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Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs Advances Bill to Extend State Commission Seeking to Overturn Citizens United

(BOSTON) – On Friday, the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs in the Massachusetts State Legislature voted favorably to advance H.4908, *An Act to continue the Citizens Commission concerning a Constitutional Amendment to secure government of the people*, filed by Representative Carmine Gentile of Sudbury. The bill would formalize the non-partisan commission that Massachusetts voters called for via ballot initiative in 2018, as well as clarify the commission member appointment process.

With 71% of the vote, the 2018 ballot question created a 15-member Citizens Commission charged with researching and providing guidance on how Massachusetts can play a role in repealing the 2010 Supreme Court decision *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*. This court case reduced limits and regulations for political campaign spending by corporations, thereby opening the door for large amounts of corporate money in politics. The Citizens Commission released [their first report in 2019](#), which provides a historical and legislative analysis of different constitutional amendments that limit corporate spending in elections. To further public dialogue and research on this topic, H.4908 would extend the duration of the commission until a constitutional amendment is ratified that formally overturns the Citizens United decision.

This bill would also codify the process for appointing new members to serve on the commission in the event of a vacant seat. Under the 2018 ballot question, there was no guidance on appointments for commission vacancies. Current members of the commission were appointed by the Governor, Secretary of the Commonwealth, Attorney General, Senate President, and Speaker of the House of Representatives, and this legislation would allow the appropriate elected official to appoint a new member to the commission as turnover occurs.

“Millions of Massachusetts residents voted to not only study the impacts of corporate funding in elections, but also to advance measures at the state level to overturn Citizens United,” **said Representative Linda Dean Campbell of Methuen, House Chair of the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs.** “I have heard from hundreds of voters who want to strengthen our democracy through campaign finance reforms. As a Veteran and Chair of the Committee on

Veterans and Federal Affairs, I am proud to stand with these residents to take every measure we can at the state level to overturn Citizens United.”

“I want to thank Rep. Linda Dean Campbell, Sen. Walter Timilty, and the other members of the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs for their vote to report this bill favorably and support the Citizens Commission’s work,” **said Representative Carmine Gentile, the bill’s sponsor.** “We expect the Commission’s second report to be released later in September. This legislation would allow it to continue its efforts towards securing ‘government of the people’ and stopping further harm to our democracy from the Supreme Court’s Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission decision beyond that day. I look forward to swift passage by the House and Senate in furtherance of the voters’ 2018 mandate to regulate campaign finance and allow limitation or prohibition of campaign spending by corporations.”

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