

The Annual Move to Amend Hearing for the City of Cleveland Heights, Ohio was held on January 25 at 7:00 p.m., Mayor Roe presiding

Council Members present: Dunbar, Roe, Seren, Stephens, Ungar, Yasinow

Staff present: Boland, Briley, Butler, Freeman, Juliano, Lambdin, Mannarino, McRae, Niermann, Nouredine, O'Neil, Sabin, Wong

Mayor Roe stated, "Okay, so are we ready? Are we ready to videotape? Okay, good evening again, everyone. My name is Carol Roe. I'm the President of Council of Cleveland Heights City Council. Thank you for joining us tonight for the City's Annual Move to Amend Hearing, also referred to as Democracy Day. Before we start, I have a few introductory remarks. The purpose of this hearing is to examine the impact on our city, state, and nation of political influence by corporate entities and big money in connection with the most recent election. That would be 2017. Corporate entities include business corporations, political action committees (PACs), Super PACs, 2014(c)(4) groups as well as unions. This Move to Amend Hearing is established by Chapter 183 of the Codified Ordinance. Chapter 183 of the ordinance was created via a citizens' initiative ordinance passed in our city in November of 2013 which, by the way, I did vote for. Although many times Council passes ordinances on the city's behalf, this particular ordinance was prepared and generated by a dedicated group of citizens and maybe some of those people could raise their hands. Thank you. The citizens asked Council to allow the voters to decide the issue. Council did that almost five years ago and it was overwhelmingly adopted. The Chapter 183 says that we hold this meeting annually and take public comment. We also will have a written record of the meeting and it will be on our website by March 1. As directed also by the ordinance, we will be sending a letter to our elected representatives about this hearing. The letter will talk about the citizens of Cleveland Heights and how wonderful they are. No, actually, it will say that we voted in November, 2013 in support of this citizens' initiative which calls for an amendment to the U.S. Constitution saying that only human beings, not corporations, are legal persons. It also says money is not the equivalent to speech. Therefore, regulating political contributions and spending does not equate to limiting political speech. We're here to listen to you tonight. As I said, we will be recording all the comments and if you have anything in writing that you wish to submit in the record, you can do that as well without speaking if you so choose. One of the other things that the Chapter 183 specifies – we must limit comments to five minutes. So, giving everybody a chance to speak. So, when speaking, I ask that you please start by giving your name and address and then limit your comments to five minutes and that you speak to the ordinance, not other city business. The purpose, again, is to examine the impact of political influence by corporate entities with the most recent election and we have some timekeepers over here. Would you like to introduce yourselves?"

Carmella Williams stated, "I'm Carmella Williams. I'm a member of the Cleveland East, Shaker Heights-Cleveland Heights movement – and South Euclid, forgive me – Move to Amend Chapter. Thank you for welcoming me to your community. So, during the evening as we speak, please do not panic if you see the one minute sign, the 30 second sign and obviously the stop sign."

Vicky Elder stated, "Hi, Vicky Elder. I'm with the Cleveland East Move to Amend as well. I'll be keeping her on track with technology."

Mayor Roe stated, "So, with that, and in order to make sure everyone gets an opportunity to speak this evening, who is going to start? Okay, Carla."

Carla Rautenberg's introductory remarks were submitted in writing as follows. "Carla Rautenberg, 3065 Berkshire.

Good evening, and welcome to the 5th Annual Cleveland Heights Democracy Day. Thank you, Mayor Roe and members of Council for hosting this public hearing.

When Move to Amend started after the Citizens United decision in 2010, it was just a few activists scattered across the country who shared a very big idea: that creating a real democracy in the United States will require not just regulating money in politics, but also ending the legal doctrine of corporate personhood. Therefore, we need a 28th amendment to the Constitution clearly stating that only human beings are entitled to Constitutional rights, and money is not equivalent to free speech.

Since 2010, Move to Amend has grown to a national movement supported by more than 450,000 people: this is what bottom-up, grassroots organizing looks like.

From small towns like Oberlin, Ohio to huge cities like Los Angeles, resolutions and ballot initiatives have been passed to support the 28th amendment. You can see some of our progress in Ohio on this map, and nationally, on the charts posted around the room.

It's hard to believe it's been more than 5 years since many of us were spending hours every week collecting the signatures to get Issue 32 on the ballot. Because hundreds of people in neighboring communities also collected signatures, Democracy Day public hearings were held last year in Shaker Heights, South Euclid, Brecksville and the City of Cleveland.

But while we must build support at the local level, the amendment will only be passed if proposed by two-thirds of both Houses of Congress, or by a Constitutional Convention proposed by two-third of the states; and in either case, ratified by three-fourths of the states.

Therefore, we must work through our elected representatives, and we will relay to them the messages you deliver tonight. Per the Ordinance passed by our initiative, the Clerk of Council will send letters summarizing this hearing to our representatives in the Ohio General Assembly, the U.S. House of Representatives, and the U.S. Senate. Summaries of your testimony will be appended to those letters. Please email your written remarks to me as soon as possible so they can be summarized and included. Send them to Carla AT Simmertildone.net.

The We the People Amendment has been introduced in the Congress as House Joint Resolution 48. Last year, we set a goal of attaining 35 co-sponsors by the end of 2017. We blew by that and by

year's end, 52 Congressional members had signed on to co-sponsor HJR-48, including both Marcy Kaptur and our own Marcia Fudge.

Our big push now is to get companion legislation introduced in the Senate. To learn more about these efforts, please plan to attend the Feb. 25th meeting announced on these flyers, and also please put our April 7 statewide gathering on your calendars. That will be in Columbus.

Another major initiative during this Congressional election year is the Pledge to Amend. We will be approaching both current office-holders and all candidates for elective office to ask for their written Pledge to support the 28th Amendment. Greg Coleridge has forms."

This 28th Amendment stating that only human beings are entitled to constitutional rights, and money is not speech, WILL happen.

When it does, it will be because Republicans, Greens, Democrats, Libertarians, and Independent voters overwhelming agree: a government beholden to corporate actors and wealthy donors is not serving this democratic Republic well.

We need broad and systemic reforms to establish a genuine democracy of, by, and for the people."

Carla Rautenberg stated, "Thank you."

Mayor Roe stated, "Thank you, Carla. So, before our next speaker, if they could get up to the podium, let me just say that we have here tonight, I'm sorry, Congressman or, I made you a Congressman."

Councilman Ungar stated, "Thank you for that promotion."

Mayor Roes stated, "Councilman Mike Ungar, Councilwoman Cheryl Stephens, Councilwoman Mary Dunbar and Melissa Yasinow, Councilwoman and Vice Mayor. Okay, next."

"Hello. It is a pleasure to introduce myself. My name is Ronin Karim. My house is 3846 Mayfield Road and I come today, sorry, just a minute, to speak to you about the great and eternal paradox of the American dream. Throughout the history of the nation, many have studied this and many have come to no conclusion, but I have come to a conclusion today. In our nation, we let many bask in the light of liberty, letting many languish in despair and languish in the shadow of hate and oppression. Throughout the history of our nation, we have failed to help these people, but I hope that today we will do something. I would like to point out that, metaphorically speaking, many other nations in our world sort of, I would say, cater to the tides of progress. Within our nation, we struggle fervently against it. I come here today to tell you that we must take back the ship from the corporate and tyrannical ship captain, corporate capitalism. I'm here to tell you that if we do not do this, we will be forever marooned on the shores of hatred and there is no coming back. We must do some nonviolent movements like this, what we here have today. We must also be informed in our decisions like this movement today. I would also

like to point out that if we continue to live the American dream, we will be living a lie. The American dream today is one of corporation funded for option and I must say that the American dream is good hearted, but if we continue to go in this direction, we will not meet that. And I must also say that I am proud to say that I believe the people I stand with today are the people that will one day change that and I hope that we can stop living that lie and accept that perhaps the American dream will not help us and that indeed, we are doomed if we do not face that and I would like to say that we have gotten through civil wars, defiance of empires, world wars, but every time we have emerged dragged into a false sense of security by corporate capitalism. And I would also like to say that through this corporate capitalism, we are dragged into eternal darkness. The question we are asked today is - As a nation, will we stand up and escape this eternal darkness guarded by the light of liberty? Will we languish in our despair as a corporate capitalist nation? Thank you.”

Mayor Roe stated, “Thank you. So, who’s next? I think for efficiency purposes, it would be okay when speaking if they’re getting towards the end, somebody could get up and get behind them and we could move along.”

Sue Dyke stated, “Hi, I’m Sue Dyke, 2510 Arlington Road, Cleveland Heights. Today I’m here to talk about gerrymandering.”

Sue Dyke’s comments were submitted in writing as follows. “Today, elections in Ohio are not fair. For democracy to function meaningfully, your vote must count. Gerrymandering is at the foundation of why we feel our votes don’t matter. Gerrymandering is one of those things that everyone should be against. It is cheating by politicians who want to make sure that they stay in power by creating a majority they didn’t earn. They do this by drawing legislative district lines that benefit the majority party. Essentially politicians are picking their voters.

In gerrymandered districts, some votes count more than other votes. It is how a purple swing state – with the population evenly split between Republicans and Democrats has a 75% Republican majority in congress.

So many votes are wasted.

In Ohio District maps are drawn by the majority party in power after each census. Since 2011

- Not one congressional district in Ohio has changed parties since. If you are running for Congress, you only need to win your primary – which is when most voters do not turn out.
- In 2016 the closest congressional race was won by 19 points and The average congressional race was won by 34 points. Not one district in Ohio is competitive

Outcome is that:

- The party of the district was predetermined when the maps were drawn in 2011 and has stayed that way through 3 election cycles.
- Representatives are not accountable to voters –
- which in turn creates gridlock and extremism and unwillingness to work across the aisle in Congress.
- Our elected officials are more beholden to their donors than to their constituents.

Snake on the lake – (show map)

- Rep for the west side of Cleveland lives in Toledo.
- You must drive through five congressional districts to get from one side to the other
- The only time they are connected is at low tide.

The maps will be drawn again in 2021 by the same gerrymandered legislature we have today in Ohio and will stand until 2032. That means that if we do not fix gerrymandering in Ohio now, the situation will not improve until at least 2032. Our Supermajority legislature cannot be trusted to make these maps without strict guidelines and rules.

We are now engaged in a petition drive to change how the maps are drawn in Ohio. This drive is organized by a coalition between the League of Women Voters, common cause and 30 other NON PARTISAN organizations. Our proposal:

- Creates a bi partisan commission to draw the maps
- Makes the map drawing process transparent
- Keeps communities and counties together.
- Based on the 2015 ballot measure that more than 70% of Ohio voters approved in every county

We do not understand why the GOP majority in the Ohio legislature refuses to endorse our proposal.

It IS the bipartisan compromise they claim to seek.

At this moment, we are at a dangerous place in our movement to enact redistricting reform. Recently GOP Sen Matt Huffman proposed a redistricting ballot initiative without any bipartisan support, Senate Joint Resolution 5.

SJR5 in its current form is worse than no reform at all. It actually enshrines gerrymandering in Ohio's constitution. It removes veto power of the governor and removes citizens referendum power to oppose future maps. The map drawing would remain in the hands of those who can directly benefit from it. It can only be viewed as an attempt to confuse voters, volunteers and prevent gerrymandering reform.

If adopted by the legislature, SJR5 will be placed on the May ballot, and they do not need any Dem. Votes or the support of Gov. Kasich to do so. Our proposal is a citizens' initiative and cannot go on the ballot until November.

With that said, it has been a very busy week at the statehouse. In the face of our strong opposition, yesterday the Ohio Senate announced it was [delaying a vote](#) on SJR5. Even more importantly, the Ohio Senate [announced it would not place a proposal on the May ballot](#) if the Fair Districts coalition did not support its plan.

Fair Districts is currently in talks with House and Senate leadership about potential changes to SJR 5 that would provide REAL Reform.

- until the legislature passes such a proposal, our campaign to collect 305,000 signatures will continue full steam ahead. The legislature has until February 7 to approve legislation that would put congressional redistricting on the May ballot.

It is very possible that we will still oppose a May ballot initiative - In the meantime, regardless of what happens with the GOP proposal, we will continue to collect signatures so our own proposal makes it onto the November ballot. And we need to win in November 2018.

This is important. Gerrymandering undermines the very essence of democracy. The future of our country depends on this."

Ari Klein stated, "My name is Ari Klein, 3393 Dellwood. Mayor Roe, members of Council, thank you for hearing us tonight. I'm the President of the Cleveland Heights Teachers Union, so I'm going to speak on education tonight and give you the report from last year until this year."

Ari Klein's comments were submitted in writing as follows. "Public education is the great equalizers in our democracy. Run as a public good, for all, governed by publicly elected officials that follows strict guidelines for funding and operations as well as staffing and other concerns. Public education is the epitome of democracy in many ways.

Public education in our country, state and local school district has been under attack for years. Here are some of the issues facing us this year.

1) Charter Schools: Both the state and federal governments have continued to divert public dollars slated for public education to private hands. Charters are accountable to no one. They have no elected board. There is very little oversight. Our one big success was finally getting the electronic

classroom of tomorrow to shut down. This mammoth virtual school grabbed over a billion dollars of Ohio taxpayer money for their online learning scheme. Somehow the state finally determined that ECOT should be able to show that students actually turned the computer on for class periodically – they could not. So, instead of giving back \$60 million to the state from funds wasted in 2016-17, they shut down. Good riddance. Students attending charters from CHUH received close to \$7,700 per student from state dollars – leaving \$2,300 from state dollars for students attending the public schools. For each of the 420 students attending a charter, whether that charter was of any known quality or not, local residents subsidized about \$2.3 million dollars from local funds for charter students.

2) Vouchers: Students attending parochial and private school that accept voucher dollars (labelled Ed Choice Scholarships) divert local funds away from CHUH students. Last year Ed Choice Students each took \$4,300 from state aid given to CHUH. The reality is that CHUH students were left with \$2,300 each from the state. SO, CHUH residents subsidized 273 students by over half a million dollars from local funds.

3) Vouchers can also be for students with disabilities going to private schools. Families that accept services from private providers for their student with disabilities are giving up their rights to challenge whether or not the service provided is appropriate or adequate. Private providers of special ed services for students not attending public schools are not held to any standard nor are they mandated to have any special requirements to provide services. So, someone who is a beautician can set up a business as a provider of services for students with autism, as an example, and charge the state tens of thousands of dollars. The state provides no oversight. CHUH had over 130 students last year that attended private or parochial schools using Petersen or Autism Scholarships – special ed vouchers, to the tune of \$1.7 million dollars (over \$12,500 per student on average). Of those funds, our local dollars subsidized over \$1.3 Million.

These are some of the threats to the very existence of public education. The laws imperil how we operate in our schools, forcing us to go to voters every few years to pass operating levies to keep our heads above water. The last levy passed in CHUH does not cover the amount of money lost from state dollars to educate students that we do not service.

The other threat that I want to mention are those coming from the Department of Education in Washington DC headed by Betsy DeVos. Here is a summary from National Education Association President Lilly Eskelsen Garcia that is concise:

***Quote “Instead of fighting to provide opportunity for every student, she openly said that more schools should have a “we’re not for everyone” approach. She rolled back Obama-era guidance on campus sexual assault policies, further reducing protection for students. She made it harder for students with special needs to get the support they need to succeed. She wanted to cut \$9.2 billion from the Department of Education—eliminating teacher training programs and college prep courses for impoverished students. Instead, she’s invested her energy in voucher programs that take scarce funding*

*away from public schools and give it to private schools that are unaccountable to the public.” **end quote.*

This does not even touch on many of the more subtle issues controlled by Ms DeVos – like funneling student loan program to her profiteer friends.

Attacks on public education are attacks on democracy. If you want to learn more than please join the Heights Coalition for Public Education’s for the first forum in our winter democracy series – starting Monday, January 29 at 7 PM at our high school. Three area superintendents speak about how they are fighting back against state policies that hurt their students communities.”

Francis Chiappa stated, “Thank you for listening. I’m Francis Chiappa, 2997 Hampshire Road and I’ve been working for a long time with Cleveland Peace Action and at one time, the Cleveland Heights nuclear free’s campaign.”

Francis Chiappa’s comments were submitted in writing as follows. “Good evening, Mayor Roe, Members of Council. I’m Francis Chiappa, of Cleveland Peace Action, and a Cleveland Hts. resident.

I speak tonight about a national issue with a grave impact on Ohio, Cuyahoga County and our local communities —the outsize influence and power of the US “defense” industry, which one might call “The War Machine”.

War is very profitable. The Pentagon’s top contractors send armies of lobbyists to Capitol Hill to fight budget caps and increase spending. Their PACs give lavishly to congressional campaigns, gifting Democrats and Republicans alike. This is the military-industrial-congressional complex.

So, our elected representatives find it very difficult to question military spending. When Congress looks for budget cuts, it’s public transportation, food stamps, Medicaid and the like. The Pentagon is a sacred cow.

This, in spite of well-documented waste, fraud and abuse; in spite of a warren of accounting systems that prevent the audits that every other branch of government is subject to. Congress just keeps the money flowing.

As a result, U.S. defense spending is out of control. With the most powerful military the world has ever seen, we spend more than the next seven countries combined. It eats over half of the federal discretionary budget, squeezing essential services and programs on which our welfare and security rest.

Consider some tradeoffs, military vs. domestic spending: (courtesy of National Priorities Project): Ohio taxpayers pay over \$15 billion a year to the Pentagon. If the Pentagon reined in waste, it could save us at least 10%. What could we do with those tax dollars?

Some examples: with \$1.57 billion more, Ohio could restore that devastating \$1.2 billion a year cut to local government funding that Cleveland Hts. has no doubt felt.

While we're wondering how an \$18 million RTA shortfall will effect public transportation, a single, problem-ridden F-35 fighter jet is costing \$100 million. The Pentagon plans to buy 2,400 of these.

Back to that 10% waste in the military budget. Cleveland Hts. share of that is \$6.65 million a year. That would fund 173 four-year university scholarships for our students.

In your report of this meeting to our state and national elected officials, in addition to supporting the Move to Amend constitutional amendment, please talk about moving the money from military to domestic spending. Call for the Pentagon to be fully accountable and subject to audits.

Consider joining Mayors for Peace. This was started in 1982 by the Mayor of Hiroshima to promote solidarity among cities, for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Mayors for Peace now numbers 7,400 cities from 162 countries.

Advocate for the People's Budget, proposed by the Congressional Progressive Caucus. It's a good blueprint for both revenue and spending, recognizing that real security lies in the health and well being of our people and our communities.

I close with a quote from President Eisenhower. In his 1961 farewell address, he popularized the term "military-industrial complex". He warned of its corrosive effect on democracy. 57 years later, its "unwarranted influence" is greater than ever.

Eisenhower warned that: "Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together."

We are that citizenry. Your voice and influence are essential in counterbalancing corporate power, addressing America's addiction to war spending, and funding the human and community needs, on which our real security depends.

Thank you."

Mayor Roe stated, "Thank you."

Jim Miller stated, "Jim Miller, 3251 Clarendon Road. Don't worry, I'm not going to talk about Dugway Brook or Nine Mile Creek tonight, but it's a related topic."

Jim Miller's comments were submitted in writing as follows. "Among our institutions, as a country, the national parks would seem to be the most revered, and the safest places from political attacks. They are our commonwealth, the wealth we hold in common. Moneyed interests have seemed to say, give them a pass.

Think back to 1903, when President Theodore Roosevelt, a Republican rough rider, spent four days in Yosemite Valley in California with the environmental pioneer, John Muir, of the Sierra Club.

Roosevelt had written Muir, "I want to drop politics absolutely for four days, and just be out in the open with you."

As the wheel of governance turned in the hand of Teddy, in 1906 Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove were made part of the consolidated Yosemite National Park. And the National Park Service was created in 1906, as well.

Or, think of our own Cuyahoga Valley National Park, only a score or so miles from Cleveland Heights as the crow flies.

A 1971 bill to make the Valley a national recreation area failed. John Seiberling, later a Republican congressperson, and the Republican congressperson from Navarre, Ralph Regula, together with Ray Bliss, the former Republican National Committee Chair, all encouraged President Gerald Ford to sign the bill creating the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area. It happened – and later became the full-fledged park we love.

But move forward to today, 2017, 2018, if you dare.

The Parks and their sister institutions are under unprecedented attack.

On Dec. 4, 2017, President Donald Trump, a Republican, reduced the size of the Grand Staircase Escalante and Bears Ears National Monuments by around 2 million acres, the biggest such reversion by far in U.S. history.

Two days later, on Dec. 6, a Utah Republican U.S. Representative, Chris Stewart, introduced a bill that would, through legal trickery, open the Escalante wilderness to hunting and livestock grazing, and make industrial and commercial development fair game in some sections. Rather than a nationally guarded treasure, Escalante would be put in the hands of four Utah county commissioners and a Utah state representative.

Teddy Roosevelt, John Seiberling and the rest must be spinning in their graves.

And think of the Trump Administration proposals which span the country:

- Oil and gas drilling at park borders and national shorelines are to be encouraged, even in areas never before leased or drilled.

- Admission fees to seventeen of the most visited National Parks have gone from \$25 up to \$70.

- And, President Trump proposed in 2017 the biggest cut in the National Parks Service since World War II. The cut didn't make it through Congress, but 2018 will likely see another administration effort to slice at our commonwealth, our heritage – our planet.

It is time for all of us, including Independents and Republicans, to stand up for Theodore Roosevelt's and John Muir's vision.

It is time for us to move. This lurch into the past can affect all of us, including us as residents of Cleveland Heights. Where would we be without Cain Park, Cumberland Park, Denison Park, Forest Hills Park, Caledonia Park? And, well then, where will we be with Cuyahoga Valley National Park turned into a starved shell of its former self?

Make yourself heard!"

Mayor Roe stated, "Thank you."

James Elder stated, "Mayor, Council, my name is James Elder. I am with Cleveland East, Shaker Heights Move to Amend. I'm here to talk about the 13th Amendment. The 13th Amendment states that neither slavery nor involuntary servitude except as punishment for a crime where the party shall have been duly convicted shall exist in the United States or any place subject to the U.S. jurisdiction. So, what does that mean? That means that in the United States, after the Civil War, we had what was known as a convict leasing system. That convict leasing system essentially said that if a person was arrested for vagrancy, and in the south vagrancy was if you were walking around with no money in your pocket, you could be sold back into slavery to a plantation owner. Because of the level we see in local governments by these contracts, those governments – those states – obviously made money. In Mississippi, Parchman Farm, as well as Angola Farm in Louisiana, are two very old plantations. Today they're prisons and these prisons house men whose sole job is to grow crops making 14 cents an hour. Now, this, according to the 13th Amendment, this is legal and this has been legal in the United States since the 13th Amendment was enacted.

It's no secret that American prisons have more than citizens than any other nation in history. With just over 5% of the population, the United States currently hosts 25% of the world's prisoners. In 2008, 2.3 million Americans were in prison or in jail with one of every 48 working-age men behind bars. The government has observed that the U.S. prison rate has not just become excessive in comparison to the rest of the world; they are substantially higher than even throughout our long-standing history. Incarceration rates between 1880 and 1970 was 100 to 200 prisoners per 100,000. Today, it is now 753 per 100,000. Although African Americans make up just 13% of the overall population, we now account for 40% of the prison population. According to the Bureau of Justice statistics, black males are incarcerated at a rate 6.5 times higher than that of white men; 2.5% higher than Hispanics. Marcel Alexander pointed out in the new book *The New Jim Crow* that more black men are in prison now than when enslaved in 1850. Private companies have a cheap labor market and it isn't just in China, Indonesia, Haiti or Mexico. It's right here in the Land of the Free. Inmate labor is a brilliant strategy to the eternal quest to maximize profits. Let me give you an idea of what those profits are. We have a company, it was known as CCA, Corrections Corporation of America, which is now called CoreCivic. CoreCivic runs 94 prisons in the United States. Private prisons. Their total revenue last year was \$464.1 million. They just sold a contract in Montana to house Montana inmates. That contract will pay them \$100 million a year. That's to house men. So, when we're talking about corporate personhood, we're talking about corporations housing men in prison making untold amounts of money and paying them 14

cents an hour to work eight hours a day and if they don't work, they take away your free time. They take away your canteen time and they put you in what's known as, 'a box.' I only have a minute left.

So, getting to the end, I want to announce something that was written by Frederick Douglass in 1875. Frederick Douglass was the fourth African American who was nominated by a major political party. In 1876, he came to Columbus, Ohio to give a speech. In it he says this – 'You say you emancipated us. You have and I thank you for it. You say you have enfranchised us. You have and I thank you for it. But under what circumstances did you emancipate us? Under what circumstances have we obtained our freedom? Sir, ours is the most extraordinary case of any people ever emancipated on the globe. I sometimes wonder that we still exist as a people in this country that we have not all been swept out of existence with nothing left to show that we ever existed at all.'

Thank you."

Mayor Roe stated, "Thank you. Please be sure that we get all your comments in writing to make sure that we can incorporate them into the record."

Dean Sieck stated, "Good evening. I'm Dean Sieck. I live at 2547 Bolton Road."

Dean Sieck's comments were submitted in writing as follows. "Last year, I spoke at this event about the American Legislative Exchange Council or ALEC. To briefly recap, ALEC is a non-profit 501 (C) 3 organization that exists to exert corporate influence with state lawmakers at events where the legislators are entertained while helping to create cookie-cutter legislation to benefit the corporations. At the end of that comment I mentioned its local equivalent, the American City County Exchange, ACCE, or "Ace", as its boosters refer to it. Tonight, I want to address corporate influence on legislation at the local level.

Tip O'Neill famously said "All politics is local." His statement is becoming literally true as more and more cities and counties create laws to benefit their citizens in the face of gridlock-born inaction at the state and national levels. But these measures are often stymied by corporate influence through two means: pre-emption and ACCE.

Preemption employs the power of state legislators to negate the right of cities to make their own legislation. Since there is no mention of cities and counties in the U.S. Constitution, they are seen as creatures of the state and therefore subject to its power. Home rule, first initiated in 1875 and now recognized in forty four states, attempted to wrest power from the states to cities. But it is often pre-empted by State legislators, and pre-emption of local governments is a principle tactic of ALEC. Think of the bathroom bill in North Carolina or, closer to home, the preemption of gun laws passed in Cleveland under home rule, and preempted by the Ohio General Assembly. These are examples of laws already passed by cities and later negated. But some states have preempted laws that have not even been passed. A plastic bag ban was signed into law in Idaho even though no city in the state had considered one. Similar puppy mill and employee scheduling laws occurred in Arizona and low-income housing laws in Kansas.

ACCE, the American City County Exchange, has a different focus. It creates legislation at the local level. This is especially important in a time when cities often serve as the engines of progressive legislation with laws that span the gamut from anti-smoking to minimum wage to green laws. But such progressive laws often do not further corporate goals. So ACCE entertains local officials at little or no cost to themselves in exotic places where they work with corporate lobbyists to create cookie-cutter city and county laws beneficial to corporations. Lacking staff, City and County officials can feel overwhelmed, especially with state governments expecting them to do more with less. One Ohio council person noted, "There's nobody feeding you ideas for legislation" and gratefully welcomed ACCE's help with model ordinances. ACCE proponents complain that cities are too assertive with their progressive legislation. But it has helped to create local law on everything from permitting plastic piping to sick-day limitations for municipal workers to "right-to-work" (read anti-union) laws to plastic bag bans—to further the goals of its corporate members. ACCE is barely four years old but already a growing organization with 300 members sending unsolicited mailings to 5000 public officials nationwide. Our own Cleveland Heights councilpersons may well have received such mailings.

You may recall that last year Cuyahoga County Council considered a law taxing plastic bags. The very first person to oppose the law was a representative of Novolex, a South Carolina company that makes plastic bags. Novolex is a member of ALEC and likely soon will be a member of ACCE. Corporate influence is always closer than we think, and it always has an ACCE up its sleeve."

Anne Caruso stated, "Hello. My name is Anne Caruso. I live at 2273 Belfield Avenue. Thanks so much for the opportunity to speak."

Anne Caruso's comments were submitted in writing as follows. "In an ideal world we would expect our elected officials to research and write laws to benefit the citizens they represent. Unfortunately in our present world we cannot make that assumption. Too often our laws are written to benefit specific industries or interest and not necessarily to benefit the public.

Here's an example on the Federal level. According to the website "open secrets" one of the top PAC's that contributed to Donald Trump's presidential campaign was the coal company Murray Energy. It is no coincidence that one of the first things Donald Trump did once in office was direct the EPA to repeal the Clean Power Plan. The Clean Power Plan calls for a drastic reduction of coal burning power plants. The threat of global warming has become obvious by such things as stronger and more destructive storms, parts per million of atmospheric carbon reaching 400, and the melting of the arctic ice. Yet, the President is not calling for measures that would reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. In fact he is doing the opposite.

An example on the State level is a 2014 law put in the Budget Bill by Republican William Seitz of Cincinnati. The law increased the distance by 3 times that a wind turbine must be set back from a property line. This is the largest wind turbine setback distance requirement in America. As a result new wind projects in Ohio have halted. There are 8 projects that would have been built but are not because the setbacks reduce the number of turbines allowed on a space and this makes the projects

unprofitable. Top contributors to William Seitz are utilities like First Energy and Duke which rely on fossil fuels to produce energy. Ohio is one of the top wind energy component manufacturers. Yet these components are shipped to other states who are increasing their wind energy capacity and reaping the benefits of lower energy costs and attracting new industries which demand access to renewable energy.

Campaign Money cannot direct our national or state or local policies. Science and public welfare must be the reason for our laws.”

Mayor Roe stated, “Thank you.”

“Good evening. My name is Harriet Applegate. I live 1522 Crest Road.”

Harriet Applegate’s comments were submitted in writing as follows. “Effect of corporate power on unions/working people

1. When citizens United came into being, it was said that unions would benefit in the same way corporations would. But when you set up a system in which money equals speech, it throws that premise out the window because unions aren’t in the same league, the same universe when it comes to money. Unions opposed Citizens United from Day One to correct that deceptive misnomer.

2. On the contrary, Citizens United ushered in a new era of extraordinary imbalance between labor and capital. By ratcheting up the power of money in politics, it greatly diminished the power of labor to bargain better wages and working conditions for working people.

3. Unionized working people have been disproportionately crushed by this catastrophic increase in corporate power because only the larger corporations were unionized as a rule. Off-shoring hit union members the hardest: 80% of the jobs lost to NAAFTA for example were union jobs, i.e. good paying jobs.

4. Unions are the only thing standing between these corporate entities and their employees and indeed the only institution standing between the power of corporations and the rest of society.

5. That is why the Koch Bros, Sheldon Adelson and their ilk are coming after us. Next month at the US Supreme Court the Darcy case will be taken up. The same wealthy individuals and corporate entities that brought us Citizens United think that if they can get this Supreme court to decide in favor of so-called ‘Right to Work,’ they will cripple the unions, thus removing the major institutional obstacle to complete corporate domination of our politics and economy.

6. The concentration of wealth –and by extension power- in the hands of a very small number is the biggest challenge to democracy.

7. There are only two ways to stop the acceleration of the concentration of wealth. One is tax policy – and we have seen that used to the opposite effect, to further the concentration. The second

is collective bargaining or the unionization of the workforce. Collective bargaining by its very nature works to distribute wealth. That is why unions are so important, so necessary even, in our economy and in our economic system.

8. Similarly in the political realm, the same breaks are needed on the concentration of power that has been delivered to corporations and wealthy individuals by Citizens United.

9. [In conclusion] Unions are necessary in a democracy to slow concentration of wealth to avert plutocracy just as in the political sphere overcoming the horrific effects of Citizens United is necessary to stop the slide toward autocracy.”

Mayor Roe stated, “Thank you.”

David Berenson’s comments were submitted in writing as follows. “My name is David Berenson, and I live at 3321 Silsby Road in Cleveland Heights, the latest of 5 Cleveland Heights residences.

Welcome and thank you to Mayor Roe, Vice Mayor Yasinow, and to all other members of Cleveland Hts. City Council here today, and to all of the citizens present today, and a special thank you to those present who have been instrumental in the creation of this annual event and who support the simple notion that Corporations are NOT People and that Money does NOT equal Speech. This includes the high percentage of voters who approved this in 2013.

I have spoken in the past about how corporations have negatively affected healthcare in my life, the life of my family and our community. This has not changed. It is still a political football that is played with, in ways that hurt people, families, neighborhoods and our economy and tonight I offer an update.

While I know that many people have benefited by the passing of the Affordable Care Act, or ACA, I, giving some people health insurance for the 1st time, I happen to be in one category of people who do not benefit from the ACA. While I could blame Obama, or Congress, it really comes down to the influence of Corporations in the original development of this act, which still plagues it today and has for the past almost 9 years, and may have contributed to much of Obama's opposition through his 8-year presidency. The influence of the health insurance and pharmaceutical industries on the development of the ACA led to the lack of a public option that President Obama had WANTED to include but was left out early in the process. This causes people like me to have to be dependent on either my employer's insurance, when I'm employed enough to be eligible, or on the ACA process, which I'm NOT eligible for when I'm employed enough to be eligible for my employer's insurance plan. Furthermore, my family is not eligible for a subsidy, because for coverage for just them, they have to include my income as well. So, sad for me that I'm so gainfully employed. I'm better off than many others who are benefiting from the ACA, which could end any moment by our President and Congress.

I currently have some options open to me to do some private contracting work, but only if I'm NOT full-time at my job, which then loses me the security of my employer's insurance plan but may

allow me a more affordable plan through the ACA. Since there's no predictability of what will happen nationally and politically, and because of a long-term pre-existing condition, I am rather stuck at this point, being underemployed. As I've said in the past, the best affordable-care option for me is to work less, and for my wife and child, divorce.

The other part of the Affordable Care Act (aka Obama-Care) is the mandate of coverage, put in there to ensure that the health insurance companies are able to increase their business and cover more people who are less needy of health services. I think that this is one of the biggest reasons that the Republican Congress has tried to repeal the ACA ever since they had enough power to do so, and why the ACA is constantly in jeopardy of being repealed, leaving nobody with any healthcare security, either we the people, the medical providers, or the health insurance companies themselves.

I've also reported in the past that, from my past working for a healthcare company, I know that internal policies of insurance companies include denying payment for expenses that should be covered, knowing that many people won't have the time, the know-how or the ability to keep appealing until the company finally agrees to pay. This, practice, by the way, is NOT against the law."

Sally Henley stated, "Good evening. I'm Sally Hanley. I live at 2577 Overlook Road in Cleveland Heights and I'm a member of the Cleveland East Move to Amend affiliates."

Sally Henley's comments were submitted in writing as follows. "As we've heard from previous speakers, big money intrudes into our lives in so many ways—education, health, our political representation, the environment. I'm going to discuss one of the ways it can affect us to the very end of our lives.

When my mom was still in her 50s she had a catastrophic stroke. After she stabilized, she was very debilitated and couldn't live alone. For awhile, she lived with my brother and his wife, but it didn't work out because she needed 24-7 care and she eventually needed to move to a nursing home. I was in Los Angeles in grad school, and eventually moved her to a nursing home out there after I graduated and had a job. I won't go into all the details, I'll just say that her treatment at the nursing home was so much less than we'd want for our loved ones, and I had to constantly act as her advocate in the face of so many problems.

Until recently, the last time nursing home regulations were updated was in 1991, over 25 years ago. Last year, the Cleveland Plain Dealer did several articles on nursing homes. They reported that in 2015, two out of every five homes in Ohio delivered substandard care that didn't meet federal guidelines and that 70% were staffed below levels needed for safe, compassionate care. Then last year they reported that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid had revised nursing home regulations for the first time since 1991. Some of these new regulations went into effect right away and others are to be implemented in the next couple of years.

According to the National Consumer Voice for Quality Long Term Care, an advocacy organization, these new regulations are meant to make a number of beneficial changes, These include:

- Promoting greater freedom for residents' choice in such things as food choice, when to get up and go to bed, and having visitors at any time,
- Requiring a baseline care assessment be done within 48 hours of arrival instead of within three weeks as is currently the case,
- Providing grievance officers at each facility to handle residents' complaints which are sorely needed because the aged, disable, and memory-impaired can be very easy targets for neglect, if not down-right abuse , as I saw with my own eyes, and
- More training for staff in dealing with dementia patents

Of course there are decent homes and caring employees, but as we all know, there are abuses.

Many nursing home owners, of course, don't like the new regulations, claiming they go too far and are burdensome. There is a powerful nursing home industry lobby in Ohio, as well as nation-wide, which made its opinions known to their congressional representatives. Last year, orchestrated by Representative Jim Renacci of Wadsworth, Ohio, 146 US House Representatives and Senators sent a letter to the administrators of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid asking them to review these regulations. Eight of the signers, in addition to Renacci, signed the letter.

According to the website followthemoney.org, which tracks political contributions, the nursing home industry had contributed more than \$2.5 million to 128 of the letter signers. Jim Renacci received the most of any signer, \$166,400 from the nursing home industry. According to the Plain Dealer article, Advocates say these regulations are badly needed. Renacci claims that he just wants the best for the nursing home residents while easing the financial burden on the nursing home owners, and further stated that he doesn't pay attention to campaign contributions.

Really."

Mayor Roe stated, "Thank you."

Kathy Flora stated, "Hi. I'm Kathy Flora, 2449 Queenston."

Kathy Flora's comments were submitted in writing as follows. "I was late tonight because I came from a meal program in Painesville that feeds the homeless and destitute.

I raced here, hoping to someday give them a voice.

To give myself a voice.

Like most people here tonight, I feel overwhelmed and exhausted. People that I care about are living in tents in this weather. Others are being torn away from their families, detained, treated worse that I would treat an animal, and deported without having a chance to even say good bye to their families. One after another after another.

Still others actually fear for the lives of their children and grandchildren when they walk out of the door, even at the hands of those who are meant to protect them.

People are being poisoned by the air that they breathe and the water they drink. The climate of our planet is being disrupted and we are in the middle of a great extinction.

I am tired. No matter how many times I march and rally, call, write or visit, I feel that no one hears me. So little changes.

As shown by numerous studies, legislative policy favors the wealthy and corporations in our country, even when those policies are opposed by a popular majority. At this point, I don't even think we need studies. It is evident all around us.

We cannot call ourselves a democracy, or a democratic republic if you prefer, if property and non human legal entities have more rights and less responsibilities than flesh and blood human beings.

Everything is reduced to profit and that profit is used to buy the laws that increase the profit for these entities. Everything becomes a commodity, including the human lives that are chewed up and spit out to increase these profits.

Where will it stop?

A government of the people, by the people, for the people has always been only an aspiration, of course, but an amendment such as that proposed by Move to Amend could move us closer to that reality, and may save us yet.

Thank you."

Madelon Watts stated, "My name is Madelon Watts. I live in South Euclid and I'm part of the Cleveland East Move to Amend. I'm going to speak tonight on Payday Loans. I believe they're another form of corporate money and corporate personhood influencing our democracy and they are a drain on Ohio's economy."

Madelon Watts's comments were submitted in writing as follows. "Payday Loans—Another Form of Corporate Money & Corporate Personhood Influencing Our Democracy & Ohio's Economy

Did you know in 2008, nearly 3.4 million Ohioans (more than 63 percent of those voting) set the maximum interest rate that payday lenders may charge Ohioans at 28% APR, annual percentage rate, or. No one doubts that except some Ohio legislators who have yet to follow the Ohio voters'- decision.

What is the reason for their inaction? Payday lenders have found a way to disregard the will of Ohio voters & charge higher prices in Ohio than in any neighboring state. In fact, 14 states & the District of Columbia have actually banned payday lending, including our neighboring Pennsylvania and West Virginia. And according to the Dayton Daily News, in 2012 (the most recent data I could find), payday

lenders contributed more than \$270,000 to Ohio politicians. That is more than a quarter of a million dollars given to Ohio politicians in 2012!¹

Payday loans are called by many names: payday advance, salary loan, payroll loan, small dollar loan, or cash advance loan. What they all have in common is they are a small, short-term unsecured loan, regardless of whether repayment is linked to the borrower's actual payday. The only requirements to obtain such credit are a checking account and a source of income. Typical borrowers earn about \$30,000 per year.

Whatever they are called, the result of these so-called "short-term loans" are all the same: they give Ohio borrowers the highest interest rates in the nation. Do you know what that interest is? According to the Pew Charitable Trusts that average is 591% APR.² Roughly 1 million Ohioans—that is 1 in 10 adult—in Ohio who have taken out a payday loan.²

But, did you know payday loans weren't even legal in Ohio until 1995, when then-Gov. Voinovich let a bill—permitting payday lending—to become law without his signature? And we can go back farther: for Ohio's earliest voters, even before Ohio was granted statehood in 1803, there were laws in Ohio setting limits on the amount which could be charged for the use of money? In 1799, the general assembly of the Northwest Territory, of which Ohio was a part, enacted the first such laws fixing the maximum permissible contract rate of interest at 6% according to an Akron Law Review article.³

And did you know banks are among the biggest beneficiaries of the profits that come from payday loans? Payday lenders cannot operate without the help of some of the US's biggest banks, such as JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America and Wells Fargo. These banks control the accounts of borrowers. When payday lenders want to collect monthly cash and interest payments on loans, these big banks withdraw funds from a borrower's account. Because many borrowers cannot cover the cost of loan payments plus high interest payments, when borrowers cannot pay these, the banks charge these accounts overdraft fees. The banks make millions of dollars from these fees.⁴ And just to add insult to injury, only a month after getting a \$3.5 billion tax break from Trump, the Bank of America announced it would begin charging fees to account-holders who maintain low balances.

But here's the good news: State Reps. Kyle Koehler, a Springfield Republican, and Mike Ashford, a Toledo Democrat have sponsored a pending House Bill, HB123. Their bill would cap, the interest rate on payday loans at 28% per year; limit monthly fees to 5 percent; permit fees only on the first \$400 borrowed (for a maximum of \$20 per month); and ban monthly payments greater than 5 percent of a borrower's monthly gross income.

With such sensible reforms as HB 123, Ohio can create affordability for Ohio's most vulnerable borrowers. Most importantly, corporate money & corporate personhood--the Supreme Court-created precedent of corporations enjoying constitutional rights that were intended solely for human beings--will be dealt the death blow they so justly deserve.

Thank you.

1 <http://www.daytondailynews.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/payday-lenders-political-contributions-top-270k/OloxvbRePVfQmLlulpMBjP/>

2 http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/assets/2016/12/ohio_has_the_highest_payday_loan_prices_in_the_nation.pdf

3 <http://ideaexchange.uakron.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2038&context=akronlawreview>

4 <http://www.thetimesinplainenglish.com/big-banks-profit-in-payday-loan-business/>

Mayor Roe stated, "Thank you."

Councilwoman Sara Continenza stated, "Hello. Sara Continenza, 4222 Bexley Boulevard, South Euclid, Ohio. I am here today in support of the Move to Amend. I think this is vital. As we've seen, large corporations have profited from the demise of our planet, from the demise of our health, from the demise of our food systems and it's about time we speak up and change this because it won't change if they continue to own our government.

Let's talk a little bit about Amazon today. We have a really nice huge fulfillment center going up down Warrensville Center Road and we were promised jobs just like many municipalities across the state and country. Jobs, jobs, jobs, jobs, jobs, yeah! Okay, let's talk about those jobs. Average of less than \$12.00 per hour... can't really live on that very easily. And let's talk about the fact that nationally, \$1.115 billion in 129 U.S. communities in tax credits to WalMart have been received. That exceeds WalMart and about \$123 million here in Ohio, tax incentives. Now, let's talk about the percentage of those employees here in Ohio that are in food stamps – 10%, about 700 employees currently and that's going to keep growing as the number of employees grow. Now, these jobs are also very demanding, okay? Very taxing. And what happens when you get hurt or injured and the company that you were injured in doesn't pay property taxes as one of those incentives? Who do you think fits that bill? So, are these jobs really worth it? Let's think about that.

I don't like to complain too much without being a little proactive. So, I say instead of just saying, 'No, no, no,' to these corporations, let's actually practice what we preach. The biggest vote we do have is with the dollars we spend. So, how about we keep going local? It might be a little less convenient. It might actually take a road trip here. It might cost a little more upfront, but that's going to be true job creation. That's going to be where the money stays in our local economy and profits us, the people, not corporations.

And did you know also that petitions are out currently for precinct leaders in our communities here in Cuyahoga County? You can go to the Board of Elections and go get those petitions. You only need five signatures of people in your precinct. Get active! You do have a voice and it does matter. And we need young people and we need all people. We need to get this ball rolling. It is the reason why I recently was elected Councilwoman in South Euclid. I plan to continue this ball rolling and I want to work with our neighboring communities as much as possible to foster local and to do the best we can to bring

ourselves up because we cannot wait for the federal or state government to do it because, at this point, we are living in a corporatacracy. The only way we can change that is with action now and it starts here at the local levels. So, thank you.”

Councilwoman Sara Continenza’s comments were submitted in writing as follows. “Big corporations have had a devastating impact on local businesses. Looking at the example of Amazon:

- Since 2000, 129 US communities have offered \$1.115 billion to Amazon as tax incentives to locate distribution centers in those cities, flying past Walmart

- 10% of Amazon’s employees in Ohio, about 700, are currently on food stamps

- Many of the tax incentives offered by cities forego payment by Amazon of property taxes, therefore we citizens are footing the bill for the many injuries in these often dangerous jobs which pay less than \$12.00 per hour on average.

- We get the "jobs" but at what cost?

We need to shop local! Support our local economies, even if less convenient and more expensive--vote with our dollars!

And get involved-- run for precinct leader, for example.”

Mayor Roe stated, “Thank you.”

Greg Coleridge’s “Good evening. Greg Coleridge, 3016 Somerton Road.

Greg Coleridge’s comments were submitted in writing as follows. “The federal Republican tax measure passed at the end of 2017 wasn’t a bill as much as a reward — to corporations and the super wealthy.

According to the Tax Policy Center, the top 1 percent will receive 34 percent of the corporate tax cut benefit, and the top 20 percent, 70 percent of the benefit. Eliminating the estate tax only benefits those individuals with wealth exceeding \$5 million (\$10 million for married couples). Eliminating the corporate and reducing the individual alternative minimum tax also benefits only corporations and the super rich.

Republican Rep. Chris Collins stated about the bill: “My donors are basically saying, ‘Get it done or don’t ever call me again.’” Sen. Lindsey Graham reportedly asserted that if the GOP doesn’t pass the bill, “contributions will stop.” Just 13 days after the tax law was passed, Charles Koch and his wife donated nearly \$500,000 to House Speaker Paul Ryan’s joint fundraising committee. This is legalized bribery at its most blatant and sickening form.

So if corporate and individual donors are the winners of the tax bill, who are the losers? The nearly \$1.5 trillion increase to the federal deficit will be paid by poor, working and middle class in

spending cuts to government programs (including Social Security and Medicare if the Republicans have their way) and tax increases once the very modest tax cuts to the middle class end after eight years. Up to 13 million people also stand to lose their health insurance due to the tax bill/reward. That includes me. I doubt too many of these 13 million were the donors to its Republican supporters. I sure the hell wasn't.

States and cities are also losers. It will be harder for states and cities to pay their bills. Ending the federal estate tax, reducing individual and corporate taxes and capping federal deductions for state and local taxes will have the double hit of reducing revenue and increasing calls to reduce state and local taxes. I don't envy any state and local elected official having to deal with these twin challenges.

The rights of corporations and the super wealthy to donate or invest in politics since constitutionally corporations are "persons" and money is "speech" is a major reason for this historic tax heist. But we would be irresponsible here tonight if we did not underline that perversion of the First Amendment by corporations and the superrich is not the only constitutional problem.

Constitutional perversion by corporations claiming "personhood" transcends the First Amendment — and has done so for 130 years. Corporations have claimed 4th Amendment search and seizure rights, 5th Amendment takings rights, 14th Amendment due process and equal protection right — as well as other provisions of the First Amendment beyond the right to speak — including the right not to speak and, thanks to the bizarre Hobby Lobby decision, religious rights. The Commerce and Contracts clauses have also been hijacked to overturn hundreds of democratically enacted laws at the state and local levels.

None of this will ever change if all we do is focus on elections, laws or regulations. I wish it was that easy. It will only change by changing the foundational governing rules of our nation — by amending the US Constitution, as Move to Amend proposes, to end all never intended corporate constitutional rights and money defined as free speech via the We the People Amendment, H.J.R 48.

In Lewis Carroll's *Through The Looking Glass*, Alice laughed: "There's no use trying, one can't believe impossible things." In response, the Queen countered, "I daresay you haven't had much practice...When I was younger, I always did it for half an hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."

The history of social change in this country via social movements has always been about people believing in the impossible and acting on it. The result — depending on external circumstances and internal preparation — was what was seen as impossible in one year or era became inevitable in the next. Every single social change that expanded the rights to human beings in this nation was considered at first impossible.

Move to Amend's We the People Amendment is inevitable if we are to avoid the complete evaporation of what's left of our representative democracy. The Republican tax bill is one more ghastly

and in your face reality that our government is fundamentally broken and only We the People can fundamentally fix it.”

Greg Coleridge stated, “Thank you.”

Mayor Roe stated, “Thank you.”

Bruce Ente’s comments were submitted in writing as follows. “My name is Bruce Ente, I grew up at 3099 Yorkshire Road, graduated from Cleveland Heights High School just a few years ago and now live in Shaker Heights. I am a member of Cleveland East Move to Amend, and I am also very active in a northeast Ohio gun violence prevention group called God Before Guns, which was founded by the pastor at Disciples Church right around the corner on Mayfield Road and which has many members in Cleveland Heights.

In the few minutes I have this evening, I want to tell you a story whose structure is best captured by the onions I just passed out. There won’t be time to get through all of the onion’s layers, but we’ll hit on five major elements of the story. It’s a sad story – of loss, of death, of tragic psychological devastation, of families torn apart – a tale with many, many tears, some of which you may have shed (even if just in your heart). And if my story doesn’t elicit tears, at least your onion might.

The outer layer of the onion, the one most easily visible to us and to anyone who reads a newspaper or listens to the radio or watches TV, is the terrible toll of lives lost and lives ruined by gun violence in our local community, our state, our nation.

- Last year there were just under 39,000 firearms deaths in the United States: 1/3 of them homicides, 2/3 suicides.
- In 2016 in Ohio alone, 1,524 people were killed by guns.
- In the most recent 25 year period (1991-2016), while national gun deaths were falling by almost 50% from their horrendous peak in the early 1990s, gun murders in Ohio increased by 12.6%.
- In 2016 gun deaths in our state were 9% higher than in 2015. That same year the national gun death toll grew by “only” 6%, so Ohio led the way.
- Every week on average, 136 children are shot in the U.S. – 25 of them fatally.
- Every week on average, one child under the age of 14 is killed by a gun in an accidental, unintentional shooting.
- A teenager in the United States is 82 times more likely to die from gunfire than in comparable first-world countries.

- For every person killed by a gun in our country, two others are shot but survive – often with terrible physical and psychological wounds that may never heal. Their injuries compromise their lives and employment prospects, ruin their families’ lives, cost our society literally billions of dollars for health care and supportive services.

- In the last decade, we are talking about more than one million Americans who’ve been shot, and how many more uncounted folks who have suffered the collateral damage.

I could go on and on with statistics, with more data about gun violence. But I want to peel back a second layer of the onion: our collective reaction to these numbers of gun deaths, murders, suicides and injuries.

We get numb and tune them out, often from a natural instinct of self-preservation. Shootings recede into the background noise of everyday life. Students of journalism note that mass shootings distract our attention and obscure our awareness of the constant, routine, ongoing shootings that happen day-in and day-out in Cleveland, in every other U.S. city, and in small towns, rural areas, even supposedly safe suburbs.

So far in January, 2018 there have been 23 school days and in these 23 days there have been eleven shooting in schools nationwide. Who can even keep track? Who even wants to keep track of these horrible occurrences?

There was a fatal school shooting two days ago. Do you remember where? Oh, yeah ... Benton, Kentucky. What was the name of the school? Oh, yeah... Marshall High School. Do you recall the names and faces of the two beautiful young people killed by a classmate in the school commons? Oh, well ... whatever...

Their names were Bailey Holt and Preston Cope, by the way. Researchers estimate that 135,000 students have been directly exposed to gun violence as a result of all the school shootings that have occurred in the years since the Columbine High School massacre. How much damage has been done to these young lives by this out-of-control gun violence?

So: In this second layer we are losing our empathy, our ability to feel the pain of others.

Next layer of the onion: Legislative responses to this senseless, pointless crusade of death. Essentially none, apart from empty “thoughts and prayers” for victims and their families, and a few sporadic, weak efforts in several states – and pointedly not in Ohio.

- No universal background checks favored by 84% of all voters, including 2/3 of NRA members.

- NO Child Access Protections, safe storage requirements to keep guns out of the hands of children. (40% of gun-owning parents mistakenly believe their children don't know where guns are kept in their house. 22% of gun-owning parents mistakenly believe their children have never handled a gun.)
- NO restrictions on assault weapons, military-grade guns designed only to kill as many human beings as quickly as possible.
- NO constraints on access to guns by domestic abusers, stalkers with orders of protection against them – even though 2/3 of women killed by a gun are shot by an intimate partner.
- NO restrictions on magazine capacity, on armor-piercing bullets, on bump stocks.

No, legislation is clearly moving in the other direction, toward fewer and fewer restrictions on where guns may be carried and by whom. Concealed carry reciprocity is advancing at the national level in order to reduce licensing standards to the lowest common denominator, which in some states is “zero.” Another national legislative priority is regulating the sale of silencers, supposedly as a hearing protection enhancement for gun owners! Exactly how stupid and gullible do congresspersons think we are?? Don't answer that question!

The fourth layer of this onion: The evolution of the National Rifle Association from a gun sportsman's club to a tool of gun manufacturers.

For the first hundred years of its existence (founded in 1871), the NRA advocated marksmanship training and gun safety, primarily for hunters and recreational shooters. The NRA was actually an advocate of responsible gun ownership and actively supported gun registration laws ... until 1970 when gun manufacturers saw threats to their marketplace and profits in the 1968 Gun Registration Act passed by the Congress.

Over the ensuing decades, the NRA became the marketing arm of the gun industry, and even more significantly, the political lobbying arm of gun manufacturers and sellers. The goal of the National Rifle Association, wrapped in its specious interpretation of the Second Amendment – guaranteeing the right to keep and bear muzzle-loading muskets as part of a well-regulated militia – became the passage of legislation that enlarges the market for guns. Their aim? Increasing the profitability of the gun industry, no matter the social cost, no matter the collateral damage to peoples' lives.

Now we get to the center of the onion: the unholy alliance between the NRA lobbyists with their massive campaign contributions and the state and federal legislators who are only too willing to trade their votes for piles of campaign cash. And those campaign contributions come neatly gift-wrapped in 2nd Amendment wrapping paper adorned with patriotic red, white and blue ribbons.

During the 2016 campaign year, the National Rifle Association spent an unprecedented \$416 million, \$100 million more than the previous year. Spending didn't slow down after Trump was inaugurated either. In the first quarter of 2017, the NRA spent \$2.3 million on lobbying, more than double what it had spent in any previous quarter! Do you believe this money was given with "no strings attached"??

- Right-to-carry laws in states with "shall issue" requirements [any applicant for a concealed carry permit must receive one] are associated with a 10.6% increase in handgun homicides.
- The Florida "stand your ground" law – being pushed vigorously across the country by the NRA – was linked to a 32% increase in total firearm homicides. At the same time, homicides deemed justifiable by law enforcement tripled.
- Texas A&M researchers found no evidence that Stand Your Ground laws deter crime – but they are associated with an increase in homicides: more than 600 additional murders annually.

That's what corporate influence buys, in a nutshell: more gun deaths and injuries, more misery. Which takes us right back to the statistics in the outermost layer of the onion. Is this the society we want to live in, raise our children in, bequeath to our grandchildren?

Draw your own conclusions about the corrupting effect of money in politics, but bear in mind the axiom "He who pays the piper calls the tune." And the corporate gun industry pays handsomely!

Thank you for your time and attention."

William McLaughlin stated, "Hello. My name is William McLaughlin. I live at 4286 Elmwood Road in South Euclid. I have lived in Cleveland Heights and South Euclid for more than 60 years. Myself, my sister, my brother and both my parents are Heights graduates. In fact, my 50th is this year, I want to speak on two things. Number one is a Move to Amend. You voluntarily joined a 501(4). You voluntarily buy stock in a company. As a public employee, I was forced to join a union, but I had one protection. In Ohio, you cannot force a public employee to pay for political speech. Each and every year, I had to opt out of the union dues to become a fair share fee payer. The problem was – I acknowledged the union's right to represent me and negotiate contracts, but since I wasn't a member, I couldn't vote, i.e. I would have had to pay a poll tax to vote on the union contract.

The second thing is – is it fair most of the unions were Democrats? I'm a Republican. It's my right. Now for the other part - Move to Amend. As a WASPMR (White Anglo Saxon Male Republican), I have been subject for more than 60 years – sorry, 50 plus – to the reverse racial gerrymandering requirements of Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. I, before you call me a racist, I voted for Lee at least 10 times and Stephanie twice. If you do not like this, I want to legally gerrymander you to an R-30 District which means, if a Republican candidate wakes up election morning with 80% of the vote, going back to the Move to Amend, I request that the City of Cleveland Heights and my Councilman for South Euclid adopt a few items. Number one – they shall tell every employee that they do not have to

join the union or do not have to pay the political contributions in their dues. Once they issue this, I want the second thing done – inform the union that once you declare yourself as a union member or a fair share fee member, that remains in effect until revoked. In the City of Cleveland, I had to opt out each and every year. Third, as a professional engineer, I joined some organizations. The dues statement said, ‘dues and amount deductible for tax purposes.’ The difference was the political speech. You can write off the deductible amount as a miscellaneous deduction. I want the cities to require the unions to inform each employee of the amount of their dues and the amount deductible. Excuse me. And, as I said, if you want to be gerrymandered in a R-30 District like I am in a D-30 District, it would look like District 9. We’ll draw a circle around the mostly Democratic Cleveland Heights, run it due west through the Bible belt, i.e. that part of Ohio west of I-75 and you’ll feel the same way I feel about my elected Congress. Move to Amend – I request that they specifically override the reverse racial gerrymandering requirements. I entered John Husted’s and Jennifer Bruner’s contest for redistricting and they both had racial redistricting requirements. Thank you for hearing me out.”

Mayor Roe stated, “Thank you.”

“Hello, everyone. I’m Lois Romanoff. I live at 12802 Larchmere Boulevard in Cleveland, Ohio and I am the co-chair of the City of Cleveland Move to Amend. I’m going to piggyback a little bit on what Ari Klein said. I am a member of the Heights Coalition for Public Schools. I am very worried about the war on public schools that is taking place right now. We really are trying to privatize our public schools and Ari very clearly talked about the money that he specified the areas that this money is going to and I just want to give an overall figure. \$6,000,000 every year is taken out of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights School District budget to go to charters and vouchers. That is unfair and if the state legislature wants charters and vouchers, no problem, except the public has voted 100% of the time that voucher money should not go to religious schools, but it does 97% of the time. So, if the legislature wants all that money to come out of these districts, the public school districts, no problem. They can assign money from the legislature, but not from the public school budget. That is extremely unfair and to continue to talk about this, the Heights Coalition is having three meetings. They’re starting this coming Monday, the 29th of January and the first meeting is going to be called, ‘Superintendents Fight Back.’ There are going to be three Superintendents who are going to be talking about this. One is the Cleveland Heights Superintendent and one is from the Woodridge Local Schools and the third is from the Olmstead Falls City Schools. The second meeting will be on February 12 called, ‘The Vision of Public Education,’ and it’s contrasting reading that show what is needed to fight against this problem; and the third meeting is February 26 and it’s, ‘Strategizing to be Able to Talk to the State Leaders,’ about this very issue. Thank you.”

Mayor Roe stated, “Thank you. Could I have a show of hands of how many other people we have to speak?”

“I guess I’m it.”

Mayor Roe stated, “Okay.”

Tony Kuda stated, "I'm Tony Kuda, 3561 Fenley Road. I had no intention of talking, but I'm just so inspired by all of you and you guys really made me think about, with the Move to Amend, in *The Federalist Papers*, they talk a lot about the worth of the individual as a bedrock for The Constitution and democracy and also federalism and the fact that Madison was so aware of how factionalism could divide our country and the worth of the individual kind of rose up, when you think about corporation, well, you think every person in a corporation is an individual. They can do what all of us can do and I don't really see why there's this big need to have corporations be people because they're already people as individuals and it certainly seems unfair to give them, as a group, more power than everybody else, but when the Supreme Court acts, there's really nothing else we can do but amend The Constitution. And Article 5 is very clear about that process. There's actually three different ways to do it and what I think you guys are talking about and, I didn't even know about this until I came to this meeting, about this Move to Amend, but I think, you know, this is a very wise path. I'd like to see that happen. I'd like to see us get rid of the electoral college. Obviously, that would have to be an amendment because that's... and I think people would start to feel hopefully that, you know, this country is fair and that their vote matters. Tonight I see the young people who were here getting extra credit. You know, I don't even, you know, it's very difficult to explain to people how somebody could get 3,000,000 more votes and lose the election. Well, you know, when we started off, we wanted to give the states... you know, we get into it, but it doesn't really make a lot of sense and I think that's the biggest reason to change things. We want people to be involved. We want people to think their vote matters and these are things that you especially who are nodding right now, you know, when you said you feel a little bit defeated, I think that's a pervasive feeling in this country.

The last thing I wanted to say about federalism was simply this. It has nothing to do really with the three branches of the government. It's the three levels of the government, right? The federal government, the state government and the local government and I hope you guys will come on the first Thursday and third Thursday to the Charter Committee Review because they're talking about just that – how much power? What should be the division of power? They're talking about – should we elect our Mayor in Cleveland Heights? Should we have ward Council representing us instead of at-large? These are huge issues and, again, I kind of see it all as the same thing. What will maximize voter involvement in our community and we're not like England. England is very centralized. It's a unitary government. 10 Downing Street controls what all the little communities do. We don't believe in that here. We do not believe in that here. We use federalism, a more or less equal distribution of power between those three levels of government and I hope that on the first Thursday and third Thursdays, some of you will come and make comments to the Review Commission about what we want to do in Cleveland Heights going forward. Thank you."

Mayor Roe stated, "Thank you. Is there anybody else? So, would you like to finish your onion story? You have one minute."

These comments are recognized on page 25 in Bruce Ente's written comments.

Mayor Roe stated, "Thank you. You have one minute."

“Yeah, I was willing to yield 30 seconds to him. Yeah, no seriously, the one thing that I was not sure was brought out – you can also amend The Constitution by the states’ voting to call a Constitutional Convention; 2/3 yeah, but then the danger is they can throw everything out, but it still would have to be approved. Thank you.”

Mayor Roe stated, “Thank you. So, I wonder if any of our Council people have any comments.”

Councilwoman Stephens stated, “Are you going to make me a Congresswoman? What are we going to do with Marcia? The concept of democracy should be near and dear to every American’s heart and democracy means that we listen to each other whether we agree or disagree and we bring up the things that allow people to make comments about what they believe and listen to other people about what they don’t people, and so, this is a very important activity that we venture into every year; that we as residents of one of the best democracies in the country, people fight and crawl into this country and fight tooth and nail to stay in this country. There are no fights as desperate as the ones to get into this country or to keep from being tossed out of this country and so, the work and the time and energy that you’ve put into this process today is very important. Don’t feel that what you said here was a waste of your time. Thank you for being good Americans. Mayor.”

Mayor Roe stated, “Anyone else over on this side?”

Vice Mayor Yasinow stated, “I just want to say thank you to everybody who came out here tonight. It’s always a pleasure. Cleveland Heights clearly has a very robust population, a robust democracy and I’m really glad to see it in action and just to Mr. Ente’s point, the two students who were killed this week in the 11th school shooting of the year in a total of 23 days – one was Bailey Holt, age 15 and there was Preston Cope, also age 15. Thank you.”

Mayor Roe stated, “Thank you all for coming. And Carla, what is the date again of the next event?”

Carla Rautenberg stated, “There’s a meeting for Cleveland East Move to Amend Sunday, February 25 at the Shaker Heights Main Library. I have fliers here and we’re having our statewide meeting in Columbus April 7, on a Saturday. There will be more details about that. Thank you for asking.”

Mayor Roe stated, “Thank you all for coming. Again, I’m proud to be part of a community which has such passionate citizens. Thank you. This hearing is adjourned.”

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Roe, Mayor

Laurie Sabin, Clerk of Council

/jkw