
Citizens United

Link:

<https://stosselintheclassroom.org/both-sides-citizens-united/>

Guide:

The questions below will help students achieve a better understanding of the arguments made on either side of a contentious topic. Because these questions often touch upon statements made briefly in the videos, we recommend reading the questions before watching each video.

Students are encouraged to take notes during the videos, and it may be helpful for students to break into groups, each taking responsibility for only a few questions, before coming together for discussion.

Analysis Questions:

1. What are the opposing ideas in these two videos?
2. What is *Citizens United*?
3. Robert Reich said that corporations have limited liability. What is limited liability?
4. In the Learn Liberty video, Bradley Smith said that in *Citizens United v. FEC*, the government argued that it could ban a book or movie produced or distributed by a corporation if it contained "even one line of political advocacy." Does this seem reasonable? Should the government be able to limit corporate influence on politics to that extent? Why/Why not?
5. Robert Reich said that with the Supreme Court's decision in *Buckley v. Valeo*, "the notion that money is speech was born." What does it mean to say that "money is speech"? Do you agree with that notion? Why/Why not?
6. Bradley Smith asked: "[I]f corporations aren't people, what are they?" How did he answer that question? How would you answer that question?
7. According to Robert Reich, Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell argued that political ads are "the type of speech indispensable to decision-making in a democracy." Do you agree? How important are political ads? How much influence do they have?
8. Bradley Smith said that treating corporations as people, for legal purposes, provides advantages to society. What were the examples he gave of those advantages?
9. Robert Reich said that the Supreme Court's ruling in *First National Bank of Boston v. Bellotti* allowed corporations "to get their foot in the door to take over elections." Have corporations taken over elections? If so, what are some examples of that?
10. Bradley Smith said that "corporations have all the rights that we, as people, have when we assemble, when we join together." What did he mean by that?

11. Robert Reich said that with the Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United v. FEC*, "the door for corporate influence in politics was finally kicked wide open." Why does Reich think that? Do you agree with him? Why/Why not?
12. What did Bradley Smith name as potential consequences if corporations didn't have legal rights?
13. What three steps did Robert Reich say should be taken to get "big money out of politics"?
14. Bradley Smith said that when you say corporations don't have rights, you're restricting the rights of real people. What did he mean by that? Do you agree? Why/Why not?
15. What does it mean to say that "corporations are people"? In what ways do you agree with that statement? In what ways do you disagree?
16. Did these two videos share any common ground? Were there any points on which they agreed? If so, what were they?
17. Should one of the arguments we heard carry more weight than the other? If so, which one? Why?
18. Did you have an opinion on this topic before watching these videos? If so, what was it? Has your opinion changed? If so, how? What did you learn from these videos that affects your views on this topic?
19. What else would you like to learn about this topic?