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*"The citizens of the United States must effectively control the mighty commercial forces which they have themselves called into being. There can be no effective control of corporations while their political activity remains. To put an end to it will be neither a short nor an easy task, but it can be done."
--Theodore Roosevelt, 1910*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Contact: Jeff Milchen, director, ReclaimDemocracy.org (see sidebar)

Corporate Lawyers' Dream Bill Would Strip Away Public Control Over Corporations In Colorado

Even with Enron and Global Crossing fresh in citizens' minds, some Colorado lawmakers are bidding to eliminate Constitutional authority over corporate chartering, corporate stock issuance, and even the requirement that a Colorado corporation actually have some bona fide connection to the state.

Jeff Milchen, director of ReclaimDemocracy.org, a Colorado-based public interest group, derided the bill as a "Corporate Sovereignty Act" that would strip away vital tools for citizens to exercise authority over their own interests and one that "doesn't pass the straight face test." He challenged any bill promoter to demonstrate a need for what he calls a "gutting of already inadequate control over corporate behavior to protect the public interest."

With little, if any public attention, House Concurrent Resolution 1003 (HCR02-1003) passed through the House Business Affairs and Labor Committee and, if not pulled from consideration, will go to a full house vote. The bill attempts to place before voters in 2002 a question that would strike four sections from Article XV of the Colorado Constitution.

Most voters might struggle to comprehend the meaning of some of these provisions—a challenge that Mr. Milchen says "corporate lobbying powers no doubt would attempt to ease by providing their own interpretations rooted in misleading propaganda." Public interest groups had no advance warning of the bill, but the bill's architect, the Business Section of the Colorado Bar Association, laid out arguments for the Business Affairs Committee using meaningless language like "antiquated" to describe Colorado's Constitution." Milchen asked whether we should delete the First Amendment for that same reason.

While citizen advocates may have been caught off guard, ReclaimDemocracy.org already has a counter in mind--they've proposed three initial revisions to the Colorado Corporate Code for which they claim they can provide substantial evidence of need. The proposed additions are:

*No corporation doing business in Colorado shall deny employees their freedom of speech, freedom of association, the right to bring grievances against their employer in court, or protection from unreasonable search and seizure.

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"Corporations, which should be the carefully restrained creatures of the law and the servants of the people, are fast becoming the people's masters."
--Grover Cleveland

ReclaimDemocracy.org is a non-profit (501c3) educational organization concerned with informing the public about illegitimate corporate power and providing tools to revive grassroots democracy.

Contributions are tax deductible to the extent of the law.

*No corporation doing business in Colorado shall advertise on issues of public policy nor contribute to any fund that is designed to promote or oppose a bill or initiative, policy objective, political candidate or political party. All corporate advertising shall be limited to the nature of the specific products or services, their price and availability.

*Only human beings may be incorporators.

Additionally, they say, the proper action when important laws go unused is to create public pressure on the attorney general and legislature to enforce them, not kill them. "we need to elect officials who will get tough on corporate crime, which takes more innocent lives and costs us all far more each year than street crime."

ReclaimDemocracy.org has issued a request to Boulder Representative Alice Madden (D), the bill's House sponsor, to pull the bill from consideration until they, other public interest groups like Common Cause and Colorado Public Interest Research Group, and concerned citizens can evaluate and testify on the bill's full impacts.

Though a thorough legal review has just begun, an initial legal analysis is available.

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