

## Fair Elections: Commonsense Reform

### *Five Reasons to Support Fair Elections*

#### **1) Improves Quality of Leadership**

Good government, like any other enterprise, requires robust competition among highly-qualified candidates for public office. Under the current system, candidates are often recruited to run for public office based on their access to big money rather than their individual qualifications or ideas, while highly qualified candidates who lack the financial means to compete are effectively removed from public consideration. A majority of congressional seats are uncompetitive today because challengers lack the financial means to be heard. Fair Elections encourages and enables the most highly qualified candidates to run for public office based on their show of citizen support, not the size of their wallet, boosting political accountability and competition.

#### **2) Reduces Wasteful Spending**

Responsible stewardship of the nation's tax dollars requires that politicians are free to govern without the influence of rent-seeking special interest groups. In countless documented cases, bundled lobbyist contributions to politicians' campaigns have resulted in special treatment by means of earmarks, tax breaks and subsidies, and other regulatory privileges inconsistent with a competitive free market. Taken together, these programs amount to tens of billions in annual pork barrel spending and a significant increase in the overall size of government. Fair Elections replaces large special interest contributions with broad-based citizen support, ensuring politicians have the independence they need to evaluate policy based on merit and public interest alone.

#### **3) Respects and Expands Free Speech**

With Fair Elections, money is not a precondition to entering the public debate. Instead of limiting political speech to individuals who have or can raise the millions that are required to mount a competitive campaign, Fair Elections gives every serious, hardworking candidate a voice. It does

so without limiting the right of independent groups to enter the political debate, because more speech and more ideas are better than more regulation. The Court has repeatedly endorsed Fair Elections as consistent with the word and spirit of the First Amendment.

#### **4) Frees Politicians to do their Job**

Under Fair Elections, candidates are accountable to the voters and their conscience alone. Rather than spending countless hours raising money for their next campaign, politicians can attend to the business of governing for which they were elected. When politicians no longer rely on special interest funds to win public office, decisions are taken on the basis of independent judgment and the needs of constituents alone. Lobbyists are considered on the merits of their ideas, not the size of their wallets. And no group gets special treatment because it helped to finance a campaign.

*In politics, as in business, competition breeds quality. Ideas should matter more than dollars in determining who runs for, and wins, public office.*

#### **5) Track Record of Success**

As experience with Fair Elections in seven states has shown, candidates willingly forego the big money game, and the countless hours it demands, when given the alternative of raising small donations matched with Fair Elections funds. In states from Arizona to Maine, Fair Elections is ushering in a new kind of politics: more candidates from diverse backgrounds are seeking public office; incumbents are spending their time working on issues and connecting with voters rather than fundraising for their next campaign; and the number of citizen small donors has increased many-fold. Approximately three-quarters of all candidates in ME, AZ, and CT voluntarily opt-in to Fair Elections today.