



May 19, 2006

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Campaign Finance eBulletin

Comprehensive CGS Report Provides Analysis of State and Local Public Campaign Financing Programs

The Center for Governmental Studies (CGS) just released [Keeping It Clean: Public Financing in American Elections](#), the first comprehensive effort to analyze and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of state and local public campaign financing systems in the United States. *Keeping It Clean* concludes that public campaign financing can resolve many of the campaign finance and electoral problems that currently plague the political process.



It recommends that state and local jurisdictions:

- Adopt public campaign financing systems to combat non-competitive campaigns, reduce special interest influence and increase voter confidence;
- Provide participating candidates with additional funding when confronted with high-spending opponents and independent expenditures;
- Ensure that programs are securely and adequately funded as a whole and for individual candidates over the course of several elections;
- Provide candidates with diminished amounts of public funding when running unopposed or against weak opponents;
- Encourage new and former candidates to participate in public financing systems;
- Develop public education programs to explain the benefits of public campaign financing programs;
- Control the use of separate fundraising committees and entities by candidates; and,
- Make local public financing laws compatible with state law.

Keeping It Clean finds that public campaign financing

*Dan Schnur
Harold M. Williams*

encourages more candidates, more competition, more voter participation and less influence-peddling. Public financing:

- Helps women, people of color, and new candidates run in elections;
- Reduces perceptions of wealthy and special interest contributor influence;
- Frees candidates from fundraising pressures;
- Diminishes funding disparities among candidates;
- Encourages more voters to participate in elections by lowering contribution thresholds and increasing voter education.

With a spate of political scandals at the federal, state and local levels, the trend toward more jurisdictions adopting public financing is growing. Connecticut has recently adopted a new public financing system. New Jersey has recommended expansion of a pilot legislative program (with modifications). And earlier this week, the California Nurses Association submitted signatures for a "Clean Money" initiative that will likely be on the November 2006 California ballot. On the local level, both the Portland (OR) city council and voters in Albuquerque (NM) approved full public financing for city elections in 2005.

Focusing on state and local programs, *Keeping It Clean* examines all forms of public financing, including full public financing ("clean money"), partial public financing ("matching funds"), tax credits, tax deductions, political party financing and free media resources to candidates. It also makes specific recommendations to improve the effectiveness of public financing programs.

Keeping it Clean is part the CGS series on *Public Financing in American Elections*. Earlier reports in the series are available on the CGS website, www.cgs.org.

This project is funded by generous grants from Carnegie Corporation of New York. The views in the study do not necessarily reflect the opinion of Carnegie Corporation, and it does not take responsibility for any of the statements or views in the report.

For more information about public financing, please contact [Steve Levin](#), Political Reform Project Director, (310)470-6590, ext. 115.

CGS Mission

The Center for Governmental Studies (CGS) creates innovative political and media solutions to help individuals participate more effectively in their communities and governments.

CGS uses research, advocacy, information technology and education to improve the fairness of governmental policies and processes, empower the underserved to participate more effectively in their communities, improve communication between voters and candidates for office, and help implement effective public policy reforms.

Learn more about CGS on our website at www.cgs.org.

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