



The League of Women Voters of Ohio Education Fund imPACT e-newsletter.

The purpose of these monthly emails is to provide League members and our partners with information on the most pressing reform issues affecting Ohioans today.

Want to learn more about the issues, how to vote confidently and how to connect with elected officials? Visit the imPACT website at www.ohioimpact.org for the latest information and resources to---Get Educated. . .Get Involved. . . and Get Results!

Clean Elections for the United States Congress

Taking big money out of politics with the Fair Elections Now Act

The cost of running campaigns for elected office is skyrocketing. The average winning U.S. Senate race in 2006 cost nearly \$10 million and the average winning House race that year cost \$1.3 million. The decisions about who runs and who wins in our democracy increasingly come down to big money and special interests, not regular voters.

With the corrupting role that big money has on politics brought to light in recent Congressional scandals – and the regular passage of pork-barrel spending projects – the need for reform is increasingly clear. Special interests and wealthy donors have an inordinate amount of influence on politicians through campaign contributions, which undermines voters’ trust in how Congress works and can lead to manipulation of public policy – often against the interests of the public.

Clean Elections reforms this system by allowing candidates to run for office using public funds rather than relying on wealthy private donors. The result is elected officials who are beholden only to the voters and not powerful special interests, making the government better able to deal with the serious issues our society is facing in areas such as education, health care, the economy and more.

The concept of full public financing of campaigns, also called “Clean Elections” or “Fair Elections,” is simple: candidates who demonstrate a wide base of public support by collecting a threshold number of small donations, and who agree to forego further private fundraising and to abide by spending limits, qualify and receive public funding to run a competitive campaign.

-By severing the direct link between campaign donations and political favors, Clean Elections would ensure that politicians are accountable to the public interest rather than special interests.

-Clean Elections would level the playing field, giving voters the opportunity to make

a decision based on the merits of the candidates rather than their fundraising abilities.

-Clean Elections would allow candidates, and officeholders seeking reelection, to spend less time dialing-for-dollars and more time focusing on solving the pressing challenges confronting our nation.

-Full public financing systems have a proven track record: Seven states and two cities have successfully implemented Clean Elections systems for some or all of their offices.

No elections are more expensive, and nowhere is the need for Clean Elections greater, than the races for Congress. In 2006, several national reform groups, including Common Cause, helped to craft a state-of-the-art public financing bill for the U.S. Senate, the bipartisan Fair Elections Now Act (S.1285), authored by Assistant Majority Leader Richard Durbin (D-IL) and Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA). The bill received a hearing in the Rules and Administration Committee on June 20, 2007, but has not yet been scheduled for a vote. A companion bill will be introduced soon in the House.