
Do I Think Corporations Should Be Able to Vote Now?

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A COMMENTARY ON John Hasnas (2016), “Should Corporations Have the Right to Vote? A Paradox in the Theory of Corporate Moral Agency”, *J Bus Ethics*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3172-0>

ABSTRACT

Many proponents of corporate agency take corporations to be responsible for their conduct, but few take them to merit rights over and above the rights of their members. Hasnas (2016) argues that, given a widely-held view of liberal political theory, corporate agency entails that corporations should have the right to vote. In response, I show that there are problems in appealing to liberal political theory, and that the view of voting Hasnas actually endorses need not be accepted. Should it be, however, the implications go far beyond the right to vote.

I THINK THAT corporations like Exxon Mobile are capable of doing things that are morally wrong, and that they can be morally responsible for this behavior. A lot of people do. I even think this is the case if all of their employees (and managers) are just doing their jobs, where nothing in their behavior is blameworthy. That is, corporations can be morally responsible for things without that responsibility reducing to the responsibility of particular managers. I take this to be a core commitment of proponents of corporate agency such as Peter French, Philip Pettit, Christian List, Carol Rovane, David Copp, Ken-

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