


**JEFFERSON COUNTY  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

**CONSENT AGENDA REQUEST**

**TO:** Board of County Commissioners  
**FROM:** Philip Morley, County Administrator  
**DATE:** April 23, 2012  
**SUBJECT:** Constitutional Amendment on Corporate Personhood



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**STATEMENT OF ISSUE:**

The Board of County Commissioners may review and approve a County Resolution in the Matter of Supporting an Amendment to the United States Constitution to Abolish Corporate Personhood.

**ANALYSIS:**

On February 27 and April 16, 2012, the County Commissioners discussed a potential resolution supporting a constitutional amendment to clarify that rights protected by the U.S. Constitution should be for the rights of natural persons rather than corporations, and that corporate campaign contributions and expenditures is not speech and may be regulated. Over 1,400 citizens have signed a local petition calling for such a constitutional amendment to end corporate personhood and recognize that corporate money in campaigns is not protected free speech. This local activity is part of a national movement that is motivated to strengthen our democracy and reduce what many view as the undue influence of corporations and other organizations on national, state and local elections,

The Resolution encourages the Washington State Legislature to call for such an amendment to the U.S. Constitution, and encourages the Legislature and U.S. Congress to consider language substantially similar as that attached to the County Resolution.

A potential County Resolution is presented for consideration and possible approval by the Board of County Commissioners.

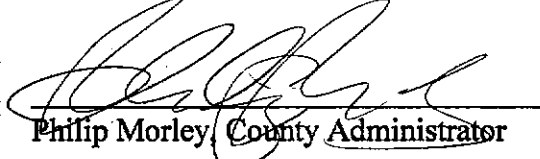
**FINANCIAL ANALYSIS:**

The Resolution has no financial impact on the County.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Review and revise the Resolution as appropriate, and consider a motion to adopt the Resolution.

**REVIEWED BY:**

  
Philip Morley, County Administrator

4/18/12  
Date

**JEFFERSON COUNTY  
STATE OF WASHINGTON**

**In the Matter of Supporting an Amendment        }                   RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_  
to the United States Constitution to            }  
Abolish Corporate Personhood                }**

**Whereas**, government of, by, and for the people has long been a cherished American value; and the people’s fundamental and inalienable right to self-govern, and thereby secure rights to life, liberty, property, and the pursuit of happiness is guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution and the Declaration of Independence; and

**Whereas**, free and fair elections are essential to democracy and effective self-governance; and

**Whereas**, corporations are not mentioned in the U.S. Constitution, and the people have never granted constitutional rights to corporations, nor have the people decreed that corporations have authority that exceeds the authority of the people of the United States; and

**Whereas**, we do not object to the ability of corporations to engage in legal actions essential to the conduct of their business (e.g. enter into contracts, sue, be sued, etc.); and

**Whereas**, interpretation of the U.S. Constitution by appointed Supreme Court justices to include corporations in the term “persons” denies the people’s exercise of self-governance by endowing corporations with constitutional protections intended for the people; and

**Whereas**, the judicial bestowal of political rights upon corporations usurps basic human and constitutional rights guaranteed to human persons, and also empowers corporations to sue municipal and state governments for adopting laws that corporations view as violating these judicially-bestowed ‘corporate rights’ even when those laws serve to protect and defend the legitimate rights of human persons and communities of citizens; and

**Whereas**, corporations are not and have never been human beings, and therefore they do not vote in elections and should not be categorized as persons for purposes related to elections for public office; and

**Whereas**, the recent Supreme Court decision, *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, that rolled back the legal limits on corporate spending in the electoral process creates an unequal playing field and allows unlimited corporate spending to influence elections, candidate selection, and policy decisions, and to sway votes, and forces elected officials to divert their attention from the peoples’ business, or even vote against the interest of their human constituents, in order to ensure competitive campaign funds for their own reelections; and

**Whereas**, tens of thousands of people, organizations, and municipalities across the nation are joining with the movement to call for an amendment to the U.S. Constitution to abolish corporate constitutional rights and the doctrine of money as free speech; and

**Whereas**, a Memorial proposing an amendment to the U.S. Constitution has been introduced in the Washington State Legislature through House Joint Memorial 4005 and Senate Joint Memorial 8007, and has yet to be passed; and

**Whereas**, over 1,400 citizens have signed a local petition calling for a constitutional amendment to end corporate personhood, recognizing that corporate money is not free speech and may be regulated,

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Jefferson County Board of County Commissioners as follows:

1. Jefferson County hereby calls on our Washington State legislators to join the tens of thousands of citizens, grassroots organizations and local governments across the country in the campaign to call for an Amendment to the Constitution of the United States to Abolish Corporate Personhood and return our democracy, our elections and our communities back to America's human persons and to thus reclaim the people's sovereign right to self-governance; and
2. Jefferson County calls on other communities and jurisdictions to join with us in this action by passing similar Resolutions; and
3. Jefferson County supports education to increase public awareness of the threats to our democracy posed by Corporate Personhood, and encourages lively discussion to build understanding and consensus to take appropriate community and municipal actions to democratically respond to these threats.

**ADOPTED** by the Jefferson County Board of County Commissioners at a regular meeting thereof, held this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2012.

SEAL

JEFFERSON COUNTY  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

John Austin, Chair

ATTEST:

Phil Johnson, Member

Raina Randall  
Deputy Clerk of the Board

David Sullivan, Member