

# Clean Elections for Alaska:

Enhancing Our Democracy

# What is “Clean Elections”?

- A proven way to get big money out of politics
- A system of public financing of political campaigns designed to ensure that elected officials are not beholden to special interests and are free to represent the needs of their constituents.

# Clean Elections: An Overview of this Presentation

- How do Clean Elections work?
- What are the benefits?
- Do other states have Clean Elections?
- What has their experience been?
- How can Alaska adopt Clean Elections?

# Who is eligible for public financing?

- Candidates who demonstrate they have a strong base of public support and agree to forego private fundraising (except for a limited amount of “seed” money) are eligible for public financing of their campaigns.

# How do candidates demonstrate a “strong base of public support”?

- They must collect a specified number of \$5 “qualifying contributions” from registered voters in their district. The required number depends on the office being sought.

# How many \$5 contributions must a candidate collect?

- 3,000 if running for Governor
- 1,500 if running for Lieutenant Governor
- 400 if running for the State Senate
- 200 if running for State House

# Is there an exemption for low-income Alaskans?

- Yes, the state must adopt guidelines to allow low-income voters to give less.
- The purpose of Clean Elections is to allow all voters to participate equally in the electoral process.

# What about start-up or “seed money”?

- Candidates are allowed to raise a limited amount of start-up or “seed money” to aid in the collection of qualifying contributions from voters in their district

# Seed money contributions

Are limited to \$100 or less & cannot exceed:

- \$20,000 for a candidate for Governor
- \$10,000 for a candidate for Lt. Governor
- \$2,000 for a candidate for Senate
- \$1,000 for a candidate for House

# How much public funding do candidates receive?

- The amount is based on what it takes to run a viable campaign in Alaska.
- One goal of Clean Elections is to slow the escalating costs of elections.

For primaries, candidates would receive :

- Governor \$250,000
- Lieutenant Governor \$150,000
- State Senator \$24,000
- State Representative \$16,000

For general elections, candidates would receive:

- Governor-Lt. Governor \$500,000
- State Senator \$36,000
- State Representative \$24,000

# What if a Clean Elections candidate is outspent?

- A CE candidate can receive up to 3 times the specified limit to match an opponent's spending dollar-for-dollar.
- This provision provides an incentive for all candidates to participate in this system and equalizes funding between opponents.

# Can political parties give?

- Yes, parties can give an additional 10% to their candidates.
- Candidates without a recognized party receive 70% of the limit, while minor party candidates receive full funding.

# Unopposed Candidates

- Receive 25% of the primary and general election limits because their need for funding is far less.

# What are the advantages of Clean Elections?

- It levels the playing field, giving people without access to big money a fair shot at getting elected.
- It allows for new faces, fresh voices, and a change from politics as usual. These new voices bring attention to a wider variety of important issues.

# Clean Elections: Advantages

- It eliminates the danger and perception of corruption caused by private financing of elections.
- It frees elected officials from the incessant demands of fundraising, enabling them to spend more time working for their constituents.

# Clean Elections: Advantages

- Most importantly, it strengthens public confidence in government.

# What's at Stake

- "Corruption is worse than prostitution. The latter might endanger the morals of an individual, the former invariably endangers the morals of the entire country." – Karl Krause
- "The time to guard against corruption and tyranny, is before they shall have gotten hold on us." – Thomas Jefferson

# What other states have adopted Clean Elections?

- Maine
- Arizona
- Vermont
- New Jersey
- Connecticut
- New Mexico
- North Carolina

# Maine and Arizona

- Longest history with Clean Elections (4 election cycles)
- Voters and candidates love it (more than 80% support the system)
- This presentation will highlight their experience.

# Greater voter choice

- In Arizona, the number of people willing to run for the legislature has increased by more than 20%.
- In Maine, the number of uncontested races dropped from 20% to less than 2% in the last two elections.
- The number of incumbents without challengers dropped from 17% to less than 1%.

# More level playing field

- In 1998, 79% of the candidates in Arizona with the largest war chests won.
- In 2002, with Clean Elections, this was true for only 2%.
- In just 4 years, Arizona politics changed dramatically.
- The biggest spender doesn't always win.

# Candidates like Clean Elections

- In Maine, use of the system grows each year.
- In 2002, 62% of candidates used CE.
- In 2004, 79% of candidates used CE.
- In 2006, 81% of candidates used CE.

# Gives newcomers a chance

- In Arizona, before CE, 95% of incumbents were reelected.
- Incumbents raised 2X their opponents.
- In 2002, only 74% of incumbents won their primary races.
- In almost all cases, spending was equal.

# Renews voter faith in elections

- In Arizona, more voters are going to the polls than ever before.
- Clean Elections has increased voter turnout by 34% in years without a presidential race and 7% in years with a presidential race.

# More public involvement

- In Arizona, the number of contributors to campaigns has skyrocketed with Clean Elections.
- 3 times more people give to gubernatorial candidates than before CE, especially low and middle income voters.

# Clean Elections is non-partisan

- In 2002, voters in Arizona elected, 22 “clean” Republicans and 17 “clean” Democrats.
- In 2006, Arizona voters elected, 34 “clean” Republicans and 50 “clean” Democrats.

# The first "Clean Elections" Governor

- Janet Napolitano has twice been elected Governor of Arizona using Clean Elections.
- 9 out of 11 statewide offices in Arizona are held by Clean Elections candidates.

# Returns power to voters

- Clean Elections reduces the influence of large campaign donors and increases the influence of voters.
- It leads to greater accountability to voters.

# Good for democracy

- Clean Elections affirms the principle of “one person, one vote” by reducing the disproportionate influence of large contributors on elections and enabling citizens of all backgrounds to participate equally in the democratic process.

# Alaskans like the idea

- According to a recent poll conducted by the Craciun Research Group, 70% of Alaskan favor a Clean Elections system for Alaska.

# Money in Alaskan politics

- In 2006, more than \$17 million was given to candidates for state office in Alaska.
- This doesn't include local or congressional races.

Even unopposed candidates raised large sums.

- One candidate raised nearly \$100,000 for a race in which he was unopposed.
- Another raised more than \$80,000.

# The cost of Clean Elections in Alaska

- Depends on the number of candidates who participate
- Must be voluntary (U.S. Supreme Court)
- Could be up to \$5 million, which is less than .05% of the state's current budget

# The financial cost of not having Clean Elections

- Potential for funding of costly pet projects proposed by special interests.
- This year's \$1.8 million capital budget passed by the legislature included some questionable & controversial items.

# Other financial costs

- Potential for decisions to be made on behalf on special interests, not public interests.
- Oil taxes: Were last year's PPT tax decisions affected by campaign donations or illegal giving?

# The cost of tainted decisions

- If the PPT debate was colored by campaign donations and illegal arrangements, the cost to the state could be upwards of \$1 billion/year.
- This is far more than the estimated \$5 million cost of Clean Elections in Alaska.

# Legislature to consider Clean Elections next year

- A bipartisan group of House and Senate members introduced SB 182 and HB 261.
- Sponsors include Sen. Bill Wielechowski (D), Rep. Gabriel LeDoux (R), Sen. Lesil McGuire (R), Rep. Berta Gardner (D).

# Citizen's Initiative

- A citizen's group., Alaskans for Clean Elections, is also sponsoring an initiative to adopt Clean Elections in Alaska.
- [www.alaskansforcleanelections.org](http://www.alaskansforcleanelections.org)

# Get involved!

- Learn more about Clean Elections.
- Contact legislative sponsors: 465-2435 or 465-2487.
- Contact Alaskans for Clean Elections: 278-3661.

# Do your part!

- Alaska needs Clean Elections now more than ever. The time is right!