

DEMOCRACY NORTH CAROLINA **2009-10 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA**

Democracy North Carolina's mission is to make real the promise of "one person, one vote" – the bedrock principle of equal rights and self-determination. The money chase in campaigns must not be a barrier for candidates or voters. Elections and politicians must be accountable to voters, not wealthy special interests. To increase the power and participation of voters and decrease the influence of special-interest donors, we recommend:

LESS BIG MONEY

EXPAND VOTER-OWNED ELECTIONS

Creating an alternative, "clean" source of funding for candidates who are currently unable or unwilling to raise large donations from big-money special interests is one way that we, the voting public, can reclaim our democracy. North Carolina is a national leader in pioneering voluntary publicly financed programs for candidates. Current programs should be protected and expanded to include other races:

Council of State (HB586, SB966): We now offer public funds in the races for Auditor, Supt. of Public Instruction, and Commissioner of Insurance. A good next step: Add the other five agency heads on the Council of State (Secretary of State, Treasurer, Attorney General, Commissioners of Agriculture and Labor).

Legislative Pilot Program (SB936): The cost of winning a seat in the NC General Assembly is out of reach for most citizens. The legislature should enact a pilot program for House and Senate races that allows candidates who adhere to strict fundraising limits to qualify for public financing of campaigns.

Local Authorization (HB120, SB938): The General Assembly should authorize more cities and counties to sponsor their own public financing programs, using their own funding. Chapel Hill has this authority and will offer public financing in its 2009 election.

Federal Clean Elections (HR1826, S752): We support legislation to create viable public financing for federal races.

DISCLOSURE & OPEN GOVERNMENT

Electronic and better disclosure of contributions by General Assembly candidates is needed. We also should require disclosure of campaign donations and fundraising by large contractors and by the appointees to major policy-making boards. Local governments should be required to enact and enforce codes of ethical conduct for local officials.

MORE VOTERS

PROTECT & EXPAND THE RIGHT TO VOTE

Every vote must be counted. Add more "one-stop" voting locations (including on Election Day) and expand early voting hours on weekends. Improve the rules for Same-Day Registration. Increase the training and testing of poll workers, e.g., on access to provisional ballots. Improve administration and education so ex-felons understand their voting rights. Include the office of President in "straight-party" voting on NC's ballot. Restricted polling sites should be banned for early voting. Military men and women need better access to the voting process.

INCREASE YOUTH VOTER ENGAGEMENT

Young people ages 18 to 24 continue to register and vote at a low rate. Explore strategies to boost registration and turnout, including possible use of DMV offices and high schools to strengthen civics education, provide a means of advance registration, and engage teenagers in the political process.

CHANGE ELECTORAL COLLEGE VOTING

Giving all of a state's electoral votes to the Presidential candidate who wins by even a slim majority disenfranchises many voters. Change the Electoral College or enact the National Popular Vote, so North Carolina allocates its electoral votes to the winner of the popular vote nationwide.

CONTINUE INSTANT RUN-OFF VOTING

Costly, low turnout run-off elections could be eliminated with rank voting or Instant Run-Off Voting (if your first choice is not among the top vote-getters, your vote goes to your second-choice candidate). Third party candidates don't become "spoilers" because their votes are re-allocated if they do poorly. Local governments should try IRV and it should be used in statewide primaries.