

POWER TO THE VOTERS, NOT THE SPECIAL INTERESTS!

THE TIME IS NOW IN MARYLAND FOR VOLUNTARY, PUBLIC FUNDING OF CAMPAIGNS

Voluntary, public funding of campaigns makes it possible to pass laws to benefit all the voters, not just the banks, developers, and other special interests that fund the campaigns of elected officials.

Public funding of campaigns is already law in Maine, Arizona, and Connecticut, where it has worked well through multiple election cycles. It is a proven, sensible way to restore voter confidence in government because it removes the corrosive appearance that lawmakers listen more to big campaign contributors than to regular citizens.

Here's how it works:

- To participate in the voluntary, publicly funded system, a candidate must demonstrate broad community support by collecting several hundred small contributions in the district he wishes to represent.
- If successful, he receives enough money from the public Treasury to wage a competitive campaign and agrees to accept only a very small amount of low-dollar private contributions from individuals and no private contributions at all from organizations.

Advantages of Public Funding of Campaigns

- It enables citizens with community support but ordinary financial means to run for office.
- It frees candidates and lawmakers from incessant fundraising, giving them more time to listen to regular voters.
- Publicly funded candidates who win owe nothing to the insurance companies, electricity monopolies, and other special interests that fund campaigns under the current system. In this way, public funding of campaigns reduces the undue influence of the special interests in Annapolis. And it restores a public's confidence in government so badly shaken that a 2009 statewide poll found that fully 67% of Marylander voters believe "big campaign contributions have a corrupting influence on state lawmakers in Annapolis."
- The system's modest, \$8 million annual cost will help the state save money because lawmakers will no longer have an incentive to shower hundreds of millions of dollars in tax breaks and porkbarrel spending on the big developers, energy monopolies, and other special-interests that currently bankroll their campaigns.
- Participation in the publicly funded system is voluntary; by leaving the private campaign finance system alone, the Act is immune to judicial challenge.
- Public funding of campaigns is already law in Maine, Arizona, and Connecticut, where it is accomplishing all the benefits described above.

IN 2010, PROGRESSIVES HAVE AN UNPRECEDENTED OPPORTUNITY TO ENACT PUBLIC FUNDING OF CAMPAIGNS IN MARYLAND

Sen. Paul Pinsky and Del. Jon Cardin are sponsoring legislation in the 2010 session of the General Assembly based on the recommendation of an official, bipartisan study commission. This legislation comes at the perfect time to enact major reform:

- **The Special Interests Are Pumping More and More Money into Maryland Politics.** \$94 million was pumped into Maryland's 2006 election -- a 69% increase over the 2002 election -- much of it from special-interest campaign contributors. Only 2.7% of Marylanders gave a contribution of any kind; corporate entities gave 22 times more than non-profit entities; and the average size of contributions increased dramatically.
- **Strong Support Statewide for Public Funding of Campaigns.** A September 2009 statewide poll found that fully 67% of Maryland voters believe that "big campaign contributions have a corrupting influence on state lawmakers in Annapolis." As a solution, the same poll found that 70% of Marylanders support voluntary, public funding of campaigns. Progressive Maryland, the League of Women Voters, Common Cause, NAACP, Sierra Club, SEIU, Maryland PIRG, AFL-CIO, and other organizations endorse the bill. The *Washington Post*, *Baltimore Sun*, and *Gazette* newspapers support public funding of campaigns. The House of Delegates passed this legislation in 2006; but it failed narrowly in the Senate in 2007 and 2009. We are very close to passing this bill.
- **Fiscally Responsible.** Once in place, the system's estimated \$8 million annual cost will save taxpayer dollars. That's because once lawmakers no longer owe favors to deep-pocket contributors, there will be less incentive to reward special interests with tax loopholes, porkbarrel spending, and multibillion giveaways such as electricity deregulation.
- **Public Funding is Incumbent-Neutral.** As incumbent lawmakers learn how the system works in Maine, Arizona, and Connecticut, they understand that this reform is in their self-interest. Already in Maine, Arizona, and Connecticut most incumbents opt into the publicly funded system. And in those states 90% of incumbents still win re-election (as they do in Maryland). Why? Because incumbents enjoy plenty of other advantages over challengers besides a fundraising edge. They have superior name-recognition, more contacts among activists, better campaign skills, more experience, a proven track record, etc. Incumbents in both states like the system because it eliminates the worst aspect of their job (fundraising) and frees them after the election to vote their conscience (not as contributors and corporate lobbyists demand).

Public funding of campaigns makes it possible to pass laws to benefit all the voters, not just the credit card companies, investment banks, and other special interests that fund the campaigns of elected officials.

Tell your lawmakers to support this bill by calling them toll-free at 1.800.492.7122 and by sending them an email from Progressive Maryland's e-Action Center at www.ProgressiveMaryland.org. Join the growing movement in Maryland to bring public funding of campaigns to our state. **To get involved, contact Sean Dobson of Progressive Maryland at sean@progressivemaryland.org or 301.495.7004.**

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