

## Public Financing Talking Points & Resources - DRAFT

These talking points breakdown how to promote public financing to maximize understanding and support and also provide rebuttals for frequently asked questions and pushback. Drafted by ReThink Media and Every Voice.

### GENERAL

- **Public financing levels the playing field.** Matching the small contributions of thousands of voters to counteract the influence of a single big donor will encourage candidates to listen to everyday Americans not just those who can afford to spend big bucks to influence politics.
- **Public financing lets everyday voters, not big donors, choose our elected representatives.** The current system is beholden to highest bidder; boosting the influence of small donors instead will allow us to restore a healthy democracy. Voters will be able to elect the candidates they believe will best represent them not the ones pre-determined by big donors or special interests.
- **Public financing puts the voices of everyday voters first.** Candidates would be able to run solely with the backing from people back home rather than depending on big money from Wall Street, Washington, or Hollywood. You shouldn't need deep pockets or big checks to have your voice heard in democracy.
- **Public financing is an important safeguard of democracy.** CEOs and big corporations, special interests, and wealthy billionaires shouldn't be able to convince the government to care about them more than the millions of everyday Americans. Public financing ensures that money will not be a means to influence government officials running for reelection to misrepresent their constituents.

### REBUTTAL TALKING POINTS

- **How do we know this will work?** 13 states already have public financing of elections. These 13 states have proved that small donors can overcome the influence of big money. One of the best systems is in New York City where donors are from more racially diverse and representative of the total population. True representation in democracy requires a shift toward the voices of the many not wealthy.
- **Won't this just help fringe candidates get elected?** Only if you then vote from them. Voters back home will have the final say about who holds public office. In the states with similar laws in place, it hasn't happened. And, the current big money system has certainly led to a fair number of out-of-the-mainstream elected officials and acts as barrier to our communities enjoying meaningful representation in our democracy. Public financing will allow more everyday Americans run for office not bar them from entry like the current system.
- **Won't this money also help candidates I don't like?** Public financing doesn't discriminate like big donors currently do. The money will support any and every candidate that believes the people's views should come before the donors' views. It's an investment in improving democracy. When wealthy donors and outside groups financially boost certain candidates over others before the voters even have a chance to go to the ballot, the American people are no longer able to choose the best representative of their beliefs. We should choose our elected representatives, not big donors.
- **It won't work. It doesn't address the elephant in the room — all the outside money and super PACs brought on by court decisions. How does this address Citizens United?** Public financing counteracts Citizens United by giving everyday Americans the ability to support and elect candidates who are accountable to them, not super PACs or big money campaign donors. It gives candidates the ability to run with the backing of people in their districts without relying on super PACs, therefore dramatically reducing outside money's influence. To make the system even more effective, we should also overturn Citizens United.
- **It's welfare for politicians. We shouldn't spend our tax dollars for this when we have giant budget deficit.** At little or no cost to taxpayers, this proposal will dramatically reduce the influence of big money campaign donors. The real way to save billions of government dollars is to end the giveaways to big donors like oil companies, insurance companies, and Wall Street banks. These political giveaways cost taxpayers far more than a small donor public funding system.

- **Can taxpayers afford this?** When the opinions of a few wealthy individuals matter more to public officials than everyday voters, we pay the price with a democracy that doesn't represent our voice. That is the cost we can't afford to keep paying. Any cost associated with public financing will be recouped when we stop electing candidates who support corporate tax loopholes and tax breaks to the wealthy 1%. Ending their exclusionary control over public officials will more than make up for the initial costs of strengthening our democracy.

## RESOURCES

- 1% of the 1% spent \$1.18 billion in the 2014 elections ([Center for Responsive Democracy & Sunlight Foundation](#)).
- [Government By the People Act](#) (establishes federal public financing for U.S. House & Senate candidates. [Government By the People Act Talking Points](#) ([Every Voice](#)).
- [Seattle Honest Election campaign](#) (establishes public financing for municipal elections).
- [Mainers for Accountable Elections campaign](#) (improves Maine Clean Elections Act).
- Existing public financing systems: [Montgomery County, MD](#); [Albuquerque, NM](#); [New York City](#) ([Brennan Center](#)) & ([Campaign Finance Institute](#));
- [By the People: The New York City Campaign Finance Program in the 2013 Elections](#) ([New York City Campaign Finance Board](#))
- [Fresh Start: the Impact of Public Campaign Financing in Connecticut](#) ([Demos](#))
- [Donor Diversity Through Public Matching Funds](#) ([Brennan Center](#))

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## Disclosure Talking Points - DRAFT

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### General

- **In a democracy everyone's voice should be heard.** The Framers of the Constitution and the founders of West Virginia intended to form a government that would be accountable and representative of everyone, not just wealthy donors and special interests. Making your voice heard shouldn't require a price of admission in West Virginia.
- **Our democracy is based on the principle of one person, one vote — not one dollar, one vote.** From telling Congress that money shouldn't drown out the voices of everyday voters to requiring transparency in who is spending money in our state elections, democracy requires us to recognize each other as equal in the political process. Contributing to a candidate's campaign or spending millions on political ads should not give you more access to our government than an everyday voter.

### Disclosure

- **Everyone has a right to know: increased disclosure ensures the public knows who is trying to influence our elections.** There are plenty of liberal and conservative organizations, secretive dark money groups, and wealthy billionaires and corporations trying to align our government with their beliefs instead of the people's will. Increased disclosure will allow us to "follow the money" so we know who is supporting the candidates running for office and supporting those nasty TV ads.
- **Our right to know who is influencing our elections is not a partisan issue.** Not matter your political beliefs or who you support for president, we all benefit when we know what is going on in the government. Conservative Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia supports increasing transparency and disclosure. In the *Citizens United* decision he wrote, "requiring people to stand up in public for their political acts fosters civic courage, without which democracy is doomed."
- **The current state of affairs in West Virginia allows anyone to hide their identity while influencing our state.** This ballot initiative will shine a light on all groups that spend money influencing West Virginia's elections to report their top donors. Any group that spends at least \$2000 in West Virginia will have to disclose the names of their top donors with 48 hours. Instead of waiting for quarterly reports, we can know who is spending money in real time. We deserve to know who is trying to persuade our public officials, not be kept in the dark.
- **Secret money has no place in West Virginia.** The U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United* has allowed groups to raise unlimited money to influence elections without revealing where they got the money. Anonymous donors should not be dictating what happens in our state. This why we need to require any group that spend more than \$2000 to influence the vote to say where the money came from. West Virginians stand up for what they believe in. We shouldn't allow this lowly form of campaign cowardice to continue.



### **CSX, owner of exploded train, spends millions on donations, lobbying**

by **David Gutman**, Political Reporter

CSX Corp., the company whose oil train derailed, caught fire and exploded in Fayette County on Monday, is a prodigious political donor, giving millions of dollars to politicians of both parties, around the country and in West Virginia, and spending millions more every year to lobby those politicians after they've been elected.

Until 2015, every person elected to federal office in West Virginia, since at least 1990, had received money from the \$35 billion transportation company, according to federal records compiled by the Center for Responsive Politics.

CSX Corp.'s political action committee has given nearly \$53,000 to Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, R-W.Va., since Capito got to Congress. That includes donations in every election cycle since 2000.

After the Kanawha Valley chemical leak last year, Capito said she would donate to charity the money that a Freedom Industries' owner had given to her campaign, although that was only \$500.

"In her more than 14 years in Congress, Senator Capito has always put West Virginians' interests first. This terrible accident is no different," stated Capito spokeswoman Amy Graham in response to questions about the CSX donations.

Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., in Congress since only 2010, has gotten \$30,700 from CSX.

"The senator has never allowed political donations to influence his decision making and he will continue to work with federal, state and CSX officials to determine the cause of this derailment and work to fix the problem so it never happens again," said Jonathan Kott, Manchin's spokesman.

The biggest West Virginia recipient of the railroad company's largesse was former Rep. Nick Rahall, who for his last four years in office, was the ranking Democrat on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. Rahall got more than \$62,000 from CSX since 2000, including more than \$22,000 in last year's election.

Rahall lost last year to Rep. Evan Jenkins. Neither Jenkins nor his fellow Republican freshman, Rep. Alex Mooney, received money from CSX in 2014, but if history is any guide that will change in the 2016 elections.

The company's PAC, officially called the CSX Corporation Good Government Fund, was a fairly consistent donor to former Rep. Alan Mollohan, D-W.Va. The PAC gave him \$2,000 in 2002, \$1,000 in 2006 and \$1,000 in 2008. Then Mollohan lost the 2010 election and suddenly CSX's allegiances switched. It gave \$5,000 to Mollohan's successor, Rep. David McKinley, R-W.Va., in 2012.

McKinley did not respond to a request for comment. In total, he has received \$9,500 from CSX affiliated groups and individuals since 2010, when he was first elected.

Similarly, before CSX became a consistent donor for Capito, the company gave money to her Democratic predecessor, Rep. Bob Wise, during every election cycle in the 1990s.

CSX's bipartisan political beneficence isn't limited to West Virginia. The corporation tends to favor Republican candidates (61 percent of its \$2.5 million in 2014 donations went to Republicans), but its single biggest beneficiary in 2014 was the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, which got nearly twice as much as its Republican counterpart.

In the 2010 elections, when Democrats controlled both houses of Congress, CSX donated more money to Democrats than Republicans, the only time it has done that since 1990.

“ The company has lobbied heavily to protect its interests and its political action committee and employees typically give more money to the party in power,” the Center for Responsive Politics writes of CSX. Out of nearly 17,000 corporations and organizations that made political contributions in 2014, CSX was the 91st biggest donor, according to CRP.

CSX’ s political spending doesn’ t end once politicians get elected.

Since 1998 it has spent a minimum of \$2 million every year lobbying Congress.

“ CSX has spent millions of dollars lobbying against bills that would strengthen railroad antitrust laws, as well as bills that would give the federal government more power of oversight and regulation,” CRP wrote.

In total, CSX has spent more than \$56.5 million on lobbying since 1998.

The company’ s lobbyist spending peaked at more than \$5 million in 2009, when it lobbied heavily against two major transportation bills.

One of the two major bills would have reauthorized funding for the Surface Transportation Board, which regulates, among other things, the economic activity of railroads.

In addition to funding the STB, it would have made it an independent organization, separate from the Department of Transportation, and it would have required the nation’ s largest railroad companies to regularly report on their service and performance.

The bill had bipartisan support — two Democratic co-sponsors and two Republican co-sponsors in the Senate — but it never came close to passing.

The bill’ s lead sponsor was former Sen. Jay Rockefeller, D-W.Va. Rockefeller, perhaps unsurprisingly, received relatively little support from CSX — just \$2,500 since 2000, and nothing after 2009 when he became chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation.

In comparison, Rockefeller’ s counterpart in the House, Rep. Bill Shuster, R-Pa., who chairs the House Transportation Committee, got \$25,600 from CSX in 2014 alone.

CSX has lavished special attention on Shuster’ s committee. Of its 50 incumbent members, 44 received donations from CSX in 2014.

All told, the corporation gave money to 313 federal candidates or officeholders in 2014, which accounts for nearly 60 percent of the seats in Congress.

<http://www.wvgazette.com/article/20150218/GZ01/150219266/1419#sthash.tapy0an6.dpuf>

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