



WASHINGTON BUREAU · NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE
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ACTION ALERT

DATE: June 4, 2007
TO: Concerned Parties
FROM: Hilary O. Shelton, Director, Washington Bureau

NAACP-SUPPORTED PUBLIC FINANCING OF CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGNS BILL INTRODUCED IN THE HOUSE AND SENATE *LEGISLATION TO LIMIT THE ROLE OF BIG-MONEY INTERESTS IN CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGNS*

THE ISSUE:

The cost of a congressional campaign, as well as candidates' need to raise large amount of money from special interests, has spiraled out of control. In the last election, the cost of the top ten competitive Senate races averaged \$34 million per campaign – double what it was just four years ago.

One direct result of this race for campaign money is the perception by voters that candidates are too busy talking to Political Action Committees (PACs) or special interests to listen to their constituents. To address this very real problem, Senators Richard Durbin (IL) and Arlen Specter (PA), along with Congressmen John Tierney (MA), Raul Grijalva (AZ) and Todd Platts (PA) have introduced in the House and Senate the "***Fair Elections Now Act***" (**S. 936 / H.R. 1614**). These bills, which deal with the financing of campaigns for the US Senate and House of Representatives, would allow qualified candidates to receive campaign financing from a public fund instead of from lobbyists and other special interests.

This legislation, which is based on working models in Maine and Arizona, would create a voluntary system that gives candidates the option to stop attending fundraisers and dialing their "friends" for donations without risking a loss to a well-funded opponent. For those who choose to participate, fundraising would be limited to "seed money" in amounts of no more than \$100 per person to pay for campaign start-up costs. Participating candidates would also be required to show that they are serious contenders by raising qualifying contributions of \$5 each from a minimum number of state residents, based on the population of the state.

Once they are able to prove their viability, candidates will then begin to receive money from the "Fair Election Fund." The amount of money each candidate would receive would be based on the population of the state. Candidates would also receive vouchers for a discount on television and radio time.

If enacted, the ***Fair Elections Now Act*** would restore the confidence of the voters that their federally elected officials were responsive to them. It would also allow candidates to spend less time talking to special interests and more time listening to their potential constituents.

[More...](#)

THE ACTION WE NEED YOU TO TAKE:

Contact your Representative and both your Senators **and URGE THEM TO CO-SPONSOR AND SUPPORT THE FAIR ELECTIONS NOW ACT, S. 936 / H.R. 1614.** To contact your Senators and Representative, you may:

✓ **Make a Phone Call:**

Call your Senators and your Representative in Washington by dialing the Capitol Switchboard and asking to be transferred to your Senators'/Congressman's offices. The switchboard phone number is **(202) 224-3121** (see message section, below).

✓ **Write a Letter**

To write letters to your Senators, send them to:

The Honorable (name of Senator)
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

To write a letter to your Representative, send it to:

The Honorable (name of Representative)
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

**A SAMPLE
LETTER IS
ATTACHED**

✓ **Send a Fax**

If you would like to send a fax, call your Senators' or Representative's offices (through the Capitol switchboard) and ask for their fax numbers (you can use either the attached sample letter or the message box, below).

✓ **Send an E-Mail**

To send an e-mail to your Senators, go to www.senate.gov; click on "*Find Your Senators*". Look up your Senators by state; go to their web sites for e-mail addresses. To send an e-mail to your Representative, go to www.house.gov, and click on "*Write Your Representative*" (on the left hand side, just under "find your Representative"). This will help you identify who your congressman is and how to contact him/her.

REMEMBER TO CONTACT BOTH YOUR SENATORS!!!!

THE MESSAGE

- Candidates for the US Senate and House of Representatives currently spend too much time courting big-money lobbyists and special interests; federal campaigns have become too expensive. Public financing would allow candidates to stop having to spend so much time talking to special interests and allow them more time for listening to their potential constituents.
- Under the *Fair Elections Now Act* (S. 936 / H.R. 1614), which is based on working public financing models in Maine and Arizona, qualified candidates could agree to eliminate special interest money yet still run a viable campaign.
- If enacted, this legislation will encourage well qualified candidates for federal office who might otherwise be discouraged from running by the need to court money from special interests.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION TO THIS IMPORTANT MATTER!!!
If you have any questions, call Hilary Shelton at the Washington Bureau at (202) 463-2940.

MEMBERSHIP IS POWER! JOIN THE NAACP TODAY.

To become an NAACP member or to sign up for e-mail legislative and press updates, visit www.naacp.org

Sample Letter

(date)

The Honorable _____
United States Senate / House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510 / 20515

**RE: SUPPORT FOR THE FAIR ELECTIONS NOW ACT, S. 936 / H.R.
1614**

Dear Senator / Representative _____;

As your constituent, I strongly encourage you to support and co-sponsor the *Fair Elections Now Act*, S. 936 / H.R. 1614. This important legislation would restore public confidence in the election process and allow candidates for the US House of Representatives and the Senate to focus their campaigns on the voters, rather than on raising money from special interests. Furthermore, if enacted, this legislation will encourage well qualified candidates for federal office who might otherwise be discouraged from running by the need to court money from special interests

This legislation, which is based on working models in Maine and Arizona, would create a voluntary system that gives candidates the option to stop attending fundraisers and dialing their “friends” for donations without risking a loss to a well-funded opponent. For those who choose to participate, fundraising would be limited to “seed money” in amounts of no more than \$100 per person to pay for campaign start-up costs. Participating candidates would also be required to show that they are serious contenders by raising qualifying contributions of \$5 each from a minimum number of state residents, based on the population of the state.

Once they are able to prove their viability, candidates will then begin to receive money from the “Fair Election Fund.” The amount of money each candidate would receive would be based on the population of the state. Candidates would also receive vouchers for a discount on television and radio time.

If enacted, the ***Fair Elections Now Act*** would restore the confidence of the voters that their federally elected officials were responsive to them. It would also allow candidates to spend less time talking to special interests and more time listening to their potential constituents. Thus I hope you will co-sponsor and support this important legislation, and that you will contact me soon to let me know what I can do to help promote this bill.

Sincerely,

(sign and print your name and
remember to include your address)

*Remember to contact your
Representative and BOTH
your Senators.*

