



## MEMORANDUM

TO: NRSC Supporters and Allies

RE: *NRSC v. FEC* — Q&A

DATE: Tuesday June 30, 2026

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## The Basics

### **What did the Supreme Court Decide?**

The Court struck down the federal limits on coordinated expenditures between political parties and their candidates. These limits, in place since the 1970s and upheld in *FEC v. Colorado Republican Federal Campaign Committee (Colorado II, 2001)*, generally capped how much a national party committee could spend in coordination with each of its candidates for federal office. For Senate races, those caps most recently range from roughly \$130,000 to \$4 million depending on a state's voting-age population.

### **What was the NRSC's Argument?**

The NRSC argued, and the Court agreed, that the coordinated expenditure limits violated the First Amendment. The only interest the Court recognizes as sufficient to limit political spending is preventing *quid pro quo* corruption, but there is no evidence that coordinated spending between a party and its own candidates can be linked to that kind of corruption. Twenty-eight states allow unlimited coordinated party spending, and none have produced a single documented instance of corruption as a result. The government's interest was purely speculative, and the limits were not closely drawn to address it.

### **Who Brought the Case?**

The NRSC, the NRCC, then-Senate candidate J.D. Vance, and former Representative Steve Chabot filed the challenge in 2022. The case moved through the Southern District of Ohio and the Sixth Circuit (which upheld the limits as bound by *Colorado II*) before the Supreme Court granted certiorari in June 2025. Oral arguments were held December 9, 2025. Notably, the Trump Administration declined to defend the limits, agreeing with the NRSC that they were unconstitutional. The Court appointed an amicus to defend the statute; the DNC, DSCC, and DCCC intervened to defend the limits as well.

## What Changes

### **What can the NRSC do now that it couldn't before?**

The NRSC can spend without limit in direct coordination with all Senate campaigns on all expenditures. Historically, most NRSC advertising was produced and distributed independently – it could not be informed by strategic conversations with the campaign about message, targeting, timing, or creative. Those restrictions are now gone.

### **How does this change NRSC's operations?**

The NRSC is sunsetting its traditional independent expenditure (IE) unit. In its place, all NRSC-funded voter contact will largely be executed as coordinated spending, developed directly with campaigns. This means:

- **Shared strategy:** Campaigns and the NRSC work together on ad content, targeting, and media planning.
- **Better rates:** Coordinated buys qualify for Lowest Unit Charge (LUC) on broadcast and cable — historically, anywhere from 3x to 13x cheaper than the issue rates outside groups pay.
- **No duplication:** One integrated plan per race, not parallel operations running blind.
- **Faster response:** Unified messaging and real-time coordination against Democrat attacks.

### **What about outside groups like the Senate Leadership Fund?**

Outside groups remain essential. Independent expenditures will be owned entirely by allied outside entities. Their role includes sustained air cover aggressively defining Democrat opponents, IE fundraising programs,



and leading large-scale paid canvassing programs (which the FEC has advised can be coordinated with campaigns and committees). The NRSC coordinates the overall ecosystem – data, targeting, sequencing – to make sure all efforts are aligned.

### **Does this help Republican campaigns specifically?**

The ruling applies equally to both parties' national committees, but the practical impact is asymmetric. This cycle, the Republican party committees vastly outraised our Democrat counterparts, and the more a committee raises, the more it benefits from unlimited coordinated spending at preferential rates. Democrats know this, which explains why the DNC, DSCC, and DCCC all intervened to defend the very limits this case struck down, even though lifting them expanded their own spending authority. They preferred the old system because it channeled spending through campaigns and their outside group network rather than through party committees, where Republicans hold the advantage. The NRSC has also spent years litigating this case and built its 2026 infrastructure around the anticipated ruling, a head start that compounds the fundraising edge.

## **What Doesn't Change**

### **Does this remove contribution limits?**

**No.** Individual contribution limits remain in place. A person can still give a maximum of \$44,300 per year to a national party committee's operating account (and \$132,900 per year to each of the special accounts for conventions, headquarters, and legal proceedings). The ruling affects how the party *spends* its money, not how much it can *raise* from any one donor.

### **Does this let donors earmark money to specific candidates?**

**No.** Donors give to the NRSC. The NRSC decides how to allocate coordinated spending across the map. Allocation of funds to specific races is determined at the sole discretion of the Committee, though deployment decisions within a race are developed with deep knowledge of what most benefits campaigns. This is not a pass-through mechanism.

### **Does this affect Super PACs or other outside groups?**

**Not directly.** Super PACs can already spend unlimited amounts independently. This ruling is about party-candidate coordination, not outside group activity. However, it does reduce the relative advantage Super PACs held over party committees — the parties can now compete on more equal footing for the most effective type of political spending.

## **Practical Implications for 2026**

### **How should campaigns be structured in light of this?**

Campaigns should preserve direct campaign dollars for where they're most valuable and lean on the NRSC to absorb costs where centralization creates efficiency — polling, data modeling, shared services, and scaled paid media. The Committee's coordinated spending program will handle supplemental broadcast, cable, and radio at LUC rates; direct mail at nonprofit postage rates; GOTV and 1:1 voter contact; and streaming/digital at NRSC-negotiated platform rates.

### **Who controls vendor selection for coordinated spending?**

NRSC coordinated expenditures are executed through NRSC vendors. This mirrors the previous IE model and preserves the cost efficiency that comes from centralized, multi-race buying. Campaign vendor agreements are designed for individual races and are not priced for aggregated spending. Running coordinated programs through a patchwork of campaign vendor contracts would forfeit the potential scale advantages this ruling creates.



## How does the NRSC decide which races get coordinated spending?

The NRSC has structured a four-tier support framework. All in-cycle incumbents and endorsed candidates receive the maximum direct contribution (\$62,000). Allocation across battlegrounds is at the sole discretion of the NRSC.

## What should allies and operatives know before speaking on this topic?

Key points:

- This is a First Amendment victory — the Court recognized that parties should be able to speak with their own candidates.
- It levels the playing field. Democrats have long benefited from a network of well-funded outside groups. This gives the party committees the tools to compete directly.
- It makes campaigns more efficient and accountable. Coordinated spending means better messaging, less waste, and more transparency than the independent expenditure model.
- Small-dollar donors and grassroots supporters benefit — their contributions to the Committee now carry dramatically more purchasing power.

## What some get wrong

- Don't describe this as "removing limits on donations" — it doesn't change contribution limits.
- Don't suggest donors can now direct money to specific candidates through the party — that's not how this works.
- Don't overstate the scope — this is about party-candidate coordination, not a wholesale rewrite of campaign finance law.
- Don't engage with "corruption" framing on opponents' terms — 28 states have operated without these limits with no evidence of the problems critics predicted.

## Legal and Political Context

### Where does this fit in the broader arc of campaign finance law?

This is the latest in a series of decisions in which the Court has applied rigorous First Amendment scrutiny to campaign finance restrictions:

- *Citizens United v. FEC* (2010) — corporations, unions, and associations may make independent expenditures
- *McCutcheon v. FEC* (2014) — aggregate contribution limits struck down
- *NRSC v. FEC* (2026) — coordinated party expenditure limits struck down

The through line: the Court increasingly requires concrete evidence of *quid pro quo* corruption, not just theoretical risk, to justify limits on spending. The coordinated expenditure caps couldn't meet that standard.

### How will Democrats respond?

Expect the standard "money in politics" narrative. But the facts cut against them: Democrats have built the most sophisticated well-funded dark money infrastructure in modern politics. The DSCC, DCCC, and DNC intervened in this case precisely because they preferred a system that advantaged their outside group network. This ruling restores competitive balance by empowering parties — accountable, transparent, regulated entities — to do what they were created to do: support their candidates.