

AMONG THE ANTI-DEMOCRATIC ASPECTS OF THIS LEGISLATIVE PROCESS:

- The bill was written before anyone not associated with the team working for its passage saw it.
- Members of the committee who were not part of the effort to draft and pass the bill did not see or even hear of the bill until hours before the committee vote.
- The surprise introduction and fast schedule for this legislation were architected to prevent the opportunity for the public to weigh in and for those against the bill to marshal their efforts to provide evidence of the harm the bill would do to the U.S. patent system and innovation leadership.

even competitors. However, every individual inventor who files a patent does so with the expectation that if their invention is adopted by industry, they will get paid handsomely for their innovation.

By the late 1990s, the level of this invention plagiarism, and small patent holders' pursuit of compensation by enforcement through the courts, had come to represent a meaningful cost to these companies. The cost was the fair value of the use of these patented innovations, but these companies were accustomed to using them for free.

Faced with growing liability, the companies sought to change the law to reduce or eliminate their liability to pay royalties. The lobbying effort they pursued was breathtaking in its sophistication and scope. The goal: to influence Congress to change laws so it would be more expensive and more difficult for patent holders to enforce their patent rights.

A Hard-Fought Battle

The first effort at patent reform in the last decade was the America Invents Act, passed in 2011. There was general agreement that the U.S. patent system could be improved, and there was a hard-fought battle between those representing patent holders and those representing the technology industry in pursuing reform that improved the patent system while avoiding making enforcement so difficult that it would become impractical to hold infringers to account. Many of the most aggressive provisions suggested by the technology industry were not included.

However, several technology companies, most notably Google and Cisco, were not happy that the act did not go far enough in delivering their desired result of avoiding liability for use of patented inventions. They consulted with the best lobbyists in Washington and concluded that a professionally led and well-funded lobbying effort with targeted contributions to the right politicians could get their desired legislation passed in the next term.

Typically, Congress reviews the laws of a specific field, such as tax law or patent law, once every decade or so. So once the battle over the America Invents Act ended, no one who was or worked with individual and small patent holders expected new legislation to be introduced in the foreseeable future. But led

by lobbying professionals and armed with a lobbying budget estimated to be in the several tens of millions of dollars, these technology companies quietly laid the groundwork for new legislation to finish the job.

Legislative Surprises on Capitol Hill

In October 2013, Congressman Bob Goodlatte (R-Virginia), chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, introduced a new patent reform bill that read as a wish list from the technology company agenda. Surprisingly, the committee vote on that bill was scheduled just days later, with the expectation of a vote on the House floor before Thanksgiving. Further surprises included the rules associated with the bill that limited any debate or amendment on the bill before the House vote, and that the same bill was to be taken up by the Senate Judiciary after Thanksgiving with expected quick passage so the approved legislation could be on the president's desk for signing before the end of the year.

The first I and others in the patent holder community knew that the technology industry was trying to further change the law was an alert from a colleague that a new patent reform bill had been introduced to Congress and was in the process of being passed out of committee in record time.

The technology companies also lobbied the executive branch to make it harder to enforce patents. One result of this lobbying was that President Barack Obama named Google's head of patents, Michelle Lee, as director of the Patent and Trademark Office. Under Lee's leadership, the patent office had an unprecedented record of overturning patents at the request of accused patent infringers. Another was the appointment as White House intellectual property "czar" a law professor who worked extensively with companies in Silicon Valley seeking limitations to the patent law. She was responsible for coordinating White House efforts in support of patent reform legislation discussed above.

What's Visible—And What's Not

We cannot truly calculate the sums spent on this effort.

What you could see was with that money they got access to the President and his staff as well as congressional leadership and other influential members of the House and Senate.

What you could see was that a small number of companies could make what to them was a modest investment of a few tens of millions of dollars to achieve many hundreds of millions of dollars a year in direct economic benefit by not having to pay patent holders for the use of their inventions.

And what you could see was that they wanted to achieve this result without putting the question of whether their proposals were good for the U.S. as a whole to the test of open and public debate—and thus used their wealth to obtain an unprecedented legislative schedule calculated to prevent public debate.

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I do not believe that the technology companies had any evil intent behind their actions, and I do not fault these companies for pursuing their self-interest. My objections to wealth providing greater political influence in general, and corporations spending their wealth to influence the political process in particular, are twofold.

First, there is no reason to believe that wealth is correlated with having the best ideas or the best interests of the public and country in mind. So the wealthy should have the same, equal limitations to use money as a replacement for speech as the average citizen.

Second, for corporations and individuals of means, their interest in influencing the political process often has a direct, measurable and immediate economic return that not only justifies the spending to achieve their ends but provides a very real direct economic return (additional wealth) that is simply not available to the average citizen.

And then I found American Promise. 

Why American Promise works for citizens across the nation

A cross-partisan movement for real change





Raising the Bar in Wyoming

Wyoming Promise is an active American Promise Association making big moves throughout its state. Here, co-founder Ken Chestek shares how the group was founded, its successes and challenges, and what's coming next.

After an up-close experience with dark money as a Wyoming House candidate in 2016, University of Wyoming Law Professor Ken Chestek vowed to work toward getting big money out of politics. Ken and co-founders Shelby Shadwell and Lynn Morrison started Wyoming Promise, an American Promise Association that's raised awareness across the state and is aiming to pass a bill in the state legislature.



Ken Chestek practiced law for 20 years in Pennsylvania before entering academia. He has taught law at the University of Michigan, Indiana University, and is now a tenured full professor at the University of Wyoming. He is a co-author of a textbook on persuasive legal writing and the author of numerous scholarly articles about the power of narrative and storytelling in the law. He currently serves as chair of Wyoming Promise.

Here Ken shares what drives him to fight for the 28th Amendment—and why Wyoming Promise is just getting started.

How did you get involved with American Promise, Wyoming Promise and the 28th Amendment?

I've hated *Citizens United* since the day it was decided, but until 2017 I did nothing but complain about it. In 2016, I ran for a seat in the Wyoming House of Representatives. My opponent and I both pledged to run campaigns without attacking each other, and we both kept our word. But then a dark money group sent fliers to voters in my district, supporting me and claiming my opponent wanted to “steal your public lands.” My opponent was a retired game warden who had spent his career on those lands. He strongly supported keeping them public.

I ended up spending time and resources disavowing the flier and affirming my opponent's actual beliefs—not how I would have chosen to spend campaign resources. I lost the election (I probably would have even without the dark money flap). I vowed then and there to stop complaining and do something to rid the system of dark money.

I'd heard about American Promise, so I contacted the organization about building a local effort to get Wyoming on the list of states calling for a 28th Amendment.

Why is getting big money out of politics important to you?

Politicians don't listen to voters, they listen to big donors and lobbyists—which is why Congress and state legislators keep passing bills most voters hate. As a law professor, I understand that a constitutional amendment is the only reliable way to overturn *Citizens United*. I believe every citizen should engage with the system using whatever talents they have. My “talent” is legal training, so I have devoted myself to changing the law.

Why do other Wyoming citizens care about this issue?

Wyoming citizens see that politicians aren't listening to them. This is not a liberal/conservative thing; politicians are not listening to anybody but the money people. Wyomingites are good people who want a government that listens to us, considers all opinions, and does what's right for the majority of citizens. We want representatives, not stooges for some billionaire donor or corporations who don't have the interests of Wyoming citizens at heart.

How has Wyoming Promise built grassroots support for the 28th Amendment across the state?

After founding Wyoming Promise, Shelby, Lynn and I worked together to build a steering committee. Next we began enlisting county

team leaders to recruit volunteer circulators in their counties, working with as many groups (church groups, civic organizations, etc.) as possible. We now have about 300 volunteers circulating petitions and gathering signatures via public events, door-to-door canvassing, and more. Almost everybody agrees big money in politics is a huge problem, but many people don't know how to fix it. We explain why a constitutional amendment is the way to solve the problem.

What successes has Wyoming Promise had?

We've been successful raising awareness of the problem and the possible solution of a 28th Amendment. We've gathered tens of thousands of voter signatures.

What challenges have you faced?

One challenge has been disinformation campaigns by lobbyist and big-money groups. We fight baseless rumors that Wyoming Promise is “funded by dark money,” a front group for George Soros, or a Democratic ploy. All nonsense, but these whispering campaigns are almost impossible to track down and debunk. Another challenge is that we need more people. Our core volunteers have each gathered 200, 300, some as many as 500 signatures each—we just need more volunteers! 



Citizen Leader Spotlight: George Penn

Read how American Promise member George Penn, a citizen leader with Wisconsin United to Amend, grows support for the 28th Amendment in his home state and across the nation.

Big money in politics affects every major political issue in the United States. After the 2010 *Citizens United* Supreme Court ruling, George Penn realized the system is rigged against everyday Americans.

“I believe every issue ‘We the People’ care about is undermined by the corrupt, big-money political system we now have,” George says. He decided to take action.

Working to Make a Difference

In 2012, George became a member of Wisconsin United to Amend, a partner organization of American Promise, working toward ratification of the 28th Amendment to the Constitution to get big money out of politics and ensure an equal voice for every citizen, regardless of wealth. George has become one of the organization’s most impactful citizen leaders, helping successfully grow the movement in his home state and beyond.

With Wisconsin United to Amend, George has helped pass dozens of local resolutions throughout Wisconsin



I believe every issue ‘We the People’ care about is undermined by the corrupt, big-money political system we now have.



George Penn is the leader of Wisconsin United to Amend, an accomplished American Promise Association that has passed more than 130 resolutions across the state.

calling on Congress to send the 28th Amendment to the states for ratification. Local resolutions help advance the amendment by showing ongoing and growing grassroots support for the campaign, educating people about the problem and that they can get involved in the solution, and proving to elected officials that it’s an issue their constituents want them to take action on.

“We have passed 132 resolutions for the call, with nine more on the ballot in November,” George says. “We target at least 10 referendums on each future ballot.”

George has also helped build an expansive network of Wisconsinites who support the cause, connecting a wide range of organizations including faith-based groups, business leaders and local activist groups.

“Our primary strategy to educate citizens and build power has been passing local resolutions calling for the amendment,” George says. “We have also started bringing into the movement the faith communities by having congregations passing resolutions calling for the amendment. We are approaching businesses to write letters of support for the amendment. While

doing all this work we continue to build relations and coalitions with other activist groups throughout Wisconsin.”

Wisconsin and Beyond

Based on his success in Wisconsin, George has also helped further the national movement for the 28th Amendment. American Promise has invited George to speak with new American Promise Associations across the nation to instruct members on effective ways to advance and grow support for the 28th Amendment.

With the help of American Promise, George has been able to pass on successful strategies that he has learned as a member of Wisconsin United to Amend to organizations in other states. George knows passing the 28th Amendment requires grassroots action across the country.

“American Promise has opened up the necessary conversation between the states and provides me with opportunities to help other states get started building the movement,” George says. “This is not just a Wisconsin movement. It is a national movement, or it is nothing.” 



Citizen Leader Spotlight: Marie HenselderKimmel

A retired physician, New Jersey American Promise citizen leader Marie HenselderKimmel was motivated to join the movement over her concerns about the state of healthcare in our nation.

As a retired gynecologist, Marie HenselderKimmel has seen firsthand how corporate money often overshadows the healthcare needs of average citizens. The powerful interplay of wealthy interest groups has restricted women's reproductive rights and caused drug prices to skyrocket. Marie's growing disillusionment with the current political system reached a breaking point after the 2016 presidential election.

"I saw that the problem of money in politics created by *Citizens United* was a core cause of many major political problems that I cared about," Marie says.

She decided to start working toward a government that represents all the people, not just those with the biggest bank accounts.

Taking Action

Marie became especially inspired to make a difference after attending a lecture by American Promise Citizen Empowerment Coach Sam Daley-Harris in 2017. Learning

“

American Promise offered me an effective rational strategy to correct the underlying cause of the ills of our democracy that resonated with my training as a physician.

”



Marie HenselderKimmel's frustration with the pay-to-play political system reached a tipping point in 2016. Channeling her energy into action, she chose to become an American Promise citizen leader to fight for the 28th Amendment to get big money out of politics.

about his citizen advocacy model motivated her to focus on her own activism. Marie co-founded the Tri-County New Jersey American Promise Association that same spring and has been a citizen leader with the APA ever since.

"American Promise offered me an effective rational strategy to correct the underlying cause of the ills of our democracy that resonated with my training as a physician," she says.

Her leadership of the Tri-County NJ APA has led to many accomplishments in pursuit of a 28th Amendment to the Constitution. The first six months of the organization were especially productive, marked by three meetings with lawmakers, six published letters to the editor and a group presentation to a local chapter of the League of Women Voters.

The group continues to make a difference. The members engage their community by holding educational workshops, writing op-eds and letters to the editor, tabling at events, and getting signed pledges from Congressional candidates to uphold the mission of American Promise.

Mobilizing Action

Money in politics may present problems on the national scale, but Marie emphasizes

starting at the local level. Her leadership strategy is based on the idea that progress in citizen advocacy relies on building relationships. Her organization's efforts are primarily focused on building local connections, whether that's in-person education or networking at events. She has found personal engagement to be the most effective way to mobilize others.

The nationwide problem of money in politics seems overwhelming at first, but even this can be tackled by the power of average citizens uniting for a common cause. Marie believes the first step is educating and organizing others. American Promise provides an ideal platform to do so.

"The organizational model of American Promise gave me a foundation of education on the problem of money in politics and training in the process of how to gain a Constitutional amendment," she says.

Marie's story is one that highlights the bipartisan movement that works to benefit all Americans. As the Tri-County NJ APA continues to grow in membership and impact, she has seen growing enthusiasm and momentum in the effort to win the 28th Amendment. 

Just a few examples of **CITIZEN-LED SUCCESSES**

**HOW CITIZEN LEADERS
LAY THE FOUNDATIONS
OF CHANGE**



Working Together, CITIZENS ACROSS OHIO MAKE A CALL FOR CHANGE

American Promise groups and citizen supporters across Ohio made a major splash by working together to ask their House Congressional Representatives to join the cross-partisan effort to amend the U.S. Constitution to get money out of elections and governance.

By Ellen Greene Bush

For about a year, the American Promise group in Port Clinton—of which I am a member—was the only one in Ohio. We saw it as part of our mission to work along with our national leadership to encourage the growth of other state groups. And now we have a Central Ohio American Promise group working along with us with energy and enthusiasm. And three other groups in Ohio are launching in 2019.

While organizing between the Port Clinton and Central Ohio groups, we recognized that with the 116th Congress came a new opportunity. With a change of House leadership and membership, we decided to focus our message on our U.S. Representatives. Ted Knapke, of Columbus, put it this way: “There is a need for reform at all levels—local, state and national—regarding campaign finance reform. The majority of voters nationwide, regardless of political affiliation, want change. So we thought this was the time to take action at the federal level.”

With that in mind, we asked constituents in all 16 Ohio Congressional Districts to contact their representatives throughout January by postcard, email, phone call or office visit. We asked them to write letters to the editor. Our message: Pledge to get unlimited and hidden money out of elections and governance by joining the cross-partisan effort in Congress for a 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. We want our representatives to know that we recognize the need for cross-partisan work on this issue, and we want Congress to make passing a 28th Amendment first and foremost on their agenda.

Central Ohio constituents sent messages to the three House Representatives in their area. Wendy Flores had a letter to the editor published in the *Columbus Dispatch*. We had help from Daisy Reish who is launching an American Promise group in Elyria-Lorain-Oberlin. Stacy Adams of Fremont



Ellen Greene Bush is an American Promise Association leader in Ohio who has driven accomplishments ranging from local resolutions to founding new APA chapters.

led the effort in her district with messages to Representative Jim Jordan and a meeting with his area coordinator. We sent requests via social media and contact with family and friends. It seems like everyone knew someone in another district who got involved.

Just as these messages were coming into Congressional offices, HJR 2, the Democracy for All Amendment, was introduced into the House with cross-partisan sponsorship. It was a perfect time to amplify our message by asking for support for this 28th Amendment resolution.

Were our efforts successful? We think so. Anecdotally, when Nancy Gurney and Carol Martin met with Representative Marcy Kaptur’s staff person, she wondered if we were the ones behind all the postcards. Ms. Kaptur took a pile of them to read on her flight back to D.C. She heard our message.

Let’s persist in Ohio—and across the nation—so our dominant Republican Congressional contingent gets the message, too. We want them as co-sponsors and supporters. Jan Nishimura,

of Grove City, said it well, “Please! Restore our campaign finance system to something Americans can be proud of, rather than appalled by. We don’t want billions of dollars spent on elections and influence any longer.”

“We asked constituents in all 16 Ohio Congressional Districts to contact their representatives throughout January by postcard, email, phone call or office visit.”

Celebrating Success IN ST. LOUIS

St. Louis American Promise Association leader Jenny Potashnick shares how her organization collaborated with other local groups on an event that made a big splash in St. Louis, driving attention and conversation to the issues of big money in politics and the 28th Amendment.

By Jenny Potashnick

Greetings from the St. Louis American Promise Chapter. We're flying high in the Midwest after a terrific American Promise event surrounding the St. Louis screening of the *Dark Money* documentary, a film about a local journalist's relentless work to expose the impact of the Citizens United ruling in Montana.

One of our group members saw the screening was happening in our city. I asked American Promise Outreach Manager Wambui Gatheru if she knew about the film. Within an hour Wambui connected me with an American Promise leader from San Francisco who had recently coordinated a panel discussion after the documentary, as well as the film's publicist. My conversation with the San Francisco chapter gave me the background and assurance I needed to make something happen in St. Louis. And the introduction to the publicist gave me the credibility to book an interview with *Dark Money* director Kimberly Reed on our local NPR affiliate. But that was just the beginning.

The Event Grows

Since our inception, our chapter had been working to support the Clean Missouri initiative to ban lobbyist gifts over \$5 and lower campaign contribution limits to state politicians. We invited Clean Missouri to partner with us to promote the screening and amplify the importance of campaign finance reform. Together we organized a panel discussion after the screening. The panel included:

- Former Assistant Missouri Attorney General
- Former Chair of the US Election Assistance Commission (Republican)
- Treasurer of the City of St. Louis (Democrat)
- A political reporter

The room was standing-room-only as the panelists discussed everything from the real world dangers of dark money to work being done right now to expose Missouri's biggest dark money operators and how concerned citizens can most effectively combat it. It was truly inspiring. The film's publicist emailed me the next day that she had received emails from people who tracked her down online to say what a great event it was. What's more, the event brought a lot of attention to



Jenny Potashnick is a citizen leader of the St. Louis APA who understands the value of collaboration, cross-partisanship, and relying on the strength of your community.

this important issue. Following the event, Tony Messenger, the reporter who participated on the panel, wrote an article about it for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, where it ran on page 2.

Takeaways for Citizen Leaders

This event was a textbook case of grassroots advocacy and collaboration. Here were our organization's takeaways.

American Promise is on the pulse of the national conversation around campaign finance reform. As a volunteer, you're a phone call or email away from that resource. Our connection to this organization also provides instant credibility. Use it.

Collaboration is key. American Promise collaborates with a variety of groups working to improve our campaign finance system. Use this as a model and reach out to other local groups that share a similar vision. Our chapter could not have achieved this success without Clean Missouri.

Don't be afraid to approach the media. When I asked a high-profile local reporter to be on our panel, I was blown away when he emailed back, "Absolutely!" His quick and resounding yes was a good reminder to remember that 80% of Americans support our effort to get big money out of politics.

Those who care about campaign finance reform want us to succeed. Give them a chance to step up and they will.

Cross-partisanship is critical. Time and again, I see that the American Promise commitment to cross-partisanship is exactly the right way to approach our goal of passing the 28th Amendment. Our panel included members from both ends of the political spectrum yet their views on campaign finance reform dovetailed beautifully. There is something inherently powerful about working on an issue that brings so many from such different walks of life to the table. People are hungry for the opportunity to come together in these divisive times. 🇺🇸

"Time and again, I see that the American Promise commitment to cross-partisanship is exactly the right way to approach our goal of passing the 28th Amendment."

A Win for New Mexico THANKS TO CITIZEN LEADERSHIP

In an example of how citizen-led successes build upon one another, the Santa Fe APA used the success of an APA across the nation to drive passage of their own local resolution.

Inspired by the work of their fellow citizen leaders in Minnesota, Santa Fe, New Mexico, American Promise Association leaders drove approval of a resolution in support of the 28th Amendment by the Santa Fe County Commission.

Ishwari Sollohub of the Santa Fe APA recently shared more about the process behind the success, what advice she would offer to other APAs working with local policymakers, and how work for the 28th Amendment continues with New Mexico's congressional delegation.

Several of these commissioners signed the American Promise Candidate Pledge. How did those efforts play into/lead up to this resolution's success?

One of our pledge signers, Santa Fe County Commissioner Anna Hansen, indicated she would be happy to bring a resolution before the county commission. Another county commissioner had signed the pledge, so we knew the support was good. American Promise communications highlighted someone in the APA from Minnesota that successfully worked to get a county resolution approved. We thought that might be a good thing to do here.

It took us a few months, but we did write a resolution, then we were able to meet with Anna Hansen and county staff member Sarah Smith to present our version of a resolution. The reception was fabulous, and they scheduled it for the next county commission meeting.

About 10 of us showed up at the commission meeting, not sure what to expect. Our agenda item was moved up when our commissioner Anna Hansen saw how many people we had. She introduced the resolution, and then several of us spoke briefly and answered a few questions.

How did the national American Promise organization support your local efforts on this resolution?

The whole idea of a resolution came from American Promise's success story about the resolution in Minnesota. We requested a copy of that, which we used to get an idea of what a resolution would look like.

What does passage of this resolution mean for New Mexico, Santa Fe and your APA?

The success of this resolution has us pretty fired up, in terms of approaching other county commissions and city councils. We have a



Ishwari Sollohub has helped achieve major victories across New Mexico, including helping lead the way for U.S. Representative Deb Haaland to sign the American Promise Candidate Pledge.

fresh success to approach others with and are excitedly working toward that right now. The more resolutions we can get throughout the state, the more prepared we will be for ratification.

What was the best part of this accomplishment?

The amazingly positive reception we had. It seems so often we are fighting to get people on board, but this was just so easy. I personally don't see that there was or is any ulterior motive for any of the counselors or commissioners to move with this item. They really believe in it, which is heartwarming and encouraging.

What challenges did you face?

The only challenge we had was that it took us awhile to get our own resolution written. We wanted to get it right, and there were a few perspectives on exactly what it should say. There was no pressure in terms of time, so we didn't make ourselves crazy, and eventually, the resolution materialized.

Any advice for other APAs looking to follow your lead?

Approach Pledge Signers or people who declined to sign the Pledge but were still supportive. Talk with them about a possible resolution and have a model or two you can show them. Talk with them about pre-ratification and see if they would like to get on board.

What's next for your APA?

We have a great slate from New Mexico in Congress right now, including two who are new this year. We are working with all of them and their staff members on 28th Amendment issues. Two of our three U.S. representatives have already co-sponsored the Democracy for All Amendment, proposed in Congress at the start of 2019. We are working on the third. 

"The whole idea of a resolution came from American Promise's success story about the resolution in Minnesota ... We ended up writing our own, but it was good to see what someone else had used."

Citizen Action Win! A LOCAL RESOLUTION PASSES IN MINNESOTA

Proving the strong cross-partisan support for getting big money out of politics, citizen leaders in Minnesota passed a county resolution in Sherburne County, one of the most conservative counties in the state.

Kathryn Tasto is one of the many citizen leaders across the nation who has successfully led local action to help drive national progress toward the 28th Amendment. Her passion led her to join a local American Promise Association. In April 2018, American Promise MN was successful in passing a local 28th Amendment resolution in Sherburne County, Minnesota, one of the most conservative counties in the state.

In this Q&A, Kathryn shares some of the process that helped her APA achieve success.

Please explain how this local resolution came about. What initiated the process?

Vicki Barnes from American Promise MN met with the Sherburne Indivisible group to explain how we could work together to take action by asking our county commissioners to adopt a resolution. Several members of our organization, including myself, decided to research the topic, contact a few of our commissioners, and make an appointment to get onto the county board agenda.

What reaction did you get from your county commissioners?

We met personally with three of the commissioners before making the request to be on the county agenda. At each meeting we presented information about the issue. All three commissioners agreed that there is too much special interest money influencing our elections and our government. We knew going into the formal board meeting that we had a majority in favor of the resolution. The final vote was 4-0, with one commissioner absent.

How did the national American Promise organization support your local efforts?

During the process, one of the commissioners changed the wording of the resolution without our permission, basically gutting it. We had to rewrite it with a small concession. American Promise Counsel Johannes Epke, from the national office, looked it over to be sure the new wording was strong enough for a local



Citizen leader **Kathryn Tasto** is helping drive local successes in Minnesota through her American Promise Association.

resolution. Having that level of support from the national office was vital for easing the anxiety of “getting it wrong.”

What does passage of this resolution mean for your APA, county and state?

Two local news outlets covered the story, which means the action provided an avenue to educate the public about the issue. Sherburne is one of the most conservative counties in Minnesota, so it helps lead the way for surrounding counties to get involved.

What was the best part of this accomplishment?

The best part for me is the opportunity to participate at the local government level, to meet with local officials, to present my research at an official board meeting, and to know that my work had an impact in my community.

Any advice for others looking to follow your lead?

Do your homework. Learn as much as you can about your elected officials before you meet with them, and meet with each one personally. At your first meeting ask if s/he will support your efforts. If not, ask why, then

address those concerns to win support. Do not request a vote until you know you have enough support. It’s more difficult to backtrack a failed vote than to wait for a better time.

What’s up next for your APA?

We hope to work in the surrounding counties with groups that are willing to work on this process in their county/city. 

“The best part for me is the opportunity to participate at the local government level, to meet with local elected officials, to present my research at an official board meeting, and to know that my work had an impact in my community.”

ROADMAP TO SUCCESS

American Promise volunteers and contributors are fueling a growing citizen uprising in America. Our strategy to win the amendment focuses on racking up state-by-state wins driven by local action. With more than 200,000 supporters in 50 states, we're on track with our plan to pass the 28th Amendment by 2026. Here's a quick snapshot of our plans for the coming year.

Grow Our Network of Engaged Citizens: In 2018 our network grew to 200,000—with supporters in every state across the nation—and we launched more than a dozen new American Promise Associations, training hundreds of citizen leaders in effective civic engagement to advocate for the 28th Amendment. Next we aim to launch more than 20 new APAs in cities and towns across the nation.

Focus on Statewide Initiatives: With 20 states that have formally passed resolutions calling for the amendment, we're well on our way to our goal of entering 2020 with 22 states in the win column. In another state-based success, a powerful effort by more than 1,000 American Promise volunteers across Massachusetts helped pass Ballot Question 2, creating the first non-partisan "Citizen Commission to Advance a Constitutional Amendment To Secure Government of the People." Every city and town in Massachusetts voted Yes on 2. The measure earned cross-partisan endorsements from Democrats including Senator Elizabeth Warren and Attorney General Maura Healey and from Republicans including Governor Charlie Baker and Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito. This success will serve as a model for other states on the ratification pathway. Our target states for resolutions include Wyoming, Virginia, Ohio, Michigan and Pennsylvania, among others. We'll also be launching initiatives in Texas, Oklahoma and Florida.

Continue Building Support in Congress: With overwhelming and bipartisan support for democracy reforms among citizens, we are primed to build support for an amendment among our representatives. Our current total is 151 co-sponsors in the House and 45 co-sponsors in the Senate, and 20 states so far have formally enacted resolutions in support of this amendment. Our goal is to build up to 240 House and 50 Senate co-sponsors of the amendment. This will put us in a strong position to head into 2020.

Ramp up our Writing the 28th program: In 2018, our acclaimed Writing the 28th Amendment town hall meetings came to Columbus, OH; St. Louis, MO; Los Angeles, CA; Richmond, VA; Boston, MA; and Washington, D.C., to take the question of what the 28th Amendment should say directly to citizen stakeholders in town halls across the country. We also participated in a nationally simulcast debate in the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, where American Promise President Jeff Clements and Business for American Promise, Bay Area co-founder Elizabeth Doty debated attorney Floyd Abrams and former FEC chair Bradley Smith. In 2019 we will host four more Writing the 28th events across the nation.

Hold Our Third National Citizen Leadership Conference: In June of 2018 more than 300 attendees met with politicians, journalists and democracy movement leaders from across the political spectrum to rally for the 28th Amendment. The day following the conference, 200 American Promise members participated in our first citizen lobby day on Capitol Hill, meeting with 79 House and Senate members from both parties. In October 2019 we will host our expanding community of citizen leaders in the Washington, D.C., area and take even more action on Capitol Hill.

These programs, and more, are bringing Americans together to build the powerful, unstoppable movement to win historic, fundamental reform, and secure our constitutional foundation of equal citizens and effective self-government. 