



## 2023 Issue Paper: Money in Politics

### Position Statement

The League of Women Voters of Washington, as stated in its [Program in Action 2021-2023](#), believes that:

- The funding level of the PDC [Public Disclosure Commission] should provide for sufficient staff to audit all appropriate reports including those of lobbyists. Public education should be a funded function of the PDC. (CF-1)
- Campaign contributions should be limited. These limits should apply to both in-state and out-of-state contributions. The PDC should implement laws pertaining to these limitations. (CF-2)
- The length of political campaigns should be shortened. (CF-3)
- Regular and full disclosure of campaign finances for both ballot issues and candidates is necessary before primary and general elections. (CF-4/EL-4)

The LWV of the United States, as stated in its [Impact on Issues 2020-2022](#), supports:

- Public financing of elections, either voluntary or mandatory, in which candidates must abide by reasonable spending limits. Until full public financing of elections is enacted, limits on election spending are needed to protect democratic processes.
- Enhanced enforcement of campaign finance laws that includes changes to ensure that regulatory agencies are properly funded, staffed, and structured to avoid partisan deadlock in the decision-making process.
- Abolishing Super PACs (political action committees) and abolishing spending coordinated or directed by candidates (other than a candidate's own campaign committee.)
- Restrictions on direct donations and bundling by lobbyists, which may include monetary limits as well as other regulations.

### Summary of Issues for the 2023 Legislative Session

#### Public Financing of Campaigns

Because of the high expense of campaigns, the possibility of running for office is often out of reach for someone who does not have significant personal wealth or access to those who do. It also makes it extremely difficult for a candidate to not accept corporate donations. An alternative to the situation is to provide some public funds through expanding the successful Seattle Democracy Voucher program to candidates for state legislature. This would empower more voters to contribute small amounts to candidates who have demonstrated community support and agree to limit fundraising from other sources.

#### Closing the "Revolving Door"

Currently, it is possible for a high-level government employee or elected official to leave their job one day and return the next as a lobbyist. Setting parameters that require time off before entering the private sector as a lobbyist is a commonsense reform to build public confidence that our public officials are working for us and not beholden to any special interest. Washington lags behind Congress, a

majority of states and the District of Columbia and we will continue to support legislation requiring “cooling off periods.”

#### Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) Requested Legislation

The PDC does incredible work making campaign finance data accessible to the public and enforcing campaign finance regulations. The League supported the 1972 ballot initiative creating the PDC. The following legislation is being proposed by the PDC for the 2023 session.

#### Adjusting Campaign Reporting Schedule

Requiring a single additional report of expenditure activity during the critical weeks leading up to voting would provide more timely information to the public when people are making decisions and casting ballots. The current expenditure reporting schedule, established prior to mail-in ballots, is oriented to a single Election Day.

#### Updating Grassroots Lobbying Disclosure

Improving transparency through reporting and sponsor identification during the legislative session

#### Improving Funding for the Work of the Public Disclosure Commission

Making the Transparency Account a non-appropriated fund to provide a permanent, stable, and independent funding source will allow the flexibility for effective long-term agency strategic planning in promoting the goals of Fair Campaign Practices Act. The Commission would use the account funds for development and implementation of specifically designated projects that will improve the usability, transparency, and accessibility of PDC information.

#### Requiring Sponsors to Identify Political Advertising

Improving sponsor reporting of digital advertising expenditure details to commercial advertisers to provide greater transparency to the public in tracking the content, location, scope, and distribution of digital advertising.

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