



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF NORTH CAROLINA**

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Legislative Action Alert for May 3, 2009

LWVNC has always supported the Council of State Pilot Program and fully believes due to its recent success, it should be expanded. Please call and/or email your NC Senators about SB-966: Council of State Voter-Owned Elections Expansion.

The success of the Voter-Owned Elections pilot program for 3 Council of State positions in 2008 provides ample reason to support legislation to expand the program to include more executive branch offices. New bills in NC (S-966 / H-586) will add 5 more offices to the program.

The public campaign financing pilot in 2008 covered the Commissioner of Insurance, State Auditor, and Superintendent of Public Instruction. The program:

- enjoyed high levels of participation by all types of candidates
- facilitated more grassroots-oriented campaigning
- reduced the conflict of regulated industries being a chief source of campaign funds
- freed candidates from the need to constantly fundraise
- allowed candidates more time to spend with voters throughout the state

Ø **Bipartisan Participation:** Four of six general election candidates for the three positions qualified to receive public financing: two Republicans and two Democrats.

Ø **Diverse, Broad Participation:** Nine of 11 candidates opted into the program during the primary. They included incumbents and challengers, blacks and whites, men and women, as well as several first-time candidates who said the program empowered them to run.

Ø **Pay-to-Play Conflict Reduced:** Contributions from industries with financial ties to Council of State agencies dropped dramatically.

Ø **Support for Expansion:** The majority of members of the 2009 Council of State supports Voter-Owned Elections and would like to see the program expanded. More than 50 House members are sponsoring legislation to add five more agency offices to the program, beginning in 2012.

How Does It Work?

Candidates must first demonstrate that they have earned the public's trust to be eligible for money from the N.C. Voter-Owned Elections Fund. To qualify, you follow 3 steps:

STEP 1. Declare your intent to participate in the VOE program. If you spend over \$20,000 for campaign-related purposes before filing this declaration, you can't participate.

STEP 2. Raise hundreds of small, qualifying donations (\$10 to \$200) from registered voters. The larger the grant for the office, the more small donations required (900 to 2,300).

STEP 3. Submit a record of the qualifying contributions and also agree to:

- stop all fund-raising after the qualifying period
- accept a total spending limit and use the public funds only for campaign purposes
- return any unused public funds to the Voter-Owned Elections Fund

What Does A Certified Candidate Get?

Candidates who qualify receive a competitive amount of public money for the general election. If you have an opponent, the amount is the average amount spent by candidates in the general election in contested races for that office in the last three elections, but not less than \$300,000. The grant sizes would likely range from \$300,000 for the State Auditor to \$1.7 million for the Attorney General. No public funds are provided if you have no opponent. Your party can provide in-kind support of up to \$30,000.

If an opposing candidate or outside group (including certain 527 or “issue advocacy” groups) spends above the limits accepted by a participating candidate, then that candidate can receive “rescue” or matching funds to stay competitive (up to 200% of the original grant in general election and up to 100% the maximum of qualifying donations in the primary).

What Does It Cost?

There is no appropriation in this bill. It only authorizes expanding the program, because of the state’s fiscal climate. The program ultimately needs \$3.5 to \$4 million per year to work.

You can find out who represents you and the contact information for legislators at the NC General Assembly website: <http://www.ncleg.net/GIS/RandR07/Representation.html#byZIP>

If your Senator and/or House of Representative is a co-sponsor of S-966/H-586, (find out [here](#)) please say "Thank you for co-sponsoring HB-1260: Voter Pre-Registration and Education. Please help this bill pass the NC House by the May 14 crossover deadline."

If they are not co-sponsors, (find out [here](#)) urge them to "please support HB-1260: Voter Pre-Registration & Education and help pass the bill by the May 14 crossover deadline."

It must pass at least one of the branches by May 14th.

To view the bill please visit:

<http://www.ncleg.net/gascripts/BillLookUp/BillLookUp.pl?Session=2009&BillID=S+966>

For additional information on The League of Women Voters of North Carolina and our policies and partners, please visit www.lwvnc.org.

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LWV is where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement.