



# ILLINOIS CLEAN ELECTIONS ACT

## What is the Illinois Clean Elections Act?

**Illinois Clean Elections Act**, is a voluntary public funding system for candidates for all state-wide offices and State Senator and State Representative. The objective of public financing of elections is to reverse the tide of private special interest money flowing into contests for public office. It allows candidates to run for office without engaging in extensive fund raising or self-funding their own election campaigns, thus making candidacy more accessible to a broader array of qualified Illinois Citizens.

To receive public funds, candidates must prove they have grassroots support by collecting a specified number of **\$5 Qualifying Contributions** from **individual voters** in their districts.

**Candidates also agree to limit their spending to the amount received from the Illinois Clean Elections Fund.**

### How will it work?

Candidates who voluntarily choose to participate in Illinois Clean Elections system would follow three simple steps to qualify for public funds:

- 1) Demonstrate their grassroots support by collecting \$5 Qualifying Contributions from voters within the district for the office which the candidate is seeking.
- 2) Agree not to raise or spend any private money.
- 3) Limit spending to amounts received from the Illinois Clean Election Fund.

Candidates who qualify would receive an equal and limited amount of public funds with which to run their campaigns. If they are outspent by their opponents or by others trying to influence the campaign, they will receive additional funds to allow them to be competitive.

## Where do candidates get their money today?

In Illinois, candidates typically receive most of their money from corporations, lobbyists, or PACs who are generally motivated by exerting influence over state contracts or issues. In 2008, about 60% of the money was contributed by corporations and PACs rather than individual citizens.

**How much does it cost to get elected?**

In 2006, **\$644,000** was the average amount of money spent to elect a State Senator and **\$302,000** to elect a State Representative.

**Who contributes?**

90% of contributions were between \$250 and \$3,000 - representing big money contributors.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> National Institute on Money in State Politics – Follow the Money Trail in Illinois.



### Isn't this just welfare for politicians?

No. Candidates must work hard to get small donations from hundreds of constituents. In fact, the current system costs Illinois citizens millions of dollars through favors, hidden “paybacks” and other forms of influence peddling.

*“People who say the public shouldn't have to pay for elections are missing the point: The American people **already pay** for elections – in ways that favor incumbents and special interests...Public Financing will cost us only a fraction of what the current system costs”.*

– **Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL) - 3/20/07 on the introduction in Congress of SB1285.**

### Are “Clean Elections” campaign limitations constitutional?

Yes, The system of “Clean Elections” does not limit free speech, as candidates “opt in” on a completely voluntary basis.

## Can a “Clean Elections” candidate compete against a well-funded incumbent or other opponent?

We realize that it's potentially difficult. That's why we also recommend “Campaign Finance Reform” limiting campaign **contributions** for all other candidates. While it is unconstitutional to impose limits on campaign *spending* – experience in other states like Maine and Arizona has shown that **even incumbents are willing to participate as clean elections candidates**. In 2006, 83% of all state candidates elected in Maine and 60% of those in Arizona ran as “clean elections” candidates.

### How are “Clean Elections” funded?

In some states like Arizona, citizens contribute to the fund as a voluntary check-off on their State Income Tax Form. Other sources include Abandoned Property Trust Funds, interest on unspent public funds, or fines from violations of election laws. Experience has shown that we can public ally finance elections **without** raising taxes.

The amounts spent on all campaigns decrease when **clean elections** are implemented. Public Citizen, a Washington D.C. Public Interest group, reports that states spend between \$2 and \$6 per voting-age resident for clean elections.

### What can we citizens do?

Illinois Legislators need to hear from voters that we demand a tidal change in the way our State Officers and Legislature conduct the people's business!

So that the General Assembly clearly recognizes that Illinois voters want clean elections, the **Illinois Clean Elections Campaign** is organizing to place this referendum on the ballot for Consolidated and General Elections in 2009 and 2010:

**Shall the Illinois General Assembly enact “Clean Elections” legislation, a system whereby candidates voluntarily agree to accept limits on campaign contributions and spending, in return for public financing of campaigns for the General Assembly and statewide offices?**

## What do Legislators say about Clean Elections?

“As a Clean Election legislator, I find myself being lobbied a lot less than traditional candidates. It’s a lot easier if someone is trying to pressure you to say ‘I owe my allegiance to the taxpayers of the State of Maine and not to any special interest group.’”

- Rep. John Patrick, (D) Rumford

“Most of the people in my district cannot afford to give a candidate \$250 to run for office, but they can participate in the \$5 Qualifying Contribution effort. By contributing \$5, my constituents can invest in Maine’s democratic process, and free me up to do what I enjoy most about campaigning: meeting with voters on their doorstep to discuss the issues that are important to them.”

- Rep. James Annis, (R) Dover-Foxcroft

## Why Clean Elections and Campaign Finance Reform will benefit every citizen in Illinois

“Clean elections has far-reaching consequences beyond limiting campaign spending and curbing corruption—it’s been called the ‘reform that makes all other reforms possible.’ It hits on almost every political issue because it impacts the basic functioning of our government.

“Clean elections actually saves the public money - lots of it. Although there is a cost to the program, far more money is saved because elected officials will no longer use public funds to pay back their donors many times over- sometimes hundreds or thousands of times over - for their electoral contributions. The paybacks are the form of subsidies, non-bid contracts, pork, regulations changes, tax breaks, and so on -- all ways the special interests feed at the public trough. There may be no better way to cut government spending on corporate giveaways--vast transfers of wealth from the public treasure to wealthy stockholders. The public gains by not losing.”

- George Lakoff

## Illinois Voters Support Clean Elections

71.5% of Illinois voters who had an opportunity to express their opinion, voted “YES” in response to the **Clean Elections Referendum** question when it was placed on the ballot for the November 4, 2008 Presidential Election through the efforts of the **Illinois Ballot Integrity Project**. This overwhelming support for **Clean Elections** shows that Illinois voters are tired of “Pay-for-Play” and want to change the way our candidates are chosen and elected.

The Clean Elections Referendum question will be submitted to voters in several jurisdictions in the upcoming Consolidated Election on April 7<sup>th</sup>. By increasing turnout and support, we can send a strong message to Springfield. We will be working to get this question before more Illinois voters during the upcoming months in future elections.

## What can I do to help Turn the Tide?

- ❑ Sign a Petition to help get the Clean Elections referendum on the ballot for Consolidated and General Elections.
- ❑ Volunteer to help pass our petitions and gather signatures in your precinct, city, township or county.
- ❑ Write, call and e-mail your State Senator and Representative and tell him or her – we need to Turn the Tide on Big Money in Illinois Politics.
- ❑ Support our work with a donation to the Illinois Ballot Integrity Project.

Learn more about *Clean Elections in Illinois*:

**Illinois Ballot Integrity Project**  
635 Chicago Ave – Evanston IL 60202  
[info@ballot-integrity.org](mailto:info@ballot-integrity.org)  
[www.ballot-integrity.org/CEC.htm](http://www.ballot-integrity.org/CEC.htm)

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**HELP TURN THE TIDE**  
**WASH BIG MONEY OUT OF POLITICS**  
**LET'S CLEAN UP SPRINGFIELD AND FLUSH**

- LOBBYISTS
- INFLUENCE PEDDLERS
- BACK-ROOM BOYS
- CORPORATE BIG WIGS
- PACs (Pandering and Corruption)



**DOWN THE DRAIN!**