

Submission by Matthew Ford

I simply wish to urge the severe disconnection between money and political power. As we see amply in the long fall of the United States empire, money is used to promote messages which tilt the balance of elections, and this is a profoundly corrupting influence to be stopped and reversed before it sends Australia any further down the track forged by the USA. Though I am a strong advocate of free speech, in this regard exceptions must be made for the greater good of democracy. I want to trust my political leaders and judiciary to form policies which enable this, though I suggest a few ideas to communicate the thrust of my argument.

There should be no political speech of any kind allowed if the person speaking was paid to do so, or had the means of broadcast paid by anyone else. This should apply to old and new media, TV, radio, newspapers, Internet, signs, mailings—everything. In this regard, the right of free speech remains, but is not transferrable.

Furthermore, speech which advocates a political party or candidate should be required to NOT identify the speaker, to prevent quid pro quo rewards for rich individuals who spend their own money to promote a candidate. Such speech could be required to be registered with a neutral government body who does learn the identity of the speaker, in order to assure that no money changed hands to promote the speech.

News organizations would be allowed to break these rules if they assure balance and neutrality of coverage.

I left the USA and became an Australian citizen because I saw the downfall coming. I love Australia and will never leave. I feel compelled to warn Australians of the peril of the kind of political corruption that may now be irreversible in the USA. When money has power, it uses that power to assure that it keeps that power. Only people, not money, should have political power.

--Matthew Ford, Kenmore, QLD