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Today I wish to explain why, after working for years as a citizen advocate for consumers, workers, taxpayers and the environment, I am seeking the Green Party's nomination for President. A crisis of democracy in our country' convinces me to take this action. Over the past twenty years, big business has increasingly dominated our political economy. This control by the corporate government over our political government is creating a widening "democracy gap." Active citizens are left shouting their concerns over a deep chasm between them and their government. This state of affairs is a world away from the legislative milestones in civil rights, the environment, and health and safety of workers and consumers seen in the sixties and seventies. At that time, informed and dedicated citizens powered their concerns through the channels of government to produce laws that bettered the lives of millions of Americans.

Today we face grave and growing societal problems in health care, education, labor, energy and the environment. These are problems for which active citizens have solutions, yet their voices are not carrying across the democracy gap. Citizen groups and individual thinkers have generated a tremendous capital of ideas, information, and solutions to the point of surplus, while our government has been drawn away from us by a corporate government. Our political leadership has been hijacked.

Citizen advocates have no other choice but to close the democracy gap by direct political means. Only effective national political leadership will restore the responsiveness of government to its citizenry. Truly progressive political movements do not just produce more good results; they enable a flowering of progressive citizen movements to effectively advance the quality of our neighborhoods and communities outside of politics.

I have a personal distaste for the trappings of modern politics, in which incumbents and candidates daily extol their own inflated virtues, paint complex issues with trivial brush strokes, and propose plans quickly generated by campaign consultants. But I can no longer stomach the systemic political decay that has weakened our democracy. I can no longer watch people dedicate themselves to improving their country while their government leaders turn their backs, or worse, actively block fair treatment for citizens. It is necessary to launch a sustained effort to wrest control of our democracy from the corporate government and restore it to the political government under the control of citizens.

This campaign will challenge all Americans who are concerned with systemic imbalances of power and the undermining of our democracy, whether they consider themselves progressives, liberals, conservatives, or others. Presidential elections should be a time for deep discussions among the citizenry regarding the down-to-earth problems and injustices that are not addressed because of the gross power mismatch between the narrow vested interests and the public or common good.

The unconstrained behavior of big business is subordinating our democracy to the control of a corporate plutocracy that knows few self-imposed limits to the spread of its power to all sectors of our society. Moving on all fronts to advance narrow profit motives at the expense of civic values, large corporate lobbies and their law firms have produced a commanding, multi-faceted and powerful juggernaut. They flood public elections with cash, and they use their media conglomerates to exclude, divert, or propagandize. They brandish their willingness to close factories here and open them abroad if workers do not bend to their demands. By their control in Congress, they keep the federal cops off the corporate crime, fraud, and abuse beats. They imperiously demand and get a wide array of privileges and immunities: tax escapes, enormous corporate welfare subsidies, federal giveaways, and bailouts. They weaken the common law of torts in order to avoid their responsibility for injurious wrongdoing to innocent children, women and men.

Abuses of economic power are nothing new. Every major religion in the world has warned about societies allowing excessive influences of mercantile or commercial values. The profiteering motive is driven and single-minded. When unconstrained, it can override or erode community, health, safety, parental nurturing, due process, clean politics, and many other basic social values that hold together a society. Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt, Supreme Court Justices Louis Brandeis and William Douglas, among others, eloquently warned about what Thomas Jefferson called "the excesses of the monied interests" dominating people and their governments. The struggle between the forces of democracy and plutocracy has ebbed and flowed throughout our history. Each time the cycle of power has favored more democracy, our country has prospered ("a rising tide lifts all boats"). Each time the cycle of corporate plutocracy has lengthened, injustices and shortcomings proliferate.

In the sixties and seventies, for example, when the civil rights, consumer, environmental, and women's rights movements were in their ascendancy, there finally was a constructive responsiveness by government. Corporations, such as auto manufacturers, had to share more decision making with affected constituencies, both directly and through their public representatives and civil servants. Overall, our country has come out better, more tolerant, safer, and with greater opportunities. The earlier nineteenth century democratic struggles by abolitionists against slavery, by farmers against large oppressive railroads and banks, and later by new trade unionists against the brutal workplace conditions of the early industrial and mining era helped mightily to make America and its middle class what it is today. They demanded that economic power subside or be shared.

Democracy works, and a stronger democracy works better for reputable, competitive markets, equal opportunity and higher standards of living and justice. Generally, it brings out the best performances from people and from businesses.

A plutocracy—rule by the rich and powerful—on the other hand, obscures our historical quests for justice. Harnessing political power to corporate greed leaves us with a country that has far more problems than it deserves, while blocking ready solutions or improvements from being applied.

It is truly remarkable for almost every widespread need or injustice in our country, there are citizens, civic groups, small and medium-sized businesses and farms that have shown how to meet these needs or end these injustices. However, all the innovative solutions in the world will accomplish little if the injustices they address or the problems they solve have been shoved aside because plutocracy reigns and democracy wanes. For all optimistic Americans, when their issues are thus swept from the table, it becomes civic mobilization time.

Consider the economy, which business commentators say could scarcely be better. If, instead of corporate yardsticks, we use human yardsticks to measure the performance of the economy and go beyond the quantitative indices of annual economic growth, structural deficiencies become readily evident. The complete dominion of traditional yardsticks for measuring economic prosperity masks not only these failures but also the inability of a weakened democracy to address how and why a majority of Americans are not benefiting from this prosperity in their daily lives. Despite record economic growth, corporate profits, and stock market highs year after year, a stunning array of deplorable conditions still prevails year after year. For example

- A majority of workers are making less now, inflation adjusted, than in 1979.
- Over 20 percent of children were growing up in poverty during the past decade, by far the highest among comparable western countries.
- The minimum wage is lower today, inflation-adjusted, than in 1979.
- American workers are working longer and longer hours—on average an additional 163 hours per year, compared to twenty years ago—with less time for family and community.
- Many full-time family farms cannot make a living in a market of giant buyer concentration and industrial agriculture.
- The public works (infrastructure) are crumbling, with decrepit schools and clinics, library closings, antiquated mass transit and more.

- Corporate welfare programs, paid for largely by middle-class taxpayers and amounting to hundreds of billions of dollars per year, continue to rise along with government giveaways of taxpayer assets such as public forests, minerals and new medicines.
 - Affordable housing needs are at record levels while secondary mortgage market companies show record profits.
 - The number of Americans without health insurance grows every year.
 - There have been twenty-five straight years of growing foreign trade deficits (\$270 billion in 1999).
 - Consumer debt is at an all time high, totaling over \$6 trillion.
 - Personal bankruptcies are at a record level.
 - Personal savings are dropping to record lows and personal assets are so low that Bill Gates' net worth is equal to that of the net assets of the poorest 120 million Americans combined.
 - The tiny federal budgets for the public's health and safety continue to be grossly inadequate.
 - Motor vehicle fuel efficiency averages are actually declining and, overall, energy conservation efforts have slowed, while renewable energy takes a back seat to fossil fuel and atomic power subsidies.
 - Wealth inequality is greater than at any time since WWII. The top one percent of the wealthiest people have more financial wealth than the bottom 90 percent of Americans combined, the worst inequality among large western nations.
 - Despite annual declines in total business liability costs, business lobbyists drive for more privileges and immunities for their wrongdoing.

It is permissible to ask, in the light of these astonishing shortcomings during a period of touted prosperity, what the state of our country would be should a recession or depression occur? One import of these contrasts is clear: economic growth has been decoupled from economic progress for many Americans. In the early 1970s, our economy split into two tiers. Whereas once economic growth broadly benefited the majority, now the economy has become one wherein "a rising tide lifts all yachts," in the words of Jeff Gates, author of *The Ownership Solution*. Returns on capital outpaced returns on labor, and job insecurity increased for millions of seasoned workers. In the seventies, the top 300 CEOs paid themselves forty times the entry-level wage in their companies. Now the average is over 400 times. This is an economy where impoverished assembly line workers suffering from carpal tunnel syndrome frantically process chickens which pass them in a continuous flow, where downsized white and blue collar employees are hired at lesser compensation, if they are lucky, where the focus of top business executives is no longer to provide a service that attracts customers, but rather to acquire customers through mergers and acquisitions. How long can the paper economy of speculation ignore its effects on the real economy of working families?

Pluralistic democracy has enlarged markets and created the middle class. Yet the short-term monetized minds of the corporatists are bent on weakening, defeating, diluting, diminishing, circumventing, co-opting, or corrupting all traditional countervailing forces that have saved American corporate capitalism from itself.

Regulation of food, automobiles, banks and securities, for example, strengthened these markets along with protecting consumers and investors. Antitrust enforcement helped protect our country from monopoly capitalism and stimulated competition. Trade unions enfranchised workers and helped mightily to build the middle class for themselves, benefiting also non-union laborers. Producer and consumer cooperatives helped save the family farm, electrified rural areas, and offered another model of economic activity. Civil litigation—the right to have your day in court—helped deter producers of harmful products and brought them to some measure of justice. At the same time, the public learned about these hazards.

Public investment—from naval shipyards to Pentagon drug discoveries against infectious disease to public power authorities—provided yardsticks to measure the unwillingness of big business to change and respond to needs. Even under a rigged system, shareholder pressures on

management sometimes have shaken complacency, wrongdoing, and mismanagement. Direct consumer remedies, including class actions, have given pause to crooked businesses and have stopped much of this unfair competition against honest businesses. Big business lobbies opposed all of this progress strenuously, but they lost and America gained. Ultimately, so did a chastened but myopic business community.

Now, these checkpoints face a relentless barrage from rampaging corporate titans assuming more control over elected officials, the workplace, the marketplace, technology, capital pools (including workers' pension trusts) and educational institutions. One clear sign of the reign of corporations over our government is that the key laws passed in the 1960s and 1970s that we use to curb corporate misbehavior would not even pass through Congressional committees today. Planning ahead, multinational corporations shaped the World Trade Organization's autocratic and secretive governing procedures so as to undermine non-trade health, safety, and other living standard laws and proposals in member countries.

Up against the corporate government, voters find themselves asked to choose between look-a-like candidates from two parties vying to see who takes the marching orders from their campaign paymasters and their future employers. The money of vested interests nullifies genuine voter choice and trust. Our elections have been put out for auction to the highest bidder. Public elections must be publicly financed and it can be done with well-promoted voluntary check-offs and free TV and Radio time for ballot-qualified candidates.

Workers are disenfranchised more than any time since the 1920s. Many unions stagger under stagnant leadership and discouraged rank and file. Furthermore, weak labor laws actually obstruct new trade union organization and leave the economy with the lowest percentage of workers unionized in more than sixty years. Giant multinationals are pitting countries against one another and escaping national jurisdictions more and more. Under these circumstances, workers are entitled to stronger labor organizing laws and rights for their own protection in order to deal with highly organized corporations.

At a very low cost, government can help democratic solution building for a host of problems that citizens face, from consumer abuses, to environmental degradation. Government research and development generated whole new industries and company startups and created the Internet. At the least, our government can facilitate the voluntary banding together of interested citizens into democratic civic institutions. Such civic organizations can create more level playing fields in the banking, insurance, real estate, transportation, energy, health care, cable TV, educational, public services, and other sectors. Let's call this the flowering of a deep-rooted democratic society. A government that funnels your tax dollars to corporate welfare kings in the form of subsidies, bailouts, guarantees, and giveaways of valuable public assets can at least invest in promoting healthy democracy.

Taxpayers have very little legal standing in the federal courts and little indirect voice in the assembling and disposition of taxpayer revenues. Closer scrutiny of these matters between elections is necessary. Facilities can be established to accomplish a closer oversight of taxpayer assets and how tax dollars (apart from social insurance) are allocated. This is an arena which is, at present, shaped heavily by corporations that, despite record profits, pay far less in taxes as a percent of the federal budget than in the 1950s and 1960s.

The "democracy gap" in our politics and elections spells a deep sense of powerlessness by people who drop out, do not vote or listlessly vote for the "least-worst" every four years and then wonder why after another cycle the "least-worst" gets worse. It is time to redress fundamentally these imbalances of power. We need a deep initiatory democracy in the embrace of its citizens, a usable brace of democratic tools that brings the best out of people, highlights the humane ideas and practical ways to raise and meet our expectations and resolve our society's deficiencies and injustices.

A few illustrative questions can begin to raise our expectations and suggest what can be lost when the few and powerful hijack our democracy:

- Why can't the wealthiest nation in the world abolish the chronic poverty of millions of working and non-working Americans, including our children?
 - Are we reversing the disinvestment in our distressed inner cities and rural areas and using creatively some of the huge capital pools in the economy to make these areas more livable, productive and safe?
 - Are we able to end homelessness and wretched housing conditions with modern materials, designs, and financing mechanisms, without bank and insurance company redlining, to meet the affordable housing needs of millions of Americans?
 - Are we getting the best out of known ways to spread renewable, efficient energy throughout the land to save consumers money and to head off global warming and other land-based environmental damage from fossil fuels and atomic energy?
 - Are we getting the best out of the many bright and public-spirited civil servants who know how to improve governments but are rarely asked by their politically-appointed superiors or members of Congress?
 - Are we able to provide wide access to justice for all aggrieved people so that we apply rigorously the admonition of Judge Learned Hand, "If we are to keep our democracy, there must be one commandment: Thou Shall Not Ration Justice"?
 - Can we extend overseas the best examples of our country's democratic processes and achievements instead of annually using billions in tax dollars to subsidize corporate munitions exports, as Republican Senator Mark Hatfield always used to decry?
 - Can we stop the giveaways of our vast commonwealth assets and become better stewards of the public lands, better investors of trillions of dollars in worker pension monies, and allow broader access to the public airwaves and other assets now owned by the people but controlled by corporations?
 - Can we counter the coarse and brazen commercial culture, including television which daily highlights depravity and ignores the quiet civic heroisms in its communities, a commercialism that insidiously exploits childhood and plasters its logos everywhere?
 - Can we plan ahead as a society so we know our priorities and where we wish to go? Or do we continue to let global corporations remain astride the planet, corporatizing everything, from genes to education to the Internet to public institutions, in short planning our futures in their image? If a robust civic culture does not shape the future, corporatism surely will.

To address these and other compelling challenges, we must build a powerful, self-renewing civil society that focuses on ample justice so we do not have to desperately bestow limited charity. Such a culture strengthens existing civic associations and facilitates the creation of others to watch the complexities and technologies of a new century. Building the future also means providing the youngest of citizens with citizen skills that they can use to improve their communities.

This is the foundation of our campaign, to focus on active citizenship, to create fresh political movements that will displace the control of the Democratic and Republican Parties, two apparently distinct political entities that feed at the same corporate trough. They are in fact simply the two heads of one political duopoly, the DemRep Party. This duopoly does everything it can to obstruct the beginnings of new parties including raising ballot access barriers, entrenching winner-take-all voting systems, and thwarting participation in debates at election times.

As befits its name, the Green Party, whose nomination I seek, stands for the regeneration of American politics. The new populism which the Green Party represents, involves motivated, informed voters who comprehend that "freedom is participation in power," to quote the ancient Roman orator, Cicero. When citizen participation flourishes, as this campaign will encourage it to do, human values can tame runaway commercial imperatives. The myopia of the short-term bottom line so often debases our democratic processes and our public and private domains. Putting human values first helps to make business responsible and to put government on the right track.

It is easy and true to say that this deep democracy campaign will be an uphill one. However, it is also true that widespread reform will not flourish without a fairer distribution of power for the key roles of voter, citizen, worker, taxpayer, and consumer. Comprehensive reform proposals from the

corporate suites to the nation's streets, from the schools to the hospitals, from the preservation of small farm economies to the protection of privacies, from livable wages to sustainable environments, from more time for children to less time for commercialism, from waging peace and health to averting war and violence, from foreseeing and forestalling future troubles to journeying toward brighter horizons, will wither while power inequalities loom over us.

Why are campaigns just for candidates? I would like the American people to hear from individuals such as Edgar Cahn (Time Dollars for neighborhoods), Nicholas Johnson (television and telecommunications), Paul Hawken, Amory and Hunter Lovins (energy and resource conservation), Dee Hock (on chaordic organizations), James MacGregor Burns and John Gardner (on leadership), Richard Grossman (on the American history of corporate charters and personhood), Jeff Gates (on capital sharing), Robert Monks (on corporate accountability), Ray Anderson (on his company's pollution and recycling conversions), Johnnetta Cole, Troy Duster and Yolanda Moses (on race relations), Richard Duran (minority education), Lois Gibbs (on community mobilization against toxics), Robert McIntyre (on tax justice), Hazel Henderson (on redefining economic development), Barry Commoner and David Brower (on fundamental environmental regeneration), Wendell Berry (on the quality of living), Tony Mazzocchi (on a new agenda for labor), and Law Professor Richard Parker (on a constitutional popular manifesto). These individuals are a small sampling of many who have so much to say, but seldom get through the evermore entertainment-focused media. (Note: mention of these persons does not imply their support for this campaign.)

Our political campaign will highlight active and productive citizens who practice democracy often in the most difficult of situations. I intend to do this in the District of Columbia whose citizens have no full-voting representation in Congress or other rights accorded to states. The scope of this campaign is also to engage as many volunteers as possible to help overcome ballot barriers and to get the vote out. In addition it is designed to leave a momentum after election day for the various causes that committed people have worked so hard to further. For the Greens know that political parties need also to work between elections to make elections meaningful. The focus on fundamentals of broader distribution of power is the touchstone of this campaign. As Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis declared for the ages. "We can have a democratic society or we can have great concentrated wealth in the hands of a few. We cannot have both."

Thank you.