



## SCOTUS Snapshot

*Your weekly window into the Court that shapes the nation.*

### ***National Republican Senatorial Committee v. Federal Election Commission [Decision]***

#### **What's At Stake**

- What is the case about?

The Supreme Court delivered a major victory for political speech, striking down federal limits on how much political parties may spend in coordination with their own candidates. The Court held 6–3 that the Federal Election Campaign Act's limits on political-party coordinated expenditures violate the First Amendment. Writing for the majority, Justice Kavanaugh explained that political parties exist to advance ideas, support candidates who share those ideas, and help elect them to office. Restricting a party's ability to communicate and coordinate with its own candidates directly burdens core political speech.

The Court ruled that the government may not restrict political speech merely to reduce the amount of money in politics, equalize political influence, or prevent donors from gaining access or influence. Under the Court's modern campaign-finance precedents, the government may regulate campaign finance to prevent quid pro quo corruption, but restrictions on speech must be sufficiently tailored to that interest.

- Who is affected and how?

The decision affects political parties and candidates across the political spectrum. National and state political party committees may now coordinate more freely with their candidates over campaign strategy, advertising, voter outreach, and other political communications without being constrained by the federal coordinated expenditure limits struck down by the Court.

The ruling does not eliminate contribution limits, disclosure requirements, or laws prohibiting donors from earmarking party contributions for specific candidates. Nor does the decision address limits on coordinated expenditures by outside organizations. Instead, the decision recognizes the unique relationship between political parties and the candidates they nominate and support.

- Why does it matter?

This decision matters because political speech is at the core of the First Amendment. The Court made clear that the government cannot restrict speech simply because it thinks there is too much money in politics or because political parties and candidates are working together to persuade voters.

## **Our Take**

This decision is a victory for free speech and political participation. Political parties exist to advance ideas, support candidates, and persuade voters, and the government should not restrict their ability to do exactly that. The First Amendment does not permit Congress to suppress political speech based on speculative fears of corruption or a desire to reduce money in politics. As the Court recognized, targeted laws already address actual corruption. The answer is to enforce those laws, not silence protected speech.