

Citizens' Actions to Control Money in Politics

Ultimately, voters decide about money in politics just like they do on other issues. The people we put into office make the laws, and appoint the people who enforce the laws and the people who interpret the laws.

Citizens need to vote, and they need to know that their votes matter, but we certainly don't need procedural obstacles to voting.

In 2013, the Supreme Court struck down a key provision of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which safeguards against racial discrimination in voting⁴.

This gave added momentum to the effort in many states to pass legislation that restricts the right to vote – laws sold to the public as combating “fraud” in spite of numerous studies that show fraud is simply not an issue³. However, controlling who votes has potential to affect who wins and who loses elections³.

These laws need to be reversed and voter access and convenience need to be enhanced with provisions such as Election Day Registration, weekend and evening voting periods, and on-line voter registration for all. States can act to protect voter rights.

Many good government organizations, including the League, support publicly funded elections as one of the most effective ways to offset the influence of big money donors and diversify the candidate pool.

New York City and Connecticut have model systems in place, and jurisdictions in Maryland, and states like Maine, North Carolina, Illinois and New York State are fighting to keep, strengthen or enact public funding systems⁸.

Clean election reforms such as stronger disclosure, anti-coordination and ethics rules are also needed to restore transparency and reduce the role of big money.

In response to Citizens United, California, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, Hawaii, Vermont and North Carolina have updated and expanded their disclosure regulations and enforcement⁹.

Cracking down on coordination between candidates, campaigns and outside groups is particularly challenging, but Connecticut, Minnesota, and Vermont have promising new policies in place that could serve as a model for other states.

Other advocates are pushing for a constitutional amendment. As of January 2015, 16 state legislatures have passed bills calling on Congress to pass amendments addressing money in politics and corporate personhood, with similar resolutions pending in 16 other states.

Some states are re-writing their corporate charters to require noninterference in elections. A synonym for “noninterference” would be “noninvolvement”. It would apply to corporations that hold a business license.