

EXCERPT FROM PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA'S PRESS CONFERENCE ON OCTOBER 8, 2013

QUESTION FROM ARI SHAPIRO, NPR: Thank you, Mr. President. You mentioned the Supreme Court, and the term started today with the campaign finance case that sort of picks up where Citizens United left off. You've called Citizens United "devastating to the public interest," so I wonder if you could weigh in on this latest case.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, the latest case would go even further than Citizens United. I mean, essentially it would say anything goes; there are no rules in terms of how to finance campaigns. There aren't a lot of functioning democracies around the world that work this way, where you can basically have millionaires and billionaires bankrolling whoever they want, however they want -- in some cases undisclosed. And what it means is ordinary Americans are shut out of the process.

And Democrats aren't entirely innocent of this in the past. And I had to raise a lot of money for my campaign, so I -- there's nobody who operates in politics that has perfectly clean hands on this issue. But what is also true is that all of us should bind ourselves to some rules that say the people who vote for us should be more important than somebody who's spending a million dollars, \$10 million, or \$100 million dollars to help us get elected -- because we don't know what their agendas are, we don't know what their interests are.

And I continue to believe that Citizens United contributed to some of the problems we're having in Washington right now. You have some ideological extremist who has a big bankroll and they can entirely skew our politics. And there are a whole bunch of members of Congress right now who privately will tell you, I know our positions are unreasonable, but we're scared that if we don't go along with the tea party agenda or some particularly extremist agenda that we'll be challenged from the right. And the threats are very explicit, and so they toe the line. And that's part of why we've seen a breakdown of just normal, routine business done here in Washington on behalf of the American people.

And all of you know it. I mean, I'm not telling you anything you don't know -- because it's very explicit. You report on it. A big chunk of the Republican Party right now are in gerrymandered districts where there's no competition, and those folks are much more worried about a tea party challenger than they are about a general election where they've got to compete against a Democrat or go after independent votes. And in that environment, it's a lot harder for them to compromise.