Foster Garvey

News

Working to Reform Campaign Finance Systems

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In 2019, Foster Garvey continued to assist its partner organization, Free Speech for People ("FSFP"), in advancing legislation to repair the country's broken campaign finance system and mitigate the influence of money in the electoral process. One of FSFP's current priorities is the promotion of model legislation, which FSFP drafted to curb super PACs and political spending by foreign-influenced corporations.

In 2017, the City of St. Petersburg, Florida, voted to enact FSFP's model ordinance, limiting spending by super PACs and foreign-influenced businesses in city elections. A significant inducement to the passage of this legislation was the offer of legal assistance from Foster Garvey, in the likely event that the ordinance was challenged on constitutional grounds. Foster Garvey was selected for the job after the city's former lead trial counsel, David Boies, stepped down.

The St. Petersburg ordinance requires corporations that spend money in St. Petersburg elections to certify they are not foreign-influenced, meaning that they are not owned in whole or a significant part by foreign entities. The Seattle City Council recently voted to enact a similar variant of the FSFP model ordinance, restricting election spending by foreign-influenced businesses. The St. Petersburg ordinance goes one step further, establishing limits on contributions to political action committees and thereby diminishing the influence of super PACs in city elections.

When St. Petersburg held its city council elections in 2019, it braced itself for a legal fight over this new campaign finance ordinance. A team of Foster Garvey attorneys, led by Andrew Goodman, made defensive preparations for an anticipated emergency lawsuit. Ultimately, no challenge was brought, but St. Petersburg expects the issue will resurface even more prominently in 2020 when the city holds its next mayoral election. The Foster Garvey team responsible for defending the St. Petersburg ordinance includes Brad Deutsch, Andrew Goodman, Maury Heller, Dan Keppler, Paul Trinchero, Malcolm Seymour and Yeli Zhou.

Featured People

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