

Resolution in support of public financing of campaigns for the Washington State Supreme Court

WHEREAS, our judicial system is an essential branch of government, and is the one branch of government that must be uniquely impartial, independent and unbiased in order to best serve the residents of Washington; and

WHEREAS, the improper appearance created by money in judicial elections is one of the most important issues facing our judicial system today, and to maintain public confidence in the judiciary, we must prevent not only corruption, but also the appearance of corruption; and

WHEREAS, it is also important to protect the fairness of elections for the highest court in Washington state - the supreme court - and thereby to foster the public's trust in the integrity and independence of the court in the face of increasingly large sums of money raised and spent by special interest groups seeking to elect candidates to seats on the supreme court; and

WHEREAS, at a time when challenging and difficult issues are before the court - on land use, water rights, worker safety, civil protections and more - and citizens are wary of confidence in government anyway - we should not tolerate a supreme court that threatens to become overly ideological or seemingly "captured" by any special interest through excessive campaign spending; and

WHEREAS, in 2006, over \$4 million was raised and spent, largely by special interest groups and donors, seeking election of favored candidates to the supreme court in Washington; and

WHEREAS, political campaigns are increasingly expensive and candidates for office, lacking an alternative, must take substantial private contributions from a select community of interests and individuals to keep up with the staggering costs required to compete in an election; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina has had a successful and popular program of public financing for judicial campaigns, since 2002, demonstrating that such a program can work, . Most candidates use the program, and they win. The result is: restored public confidence in the integrity of the judiciary. More women and diversity on the court, reflecting the population. Judges who can focus on the law, rather than needing to romance campaign financiers; and

WHEREAS, the Washington State Legislature is considering proposals, including HB 1738 in the House (with 33 co-sponsors), and SB 5812 in the Senate (9 co-sponsors), to adopt a program of public financing of campaigns for seats on the Washington State Supreme Court, optional for candidates, and which would provide adequate sums to run a competitive campaign for candidates who qualify for public financing support by demonstrating reasonable voter support in a manner prescribed in the proposed bills;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that (*organization*) _____, urges the legislature and the Governor to support a program of public financing for campaigns for the Washington State Supreme Court; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be forwarded to the Governor, to Senate Majority Leader Lisa Brown and House Speaker Frank Chopp, and to legislators from districts in which members of our organization reside.

Approved by (*organization*) _____ (*date*) _____