

Americans Agree: Corporations Aren't People

Recent *Legal Progress* surveys on constitutional rights have found that concern over corporate favoritism continues to be a consistent concern among American voters across the political spectrum, from all walks of life, following the Supreme Court's 2010 *Citizens United* decision.¹

In particular, voters widely reject the notion that corporations have the same constitutional rights as people, including 3-to-1 opposition to unlimited corporate spending in campaigns.

Public opinion research conducted for *Legal Progress* in 2010 and in 2011 found that **voters strongly believed that corporate favoritism in the political sphere carried over to the judicial system, where most individuals did not enjoy the same protections and access to a fair hearing as corporations and those with deep pockets.**

This sentiment continues to be a driving force behind public attitudes toward Americans' individual rights and the role of politics and powerful interests in compromising those rights in this most recent survey, conducted in late 2011.

Digging deeper into attitudes toward corporate rights, the 2011 survey tested the proposition that "corporations are people." It also tested this concept by applying it to the *Citizens United* decision.

The "corporations are people" argument loses by 31 points (56 percent to 25 percent) to a counter-argument rejecting corporate personhood. The public's assessments are even worse for conservatives when invoking the consequences of *Citizens United*: By a 48-point margin (65 percent to 17 percent), voters believe corporations should not be able to spend unlimited amounts of money in political campaigns.

1 This analysis is based on the results of a Center for American Progress poll of 1,000 likely voters, conducted November 28-30, 2011 by Gerstein Bocian Agne Strategies, and on results of a Center for American progress poll of 1,000 registered voters conducted September 21-26 2010 by Gerstein Bocian Agne Strategies.

FIGURE 1

Voters do not believe corporations are “people”

Please tell me whether you agree more with the first statement or agree more with the second statement:

Corporations are not people and **they should not have more rights than actual people.**

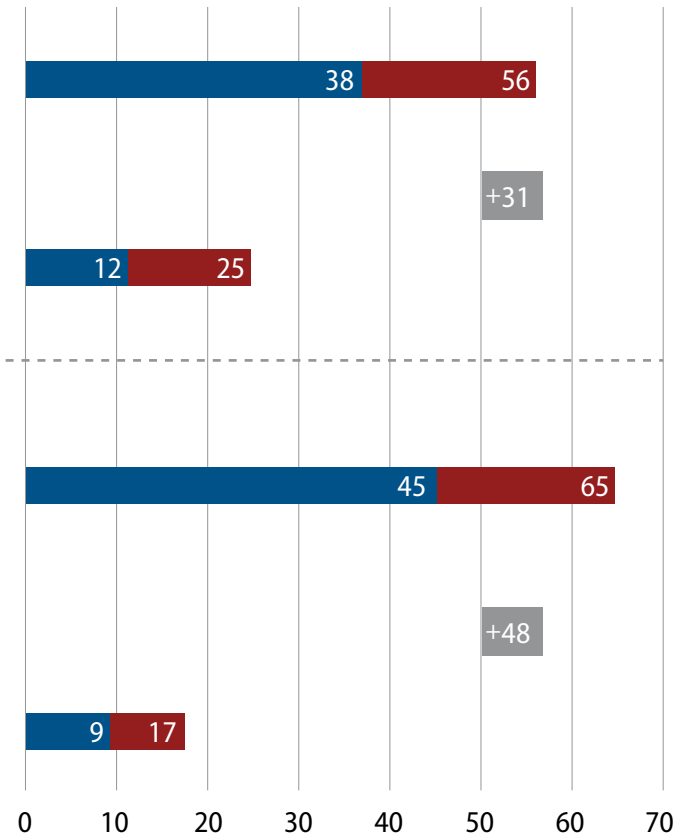
OR

Because corporations are made up of individuals, **corporations have the same constitutional rights as people.**

Because corporations are not people, **they should not be able to spend unlimited amounts of money** in political campaigns and overpower the voices of individual Americans.

OR

Because corporations are made up of individuals, corporations have the same free speech rights as people and **should be able to spend unlimited amounts of money** in political campaigns.



■ Much more ■ Total

GBA Strategies – Legal Progress Survey 11/2011