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Supreme Court to Hear Argument in Campaign Spending Limits Case
-- Sec. of State Candidate John Bonifaz, Co-Counsel in Defense of the Limits, to
Join Other Counsel in the Courtroom for Historic Argument --

Washington D.C. – Voting rights leader **John Bonifaz**, Democratic candidate for Secretary of State, will join other counsel tomorrow (Tuesday) in a historic moment before the U.S. Supreme Court. The Court will hear arguments in *Randall v. Sorrell*, a case to determine whether a Vermont state law setting strict campaign spending limits and donation guidelines is Constitutional. The case will give the Court its first opportunity in 30 years to revisit its 1976 decision in *Buckley v. Valeo*, which struck down congressional spending limits on First Amendment grounds.

“Thirty years ago, the Supreme Court sanctioned a system of unlimited campaign spending in federal, state and local races across the country,” explained Bonifaz. “Thirty years later, the Court now has an opportunity to examine the real-world experience of this system and the evidence of its detrimental impact on the integrity of the electoral process, and on basic First Amendment and political equality values.

“This case could change the landscape of our elections and help return power to the voters.”

Bonifaz has been a principal architect in the movement to revisit *Buckley v. Valeo*. In fact, when he founded the National Voting Rights Institute (NVRI) in 1994, Bonifaz had the challenge of Buckley in mind as one of NVRI’s major purposes. NVRI has since litigated the only three test cases directly revisiting the question of the constitutionality of spending limits since 1976.

In *Kruse v. City of Cincinnati*, the first test case after Buckley, Bonifaz served as lead special counsel for the City in defense of its campaign spending limits. As part of that case, Bonifaz was able to develop a coalition of 21 secretaries of state in support of revisiting Buckley on the spending limits question.

A 2005 survey commissioned by NVRI, found that 87% of voters polled support caps on campaign spending. The support cut across party lines with 71% of Democrats, 66% of Republicans and 73% of Independents responding that candidates spend too much money.

In the Vermont case, Bonifaz helped marshal and coordinate a Secretary of State brief filed in support of the Vermont law and signed by the Secretaries in New Hampshire, New Mexico, Oregon and Wisconsin. The brief was circulated by the Oregon Secretary of State via the National Association of Secretaries of State, but was not signed by current Massachusetts Secretary William Galvin.

“Massachusetts should be leading the way calling for such limits,” said Bonifaz. “The people of this state and of the nation want an end to the current system of money in politics and want limits on overall campaign spending. The voters of the Commonwealth cast their vote on this issue in 1998 when they passed the Clean Elections Law overwhelmingly.”

Bonifaz, who launched his campaign in December, defended the Massachusetts Clean Elections Law against a Legislature that turned its back on the voters it represents and refused to fund the law.

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