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Editorial | Letters

Corporate money silences other voices

Posted October 21, 2016

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Carl H. Zimmerman appears to suggest that the current level of corporate money in politics is fine (“Free speech applies to corporations, too,” Star-Advertiser, Letters, Oct. 11).

Independent spending on federal elections by non-disclosing groups such as 501(c)(4)s and 501(c)(6)s, which have become preferred vehicles for secret corporate donations, is at \$111 million in the 2016 election cycle — 25 percent greater than it was in the 2008 cycle, before the Citizens United decision. Non-party independent expenditures generally are at \$980.6 million this year, 85 percent greater than they were in 2008.

Missing in the 5-4 U.S. Supreme Court decisions that have authorized the tsunami of private money is the crucial balance implicit in our First Amendment right.

If corporations and small groups of wealthy individuals, through virtually unrestricted “independent” expenditures, are allowed to so dominate speech that most citizens can’t effectively join the debate, then our democracy really is sliding toward plutocracy.

R. Elton Johnson III*Chairman, Common Cause Hawaii***Privileged elites avoid punishment**

The news about Hawaii County Mayor Billy Kenoi misusing his pCard should be an open-and-shut case (“Opening-day testimony focuses on use of pCard,” Star-

Advertiser, Oct. 19).

Simply ask: Did he use the card improperly? Yes. Was he warned that it was an improper use? Yes. Case closed.

Hillary Clinton misused a private email server to handle classified information. Was she told it was an improper use? Yes. Did she do it anyway? Yes. Case closed.

The rest of the populace has to obey the rules or risk termination from our jobs. Why does rank have the privilege of interpreting rules as it sees fit? No court case is needed to settle these cases. And I bet neither one gets so much as a slap on the wrist.

Whiting Hyland

Kailua

Elderly affected by Residential A tax

The Residential A tax is increasingly ensnaring elderly property owners of modest homes in Honolulu. I sympathize with the daughter of an elderly mother in her letter to the editor ("Residential A tax causes hardships," Star-Advertiser, Oct. 18).

I bet most people don't know what a Residential A property tax is. This unawareness by taxpayers is exactly what Mayor Kirk Caldwell is counting on to preserve this unfair tax.

As home prices increase in Honolulu, longtime homeowners find their ordinary homes being assessed by the city at more than the abrupt \$1 million threshold of Residential A. These high valuations of old, plain and simple properties are often just a reflection of the general desirability of the neighborhood they are located in. This can result in serious consequences, like the elderly mother described in the letter who moved to a care facility and needs the rent from her home to help pay for expenses.

Are you or your elderly parents going to have an issue with this in the near future as home prices rise?

Gregg Uyetake

Hawaii Kai

Discrimination laws should be studied

Federal employees must take annual training, pass tests and affirm that they will follow certain guidelines. I hope that our presidential candidates will commit to following these same rules.

Equal Employment Opportunity laws cover discrimination and harassment because of a person's race, color, religion, ... national origin, age, ... disability or genetic information. Prohibited conduct may include offensive jokes, slurs, epithets or name

calling, physical assaults or threats, intimidation, ridicule or mockery, insults or put-downs, offensive objects or pictures, according to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Other training relates to ethics awareness, computer security awareness and human trafficking, which includes sexual trafficking or labor trafficking that deprives people, U.S. citizens or not, of the rights guaranteed by U.S. law.

I also hope a future commander-in-chief will be in a position to address the pervasive problem of sexual assault in our military, including cover-ups, unwarranted clemency toward perpetrators, and retaliation against victims.

John Sharp

Mililani

Why are there still undecided voters?

How can anyone in America be undecided about who to choose for president?

For the last 15 months, every major network and cable news station has spent every day covering the two major candidates running for the presidency.

Whomever is undecided at this point must either have been living in a bubble or just got released from solitary confinement.

Why do the networks concentrate countless days on the undecided voter? Are there really undecided voters, or is this really just a ratings game for network and cable executives who cannot figure out that the ratings with these two candidates will be high no matter what?

I have heard that after the election, the candidates could sign contracts for their own reality shows.

Stay tuned. Just because the election will soon be over, this battle is far from over.

James "Kimo" Rosen

Kapaa, Kauai

Ige lucky to enjoy big budget surplus

After one of my many trips to Honolulu, probably close to 30 by now, I want to thank you for your paper, possibly one of the few papers still printing and delivering a full seven-days-per-week paper in a city of the size of Honolulu. Your subscribers should be happy, as I am each time to read it every morning of my visit.

During my last trip I read about the \$680 million that Gov. David Ige plans to set aside for a rainy day ("New policy would bank \$680M in state rainy day fund," Star-

Advertiser, Oct. 9).

I spent 15 years in Oregon state budget administration and I can tell you that any current governor would eat his heart out to have such a surplus to set aside.

Chuck Crump

Salem, Ore.