



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Zachary Stalberg
President and CEO
(267) 861-6042
(267) 241-1628 (cell)

Ellen Mattleman Kaplan
Vice President and Policy Director
(267) 861-6039
(215) 470-8316 (cell)

Campaign Contribution Limits to City Candidates Preserved **U.S. Supreme Court’s campaign finance ruling has no local impact**

PHILADELPHIA – April 2, 2014 – The Committee of Seventy expressed relief that a U.S. Supreme Court ruling issued today does not impact caps on contributions to most candidates elected by Philadelphia voters.

However, Seventy’s President and CEO Zack Stalberg said the non-partisan organization’s biggest concern is unlimited spending by groups independent of the candidates dominating city elections in 2015.

According to Stalberg, the U.S. Supreme Court’s opinion was narrowly directed at aggregate limits (i.e. caps on *total* contributions to *all* candidates or political committees), which the majority of the Court found to be unconstitutional. Philadelphia’s campaign finance law does not impose aggregate contribution limits, but only caps contributions to a particular candidate or political committee.

“Philadelphia’s contribution limits have significantly reduced pay-to-play and allowed more people able to make smaller donations to participate in local elections,” said Stalberg. “With the 2015 municipal elections already underway, we were very concerned that today’s ruling would ignite legal challenges to do away with the limits altogether. Thankfully, it does not.”

Limits on contributions during a calendar year to a candidate or political committee – from individuals and from political committees, partnerships and sole proprietorships – are in effect for the 2015 races for

mayor, City Council, Sheriff and City Commissioner. Candidates for Register of Wills, also running in 2015, are considered state candidates. Pennsylvania has no limits on how much money can be contributed by individuals and political action committees to state candidates.

Stalberg said Seventy continues to be concerned about unlimited outside dollars flowing to the 2015 municipal elections: “The majority opinion acknowledges that anyone who wants to give lots of money to influence an election can easily get around contribution limits. In fact, the Court practically invites donations to groups uncoordinated with the candidates by noting that not all are required to publicly disclose their donors.”

Stalberg said that Seventy has urged City Council to strengthen the city’s campaign finance law by requiring disclosures from groups making independent expenditures. “This City Council has vehemently denounced the impact on elections of outside spenders,” he said, noting a Council resolution condemning a prior U.S. Supreme Court decision that opened the floodgates. Stalberg pointed out that Council has taken no action on legislation introduced over a year ago to require disclosures from independent contributors and spenders.

“As the majority ruling says: ‘[D]isclosure of contributions minimizes the potential for abuse of the campaign finance system,’” Stalberg concluded. “Council should make sure that city voters know the people behind spending in local campaigns. It is a vital piece of information voters need before deciding who to vote for.”

The Committee of Seventy is a non-partisan organization fighting for clean and effective government, fair elections and an informed citizenry. For more information, see www.seventy.org.