



**For Immediate Release
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Press Release
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Reformers Launch National “Voters First” Pledge to Build Support for Public Funding of Congressional Campaigns

WASHINGTON, DC – Backed by bipartisan public opinion research showing voters weary of pay-to-play politics, four major national campaign reform organizations on Wednesday launched a campaign to build public and political support for comprehensive public financing of congressional campaigns.

Common Cause, Public Campaign Action Fund, Public Citizen, and the U.S. Public Interest Research Group (US PIRG) unveiled their “Voters First” pledge that they will ask all congressional candidates to sign. The pledge includes specific policies to make elections fair for all, restore congressional accountability, and protect voters’ right-to-know. Activists will use the pledge in congressional districts across the country to press candidates for federal office to support a comprehensive agenda to clean up Congress.

In addition, pollsters Celinda Lake of Lake Research (D) and Christine Matthews of Bellwether Research (R) unveiled polling showing that many voters are tired of politicians who put the public’s interest behind big donors’ and lobbyists’ agendas. The polling showed that voters are ready to embrace substantive reform that will help put their concerns on the top of the congressional agenda, where they should be. The public opinion experts cautioned candidates to take this issue seriously.

“In the wake of lobbyist scandals, the soaring costs of campaigns, and discontent with Washington, voters are hungry for a more open, clean, and fair system of campaign funding,” said Lake and Matthews in a polling memo that was released.

The survey also found that candidates who sign a pledge to support reform receive a dramatic boost from voters. A Republican candidate gains 26 percent and a Democratic candidate gains 13 percent over an opponent from the other party who refuses to sign a pledge of support, the polling showed. The survey was conducted June 8 through 15, with a sample size of 1,000 registered voters and a margin of error of plus or minus 3.1 percent.

“The scandals have made clear to voters that money talks,” said Common Cause President Chellie Pingree. “A public financing system for Congress would go a long way toward putting constituents’ concerns first, and involving lots of new people and fresh ideas in the political process.”

“Despite the multiple scandals and related convictions, Washington still marinates in political money,” said Public Campaign Action Fund’s Executive Director Nick Nyhart. “There’s one clear way to change the status quo: give the voters more clout by instituting a Clean Elections’ system of full public financing for Congressional campaigns.”

"Government ethics – especially these days – is a laughable oxymoron," said Public Citizen President Joan Claybrook. "Congress has some ethics rules on the books, but no one is watching. Congressional ethics rules regarding gifts and travel need to be strengthened -- and enforced."

“Because of scandal, war, gas prices and more, the public is paying closer attention to the actions of their legislators. As a result, we have a rare opportunity to move our elected leaders to write a new rule book that shifts the playing field back in the voter’s direction,” said Gary Kalman, democracy advocate for U.S. PIRG.

The Voters First Pledge calls on candidates to put voters ahead of lobbyists by supporting legislation to:

- 1. Make Elections Fair.** Establish and enforce campaign spending limits by providing a set amount of public funding for all candidates who agree to take no private contributions.
- 2. Restore Accountability.** Pass and enforce meaningful new restrictions on gifts and travel from lobbyists and other powerful interests for members of Congress.
- 3. Protect Voters’ Right-To-Know.** Require full disclosure on the internet of all lobbyists’ contributions and any fundraising help members of Congress get from lobbyists.

Click here to view the entire pledge with preamble:

<http://www.commoncause.org/site/pp.asp?c=dkLNK1MQIwG&b=1805299>

Click here to view the full text of the pollsters’ findings: <http://www.campaignmoney.org/polling>

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