

# Resolution in Support of Public Financing of Political Campaigns (entitled “Clean Elections Act” in some states)

**WHEREAS**, our political system at all levels is increasingly dominated by the influence of large sums of private money to finance electoral campaigns, whereby

- large special interest donors have undue political access to lawmakers and influence over public policy; and
- the current system of privately-financed campaigns actually selects for candidates who are proficient at raising money – regardless of their commitment or ability to represent voters in their district; and
- Main Street desires of ordinary citizens are too-often trumped by Wall Street influence, the demands and quid-pro-quo of large campaign donors; and

**WHEREAS**, until campaign financing is reformed so that voters and issues matter more than money, there is unlikely to be significant progress on issues that concern many Americans, such as affordable health care for all, full funding for education, living wages, safety on the job, sustainable energy policies, respect for small business and family farms, protection of habitat and our ecosystem, and an environment we can proudly leave to our children; and

**WHEREAS**, several states such as Arizona and Maine have pioneered “Clean Elections” programs (public financing of campaigns), whereby more diverse, qualified citizens can afford to run for office – and win – without personal wealth, and whereby elected lawmakers are less beholden to wealthy special interests and their lobbyists, spend less time “dialing for dollars” for election campaigns; and

**WHEREAS**, public financing of election campaigns would save taxpayers millions of dollars now wasted due to biased public policy decisions, earmarking of tax dollars and corporate giveaways due in large part to the influence and quid-pro-quo demands of large campaign contributors; and

**WHEREAS**, in Washington State, support for public campaign funding is being organized by Washington Public Campaigns, a non-partisan nonprofit organization, through a public awareness campaign, grassroots organizing and lobbying of state legislators, and planning for a ballot initiative in the future, if needed; and

**WHEREAS**, the Washington Legislature is considering proposals to allow cities and local jurisdictions to provide public financing for campaigns for local office; and for the state to provide public financing for statewide and legislative campaigns, similar to programs enacted in Arizona and Maine; and

**WHEREAS**, a comprehensive system of public financing of campaigns at all levels within the state would cost less than \$4 per year per resident of the state - an amount totally affordable and reasonable to level the financial playing field for candidates who wish to represent the people’s interests;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that we hereby call on public officials and lawmakers at local, state and national levels, to enact public financing of political campaigns; that copies of this resolution be sent to appropriate lawmakers and public officials; that organizations be encouraged to adopt similar resolutions;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that a copy be sent to Washington Public Campaigns, the statewide organization working for public financing of political campaigns at all levels which accepts mail at: P.O. Box 45088, Seattle, WA 98145-0088, and which can be contacted at: [www.washclean.org](http://www.washclean.org), 206-784-2522.

Submitted by \_\_\_\_\_ Precinct \_\_\_\_\_ LD/County. By \_\_\_\_\_

## **CLEAN ELECTIONS— HOW IT WORKS**

Public financing is optional for candidates; they may still choose to run the traditional way, using their own wealth or soliciting private contributions. The program is non-partisan; political party affiliation does not matter.

In order to qualify for public financing, candidates must first demonstrate they are serious and have a basic level of community support, by gathering a set number of signatures in their district along with a small qualifying contribution (\$5) from each signer. These \$5 contributions and signatures are validated by a state Clean Elections commission. Then, upon certification, the Clean Elections candidate receives full public financing for their primary and general campaign – provided they agree to use only the public funds provided to pay for their campaigns, accepting no additional private contributions and not using any of their personal wealth.

The financial playing field remains level. If outspent by an opponent, Clean Elections candidates receive public Fair Fight or Matching Funds to match any spending – dollar for dollar, up to a set limit – by opponents who run using their own or traditional private financing, and also to match spending for independent or “attack” ads by third party organizations.

Clean Elections programs may vary slightly state by state, on details such as: how the program is financed by state funds, how candidates qualify, the amount of funds provided to candidates, and regulations governing how campaign funds may be used. In general, programs operate as outlined above.