

# Fair Elections ... with Publicly-Financed Campaigns

## Why public financing for campaigns?

Campaigns and elections should be about issues and voters' concerns — not who can raise the most money. Isn't it time to end "dialing for dollars" and the "arms race" in campaign spending?

Let's face it: campaigns need funds to reach the voters. It's a cost of having a healthy democracy. But unless campaigns are financed publicly, candidates have to be fund raisers, romancing big donors rather than talking with voters. The result? Elections become auctions — for sale to the highest bidder.

And once elections are over, real solutions to our nation's challenges are stymied — because lobbyists for Big Money come calling, seeking a "return on investment" for having bankrolled campaigns.

## When campaigns are "voter-owned:"

- Candidates can run for office without being wealthy — and win on the strength of their ideas.
- Incumbents can work full-time on voters' issues rather than fund raising. No more "dialing for dollars"
- Elected officials are indebted to NO special interests — only to the voters.
- Voters get wider choice of candidates and views, without pre-selection by big money interests.

## Voter-Owned Elections programs are working in several states

In 2008, nearly 400 state candidates won their elections after participating in such programs, in Maine, Connecticut, Arizona, North Carolina, and elsewhere. In Connecticut and Maine, more than 80 percent of the current legislatures were elected having run only on public financing, as were eight of the ten statewide elected officials in Arizona. North Carolina, West Virginia, New Mexico and Wisconsin each provide public financing for state supreme court campaigns.

## Voters want less Wall Street — and more Main Street

A bipartisan survey conducted by Lake Research and the Tarrance Group in February, 2009, found that 67 percent of voters backed these reforms. Support crossed all party and regional lines.

Details: [www.washclean.org/Library/FENA-09-nationalpoll.pdf](http://www.washclean.org/Library/FENA-09-nationalpoll.pdf)

## In Congress, the Fair Elections Now Act

The Fair Elections Now Act (S.752 / HR 1826) would allow candidates for Congress to run a viable campaign with a mixture of small donations and limited public financing. Candidates would qualify for public funds by raising a specific number of small donations (limited to \$100) from in-state donors. Once qualified, they would receive a four to one match on the small donations, and be prohibited from taking any large donations.

Details: [www.washclean.org/bill-in-congress.htm](http://www.washclean.org/bill-in-congress.htm)

## In Washington State, Supreme Court Fair Elections

Washington Public Campaigns is promoting legislative proposals for a program of optional public financing for state supreme court races. Justice through our courts must be blind and impartial — and never appear to be influenced by campaign contributions from any private special interest.

Details: [www.washclean.org/2009judicial-campaign.htm](http://www.washclean.org/2009judicial-campaign.htm)

## Public campaign financing is a bargain

In Washington State, a program for all state executive offices, all legislative races, and all upper-level judicial races (supreme and appellate court seats), would cost less than \$10 per person, per year.

Don't fall for the line that we can't afford it, or that it's welfare-for-candidates, or that it diverts money we need to fix potholes or for public services. The truth is: When lawmakers reward today's big campaign donors for their "investment", it costs more NOT to have voter-owned public campaign financing.