

The FFFP Act

I would assume that all of us were pretty disgusted with many of the political ads that came our way this last election cycle. A lot of money was spent throwing mud our way, on our TV screens or in our mailboxes, money spent by God knows who. And that's the trouble – who is it exactly who's polluting our airwaves?

Now I understand that the Supreme Court, in its infinite lack of wisdom, has ruled that spending money is free speech. But I also understand that our Constitution only grants those rights to American citizens and permanent residents, but not foreigners. But we have no idea whether those attack ads are paid for by American citizens, or by Mexican drug lords, Arab sheiks, or Russian kleptocrats. And there's no way we want those foreigners to be allowed to spend their ill-gotten gains to buy power and influence in our elected government.

So here's what we need – a Freedom From Foreign Propaganda Act. The act would prohibit foreigners, and only foreigners, from financing political ads here in the U.S. Any American citizen or legal permanent resident would still be free to spend as much as they want on political ads under the Act. All they would have to do is to document that they are in fact legal American residents.

So here's how it would work. Suppose you are wealthy, and want spend \$10 million on an attack ad describing how Rep. Jones beats his wife and children. All you would have to do is file with the state some document proving your citizenship, like a copy of your passport, or driver's license, or birth certificate. If you're not a citizen, but are a permanent American resident, a copy of your green card would suffice. And then you could spend your money freely, exercising your Constitutional right to make scurrilous claims about any politician you dislike.

Now I know there are some that would argue that this places an undue burden on those who want to finance all this mud throwing. "Not every filthy rich mud thrower will have a passport or driver's license," some of them might say. So fine. Let's make available free identification cards for them, available by going to the DMV with a certified copy of your birth certificate and copies of any court records showing any name changes since birth, if you happen to be a filthy rich married woman mud thrower.

"But why," some might say, "make them identify themselves at all? Is there any evidence that Columbian cocaine cartel members or African warlords are spending money on American campaigns?" No, but why does that matter? We're only asking them to show identification, the same identification you need to cash a check or get on an airplane. So no, I don't think that's too much to ask, to keep our electoral system fair and honest.

And yes, I did argue recently that making voters show IDs was a bad idea. But that's different. The right to vote is perhaps our most fundamental political right. Certainly its more fundamental than the right to tell someone else how they should vote. So no, it's not a contradiction to argue that the lesser right should have requirements that are not imposed on the greater right. It's doing the opposite – imposing more restrictions on voters than on political advertisers – that makes no sense whatsoever.

So let's pass a Freedom From Foreign Propaganda Act, so we can be sure Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, the Taliban's Mullah Mohammed Omar, and North Korea's Kim Jong-un aren't spending their wealth on our elections.