

# When one man's benefit burdens us all

In the 2010 Citizen's United case, the United States Supreme Court decided that a business organization, which included a multi-national corporation, could not be restrained in the amount of its political contributions to a state or national political candidate. The result was an open money train for candidates who could show they were likely to get elected.

Today, corporate sponsorships determine state and national elections just like they determine the name of a football stadium. There are those who believe there is no correlation between Citizens United and every day you and me; They would be wrong. For instance,

there was a time when contracts to build roads had reasonable time requirements for completion. Now, for some not so mysterious reason, the Department of Transportation no longer puts a reasonable time on road construction.



The time requirement for the completion of a road was not the only change, but it was the easiest to do without public notice. Removing or relaxing time to perform provisions in road contracts cost the public nothing, in theory, and benefited the companies in that business because they

could stretch their crews over multiple jobs and tie up more road contracts with less men and equipment. Some of this is supposition. Yet, in observation, on today's road projects, the construction site stands idle for long periods of time, then workers reappear for a period of time, then disappear for weeks. No citizen can afford to audit the number of days that a job sits idle, and neither can I. But I don't need an audit to be frustrated by the number of days we navigate through the barricades of an empty construction site. It is tempting to suppose these observations are none of my business, since I am merely an observer, and in this case,

I write columns about real estate. Maybe the more tempting question to ask is, "what does this have to do with real estate?" The answer is, "everything." Local businesses will continue to be affected for years by locals and tourists who simply stay away because of lugubrious pace of road construction.

In some cases, the appeal and hope of better roads obscures the irritation of dodging barriers around empty workites and waiting like loyal supplicants until the builder returns to work. I do appreciate the road that's coming, but I do not appreciate the assumption that my time doesn't matter.

The number of road contractors is now down to one or two in North Florida. Those one or two companies can stretch their crews and equipment across the district because there is no one with jurisdiction to monitor or care about the length of time to finish. But the Board of Realtors, Home Builders, the Chambers of Commerce, and residents pay a heavy price when a road that could easily take two or three years to build takes five. The additional time to build a road also increases the dangers in the surrounding area. For example, concrete barriers present a very real danger for those on the road, especially in

the rain and after dark. Something that intrusive ought not to be stretched out for unnecessary time to benefit the construction company. If there were reasonable time constraints enforced on public contracts I'm betting there would be less accidents, more road contractors, and probably even cheaper roads. I have looked for someone better informed about the issues raised in this article. If that person is out there, I would appreciate an email or call; if I have improperly impugned the industry, I will correct this article.

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