



SAN FRANCISCO CLEAN GOVERNMENT PLEDGE

2008 SPONSORS:

- CA Church IMPACT
- CA Clean Money Campaign
- Change Congress
- Common Cause
- Democracy for America
- Greenlining Institute
- Healthcare for All
- New America Foundation
- SF for Voter Owned Elections

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With the skyrocketing cost of political campaigns, the negative influence of special interest money on our political process has never been more apparent.

This has driven citizens away from a democratic process that they feel represents the interests of big donors more than the voters themselves.

In response, a growing movement across the United States is successfully pushing for publicly funded campaigns.

With publicly funded campaigns, candidates have the option of receiving public funds in exchange for accepting limits upon private contributions, or foregoing them altogether.

This system:

- Frees candidates from the pressure to give inappropriate favors to campaign contributors. Instead, elected officials are accountable only to the public.
- Levels the playing field, ensuring that voters have the opportunity to make a decision based on the merits and ideas of the candidates, rather than their fundraising abilities.
- Saves money by reducing the waste that results from the special favors which take place under a pay-to-play system.
- Reduces the amount of time that candidates need to spend raising money and will therefore improve the ability of our elected officials to effectively serve the public.
- Ensures that women and minorities have a fair opportunity to participate in elective and governmental processes by ensuring that all groups, regardless of financial resources, are able to have their voices heard in government.

San Francisco already has a system of partial public campaign financing for Board of Supervisors and mayoral candidates. This program is an important first step, and right now, we are concerned about recent decisions to remove money from the fund to use for other purposes. Public campaign financing programs must be insulated from partisan politics, with funding set by policy and protected from budgetary raids.

Also, while the program of partial public campaign financing is effective, a voluntary full public financing, or "Clean Elections" system, which allows participating candidates to raise no private money at all, other than qualifying contributions, would be significantly better – completely severing the link between campaign contributions and political decisions.

Finally, San Francisco has too many elected offices currently not covered by any public campaign financing program. We believe that the influence of campaign contributions can be felt in all elected offices, and that all candidates should have the opportunity to participate in this program.

The following pledge is designed to work towards a future of protecting and enhancing public campaign financing in San Francisco. We hope you will sign.

We, the organizations sponsoring this pledge, cumulatively have tens of thousands of voters on our lists in San Francisco, many of whom are extremely politically active. The results of this pledge will be distributed to all of our lists and the local media in advance of the 2008 Supervisorial elections.



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Please initial those which apply and fax to (484) 208-9886 no later than September 17, 2008 at 5pm.

—— **I pledge to fully fund the current public campaign financing program and to support a Charter Amendment that would protect the funds from political tampering in the future.**

I understand that while public campaign financing does have a small cost associated with it, that it ultimately saves tremendous amounts of money in the long run, by eliminating the inappropriate and expensive favors that are incentivized under a pay-to-play system. I pledge to vote to fund the public campaign financing program at the levels stated in the Campaign Finance Reform Ordinance (currently approximately \$2 million per year – plus ensuring at least \$6 million in the fund going into a mayoral race), even in the case of a budget deficit. I pledge to not support removing money from the fund on a one-time basis.

I also pledge to support a Charter Amendment, which would protect the funds from political manipulation by setting aside the money each year. Just as elected officials should not draw their own district lines, they should not have discretion regarding the amount of funding available to their allies and opponents on an annual basis.

—— **I pledge to support legislation to expand the program to a full public financing, or “Clean Elections” system AND to expand the program to cover all city offices.**

I will support legislation to expand the current partial public financing program to a full public financing program. Full public financing programs are more effective, in that they eliminate almost all, rather than only some, private money from the political process.

I will also support legislation to expand the public funding program to cover all citywide, School District, and City College elections.

(Total cost to cover all offices with full public financing: approximately \$6 million per year)

Other Comments:

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____



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Frequently Asked Questions

Doesn't public campaign financing cost a lot of money that could be used for other programs?

Public campaign financing, while it does have a small up front cost, saves far more than it costs in the long run, by reducing the costly favors that are often given to campaign donors under a pay-to-play system. For example, at www.voterownedelections.org, we compiled a list of media-documented examples, adding up to \$70 million in giveaways to campaign contributors in San Francisco, in the space of only a few years in the late 1990s, before the public campaign financing program went into effect. These are only the most clear examples, and yet, are still far more than the cost of publicly funded campaigns.

The cost of our public financing program is currently \$2.75 per San Francisco resident per year. That's approximately \$1.00 for every \$3000 the city spends, or .03% of the budget.

Why do we need a Charter Amendment to protect the funds?

In 2000, voters approved the Campaign Finance Reform Ordinance (CFRO), which created the public campaign financing program. The voters also approved a mechanism by which the ordinance could be amended. Unlike other ordinances, amendments to the CFRO require a two-thirds majority vote of the Ethics Commission and the Board of Supervisors. This high threshold was created because of the conflict of interest inherent in politicians determining the rules for their own campaigns.

Unfortunately, there is currently a loophole in this mechanism. The Charter grants budgetary authority to the Mayor and Board of Supervisors, and all funds for the public campaign financing program must be given through this process. This creates an opening for elected officials to defund the program with a simple majority vote, even as the program itself can not be altered without a supermajority.

Because public campaign financing programs consistently increase electoral competition, and because incumbents have a far easier time raising money, there is an electoral incentive for incumbents to defund public campaign financing programs. Therefore, funding should be set by policy and protected from annual tampering.

While politicians do have an important role in crafting and determining policy for public campaign financing programs, there is a conflict of interest when our elected officials are given the power to determine whether or not, and at what level, the public financing program is funded in any given year.