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For Immediate Release

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U.S. Supreme Court to Hear Watershed Campaign Spending Limits Case

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Sweeping Campaign Finance Reform Possible in *Randall v. Sorrell*

Boston, MA – Today marks an historic opportunity for the Supreme Court to consider anew whether carefully drawn campaign spending limit laws are constitutional. The *Randall v. Sorrell* case offers the Court the opportunity to open the door for a sea change in the way American elections are funded by declaring that reasonable campaign spending and contribution limits are constitutional.

As a recent poll commissioned by the National Voting Rights Institute (NVRI) revealed, many agree the current system is unfair and chronically flawed. A remarkable 87% of voters support caps on campaign spending as a way of improving the fairness, honesty and integrity of elections.

The Court had ruled in *Buckley v. Valeo* in 1976 that recently passed limits on Congressional campaign spending were unconstitutional. This is the first time the Court will have considered the question of spending limits since that time. The Court will also be reviewing the limits on the size of contributions under Vermont's law.

NVRI Executive Director Stuart Comstock-Gay said, "In this case, the Supreme Court faces an extraordinary opportunity. For nearly three decades since the *Buckley* ruling, the nation has witnessed the threat posed to our democracy by unlimited campaign spending. The Jack Abramoff scandal shows once again that the never-ending need for more and more campaign money creates a constant temptation to go down a wrong path."

NVRI represents a coalition of Vermont voters, candidates and public interest groups helping to defend the law. NVRI Managing Attorney Brenda Wright argues the case today, along with Vermont Attorney General William Sorrell.

The Supreme Court is reviewing the case because the U.S. Second Circuit Court of Appeals in the summer of 2004 ruled that spending limits may be upheld under the First Amendment, the first time a federal court had issued such a ruling since the Supreme Court's 1976 ruling. Paul Burns, Executive Director of the Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG), which leads the Vermont coalition in support of the law, added, "This law is about Vermont citizens taking control of Vermont democracy. The Court should reject a one-size fits-all solution, and give us the leeway to create accountable government here at home. The time has come to look at new facts and circumstances presented by Vermont, and revisit the prohibition on spending limits."

Amicus briefs in support of Vermont's law were filed by a wide range of voices, including a bi-partisan group of 13 U.S. Senators and Representatives, former U.S. Senators Bill Bradley (D-NJ) and Alan Simpson (R-WY), 17 state Attorneys General, several state Secretaries of State, 13 current and former elected state judges and justices, several candidates who have run as challengers in Congressional elections, nearly two dozen democracy reform and civil rights organizations, and many others.

The National Voting Rights Institute is a Boston-based, non-partisan, non-profit organization committed to making real the promise of American democracy that meaningful political participation and power should be accessible to all regardless of economic or social status. NVRI represents a number of organizations and individuals defending the constitutionality of the Vermont law.

The State PIRGs – a national network of nonprofit, nonpartisan public interest advocacy organizations – work to preserve the environment, protect consumers, and promote accountable government. With 20,000 members statewide, Vermont PIRG is Vermont's largest environmental and consumer watchdog organization.

All of the amicus briefs, as well as the briefs of the parties, are available at www.nvri.org/campaignspending/cs_supremecourt.html. In addition to the briefs, summaries from the briefs can be found there as well.

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