Poll: Large majority opposes Supreme Court's decision on campaign financing

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Americans of both parties overwhelmingly oppose a Supreme Court ruling that allows corporations and unions to spend as much as they want on political campaigns, and most favor new limits on such spending, according to a new Washington Post-ABC News poll.

Eight in 10 poll respondents say they oppose the high court's Jan. 21 decision to allow unfettered corporate political spending, with 65 percent "strongly" opposed. Nearly as many backed congressional action to curb the ruling, with 72 percent in favor of reinstating limits.

The poll reveals relatively little difference of opinion on the issue among Democrats (85 percent opposed to the ruling), Republicans (76 percent) and independents (81 percent).

The results suggest a strong reservoir of bipartisan support on the issue for President Obama and congressional Democrats, who are in the midst of crafting legislation aimed at limiting the impact of the high court's decision.

"If there's one thing that Americans from the left, right and center can all agree on, it's that they don't want more special interests in our politics," Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.), who is spearheading the legislative effort, said in a statement after the poll was released Wednesday.

"We hope we can get strong and quick bipartisan support for our legislation, which passes constitutional muster but will still effectively limit the influence of special interests."

Under legislation being drafted by Schumer and Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.), companies with foreign ownership or federal contracting ties would be limited in their ability to spend corporate money on elections.

The lawmakers also want to require companies to inform shareholders about political spending; to mandate special "political activities" accounts for corporations, unions and advocacy groups; and to require that corporate executives appear in political advertising funded by their companies.
Other likely proposals include banning participation in U.S. elections by bank bailout recipients.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (Ky.) and other Republican lawmakers have praised the high court ruling as a victory for free speech, however, and have signaled their intent to oppose any legislation intended to blunt the impact of the court's decision.

In Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission, the high court ruled 5-4 that corporations have the same rights as individuals when it comes to political speech and can therefore use their profits to support or oppose individual candidates. The decision appears to open the door to unlimited spending by corporations, trade groups and unions in the weeks leading up to an election, which has been explicitly banned for decades.

Democrats have seized on the ruling as an example of judicial overreach and vowed to enact new limits on political spending by corporations, which have traditionally favored Republicans in their contribution patterns. Obama said in his State of the Union address that the ruling will "open the floodgates for special interests, including foreign corporations, to spend without limit in our elections."