

CLEAN ELECTIONS TEXAS UPDATE

The political process has recently championed many millionaire candidates who can finance their own campaigns. More new tactics have emerged for getting around campaign finance laws, such as “issue” advertising. In the 2000 federal election cycle, \$629 million was spent on political advertising, but only 4 percent of interest group ads expressly urged voting. This tactic carved a huge loophole in federal campaign finance law, and sham ads flourished.

In 2004 several presidential frontrunners had amassed so much private cash early in the cycle that they decided to ignore the partial public funding system so that they would not have to bother with spending limits. Today, by late 2007, it is clear that fundraising for the 2008 races is over the top. Presidential candidates have amassed huge funds, House and Senate incumbents have taken in record amounts compared to the 2002, 2004, and 2006 election cycles; even officials who are not up for reelection are fundraising heavily. Overall campaign spending could exceed \$5 billion.

Media coverage of individual scandals focuses public attention on possible illegalities, but the bigger scandal is that so much of the money changing hands is completely legal. What President Lyndon Johnson observed some 40 years ago is still true today: *the system is more*

loophole than law. It is clear that the system of laws governing campaign financing has been rendered meaningless and requires fundamental changes that will provide new options for candidates.

While Congress and most state legislatures appear far from any consensus on the problem, much less a solution, the voters are far ahead of the politicians. In 1996 Maine voters approved, by a 56 to 44 percent margin, a Clean Money Campaign Reform (CMCR) initiative that does something that no state or federal legislation had ever done: it offers full public financing to candidates for state office who reject special-interest contributions and agree to campaign spending limits. Those who discounted the Maine law as a one-state wonder were proved wrong. In 1997 the Vermont legislature voted overwhelmingly to create such a system for their state. In 1998 voters in Arizona adopted new Clean Money systems via ballot initiatives, and in recent years both New Mexico and North Carolina have won Clean Elections (CE). Today, in all these states, CE is wildly popular among people of every political stripe.

This year Texans are demanding change by getting behind **Clean Elections Texas**, a campaign of the True Courage Action Network in collaboration with other civic groups. Contact us to learn how you can help!

Clean Elections Campaign Reform Addresses the Most Serious Problems That Concern Voters and Lawmakers:

PROBLEM	CE SOLUTION
Campaigns are too expensive	Provides constitutionally acceptable limits
Too much special-interest influence	Participating candidates do not take special-interest money
Candidates and lawmakers spend too much time chasing money	Eliminates need for fundraising
Good people don't have a fair chance to compete	Provides financially level playing field
Too many loopholes	Comprehensive package tightens loopholes