

IMAGES CINEMA

Probing the impact of corporate donations on democracy: Images sets screening, expert discussion on Monday, Aug. 11

WILLIAMSTOWN, Mass. – A live public dialog on the role of corporate donations in American politics -- and the Citizens United decision -- comes to Images Cinema for one night on Monday, Aug. 11 highlighted by a 7 p.m. screening of the new documentary “Citizen Koch.”

The 88-minute documentary, released to theaters in July, will be followed by a live teleconference discussion with the audience and film’s co-director, Carl Deal, and by two Williams College professors, Ralph Bradburd and Justin Crowe. Future-of-media researcher Bill Densmore will moderate.

“This film – ‘Citizen Koch’ – is an example of a shift in technology and our media ecosystem which allows independent voices to reach diverse audiences at much lower cost than an earlier era of three networks,” says Densmore. “We’ll be assessing with the Images audience the fairness and balance of this example and whether it is effective advocacy.”

Admission will be by suggested donation, \$5-10, which will benefit Images Cinema to cover film exhibition expenses. Images Cinema is located at 50 Spring Street, Williamstown, Mass.

"Citizen Koch" is billed as a searing exposé on the state of democracy in America and the fracturing of the Republican Party by Academy Award®-nominated directors Deal and Tia Lessin (Trouble the Water; co-producers of Fahrenheit 9/11 & Bowling for Columbine). The film is in part a case study of the impact of the 2010 U.S. Supreme Court “Citizens United” decision overturning campaign-finance restrictions on corporations.

As a case study, the documentary investigates the impact of unlimited, anonymous spending by corporations and billionaires on an anti-union drive and ensuing gubernatorial recall in Wisconsin. It focuses in part on Charles and Edward Koch, the two Texas oil-industry billionaire philanthropists who have backed Tea Party and other political initiatives.

Originally, Lessin and Deal were commissioned by mainstream foundations to create the documentary for airing via the Public Broadcasting Service. Critical funding evaporated after they retitled the documentary from “Citizen Corp” to “Citizen Koch.” At that point, PBS station officials allegedly worried about David Koch’s \$23 million in giving to public TV. Deal and Lessin then used the online service Kickstarter to raise \$170,000, finish the documentary and re-orient its release to theaters.

After screening the film at 7 p.m., Images will host a panel discussion including:

- Carl Deal, co-director of “Citizen Koch” (via live link from his New York home), who will describe why the documentary focuses on events in Wisconsin and the president campaign of former Louisiana Gov. Buddy Roemer.
- Williams College economist Ralph Bradburd, who will discuss the incentives for corporations to spend large sums on lobbying or public advocacy.
- Williams College political scientist and Supreme Court scholar Justin Crowe, will summarize the debate over “Citizens United” (and subsequent cases) as well as the political and constitutional issues surrounding corporate policy spending generally.

Densmore, the session moderator, is a convenor of the Rules Change Project (<http://www.ruleschange.org>) and a research fellow to the Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute at the Missouri School of Journalism.

ABOUT IMAGES CINEMA

The only one of its kind in Berkshire County, Images Cinema is a year-round non-profit, member-supported community film house that presents a wide range of films that impact filmmaking and our culture. Images continuously seeks to entertain, educate and engage the community with quality programming, while maintaining its dedication to independent film and media. Images Cinema serves organic popcorn, real butter, locally-made baked goods, and naturally sweetened sodas, as well as traditional concessions fare. Images Cinema is supported in part by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency. Check for up-to-date happenings at www.imagescinema.org

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