By Russ Pankonin, The Imperial Republican

Are you aware of the effect of 2010 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in the case of Citizens United v. Federal Communications Commission?

With the presidential election now behind us, it's time that Americans take a closer look at the Citizens United ruling and how it affects the political climate we endure today.

Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission, 558 U.S. 310 (2010), proved to be a landmark U.S. Supreme Court case. The High Court ruled that the First Amendment prohibited the government from restricting independent political expenditures by corporations and unions.

What this really means is that it opened the check books of corporations and unions in hopes of influencing the presidential election, and other important elections, such as Congress and governorships.

Before the ruling, candidates at least knew who was going after them because spending on attack advertising was tracked and in some cases prohibited. That all changed in 2010.

You've probably heard of the term "political action committee" or PACs, as they are often referred as. With the Citizens United ruling, these PACs could spent countless dollars on attack advertising with virtually no accountability. A big source of the funds? Corporations and unions.

Prior to the ruling, these two entities couldn't get away with the shenanigans we voters have had to put up with for the last six to eight months.

Still in place is a federal ban making it illegal for corporations or unions to make direct contributions to candidate campaigns or political parties in races for federal office. But the ruling on Citizen's United provided the back door corporations and unions needed in an attempt to usurp the power of the voter.

Instead of throwing up our arms in disgust, this time there is something that can be done to right this abuse.

Free Speech for People is a national non-profit organization seeking to overturn the Citizens United decision through an amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Unless the Supreme Court reverses itself, a constitutional amendment is the only way citizens can overrule it.

Article V of the U.S. Constitution allows for the amendment of the Constitution by votes of two-thirds of each chamber of Congress, followed by ratification by three-quarters of the states. Peter Schurman, campaign director for Free Speech For People, said 67 U.S. senators, 290 U.S. representatives and 10 states have already jumped on board.

In the U.S. Senate, 24 returning senators have introduced or co-sponsored amendments to overturn Citizens United. In the U.S. House, 73 returning U.S. representatives have done the same with another eight having made public commitments to support one.

On Election Day, voters in Montana and Colorado voted to make their states the 10th and 11th to formally call for an amendment. Seven of the other states—Hawaii, New Mexico, Vermont, Rhode Island, California, Massachusetts and New Jersey—acted through their legislatures, which passed resolutions calling for an amendment; in two more, Connecticut and Maryland, majorities of the legislatures signed letters to Congress calling for an amendment

More importantly, Schurman said public support for an amendment also is resoundingly bipartisan. A 2010 Peter Hart poll revealed that 68 percent of Republicans, 82 percent of independents and 87 percent of Democrats support an amendment. A 2012 AP poll showed that 81 percent of Republicans, 78 percent of independents and 85 percent of Democrats want to limit corporate, union and other outside spending.

Schurman said the growing national movement for an amendment is even more dramatically visible at the local level. More than 350 cities, towns and counties, including New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and Philadelphia have called for an amendment, and more than 2,000 elected officials nationwide are on record supporting one.

I am just one American who spent the past few months barraged under an unprecedented explosion of distasteful advertising financed by millions of dollars for which there is no accounting or responsibility. Is this the way we want our elections to be won or lost?

I will be among the first to step forward in protecting the First Amendment and the right of people to express themselves freely. But I don't believe a corporation or union should receive the same consideration as you and me in regards to individual freedom of expression.

After Nebraskans got a taste of (or should I say distaste from) outside spending that occurred in the Fischer-Kerry Senate race, I would hope most Nebraskans will support an effort to rid our country of this ridiculous ruling.

I would also hope that our senators in the Nebraska Unicameral will step up to the plate and follow the lead of other states in seeking to overturn the Citizens United ruling and return democracy to we, the people!