

House Elections Finance & Policy Committee
Representative Mike Freiberg, Chair
Representative Emma Greenman, Vice Chair

Committee meeting Wednesday, February 14, 2024 at 8:30 a.m.

Committee Chair, Vice Chair and Committee Members. My name is Barbara Gerten from South St Paul, MN.

The representative democracy we think we have no longer exists. We no longer have a government of, by and for the people. Each vote in a political election no longer has the impact intended. Today money in politics is a huge enterprise and a major concern of voters.

Many Minnesotans who participated in Money in Politics Listening* activities expressed that one person, one vote is a basic tenet of a representative democracy. There is a great deal of concern that our election system no longer operates as it should. When large amounts of money are given by a relatively small number of voters and an even greater amount is given by non-voters, such as corporations and other legally constructed entities, the equalizing power of one person, one vote is annulled. This outsized influence of money provides power to a few. Given this reality, can we say we live in a representative democracy?

Once elected, many officials are beholden to the large donors and influencers. A return is expected from the "investment." This continuous tit-for-tat is reducing our country to a corporatocracy.

Our country is in need of strong elected officials who value our republican form of government more than their desire to hold an office. We need representatives and senators who will reset the definition of We the People to mean human beings only so that the courts can not deviate from this basic understanding. Equally necessary, it must be made clear that money is not a First Amendment right of free speech, and that it shall be regulated in political campaigns.

I ask for your yes vote to pass HR 1064. Be the champions for the representative democracy we deserve as Americans.

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