



Most of all, I want a government that....”

How would you complete this sentence? In a recent survey by Public Campaign, most voters say they want a government that serves the interests of all citizens. They want a government that is honest, open, and accountable.

The way we currently pay for election campaigns works against this desire. The pressures on candidates to raise large sums of money invite corruption and can lead to special favors and sweetheart deals for campaign contributors. Elected officials can become less accountable to the voters than to the special interests that helped elect them. The influence of money creates a closed and entrenched system, in which well-qualified people are prevented from running for office because they lack personal wealth or connections. They simply can't afford to run.

Elections have become less a contest of ideas than a race to amass the largest campaign war chest.

If we want sound policies on environment, health care that works for everyone, good schools in our communities, and other laws that benefit all citizens, we need to eliminate the undue influence of special interests. Public financing of campaigns allows the voters to take back control of the electoral process.

Public financing levels the playing field, and allows people of many different backgrounds who do not have wealthy connections a fair shot at being elected. West Virginia would benefit from having more good people with fresh ideas running for office. Publicly financed candidates are responsible only to the voters, feel obligated to keep promises, and can help the citizens get what we want and need from government.

Public financing costs only about six dollars per household—a very reasonable amount to pay for a system that will result in voter control and more beneficial public policy.

Organizations at both state and national levels recognize the benefits of public financing for working people and their families. William Samuels, Director of the Department of Legislation for the AFL-CIO states in a letter supporting public financing:

It has long been our belief that the establishment of a public financing system would encourage full citizen participation in our democracy and restore public confidence in the legislative process . . . It would allow candidates to shift their focus from the incessant need to raise campaign funds so they can engage voters and devote their time to representing their constituents . . . It would foster broad public participation in the electoral process, as it would spare candidates from the fundraising demands that have undermined faith in our political process.

Sound too good to be true?

It isn't!

Maine, Arizona and Connecticut already have public campaign financing which delivers on its promise of more voter control and sounder policies. Read two testimonies from Arizona voters:

“When public financing first came out in Arizona, I was opposed to it because I didn’t want my tax dollars going to pay for politicians getting elected. Now I support it because I see that politicians are spending more time paying attention to voters like me and less time listening to special interest groups and wealthy donors. Voters have more power under this system.”

“I voted for Janet Napolitano for Governor because she promised to do something about prescription drugs. Her campaign stressed that public financing meant she did not have to take contributions from the pharmaceutical drug industry. She kept her promise. Her first act as Governor was to require that the state buy its prescription drugs in bulk, lowering costs and saving all of us money.”

It’s time for West Virginia voters to take back control of our state legislative races by adopting public campaign financing!

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