

Voter-Owned Elections – Portland’s Campaign Finance Fund ***More Choices. New Voices.***

Portlanders want their city officials to focus on local issues and to be free from even the perception of big money and special interest influence. They also want fair elections that are open to candidates who have broad community support and aren’t reliant on big dollar campaign donors.

The Problem and the Solution – Voters got the ball rolling in 2004, saying “No!” to a Portland million dollar candidate in a campaign season where the lion’s share (69 percent) of the money city candidates raised came in checks of \$1,000 or more, with those big spenders representing a small number (just 7 percent) of the donors.

The City Council got the message and in May 2005 passed a strong campaign finance reform called Voter-Owned Elections or VOE. Grassroots support carried the day in City Hall over opponents, most of them major donors to city campaigns.

Improving Portland Politics – Beginning in 2006 and continuing in the 2008 city elections, VOE has improved Portland politics by reducing the power of special interests and wealthy campaign contributors. Instead, everyday folks from all over the city are empowered, enabling grassroots campaigns and candidates.

All of Portland Benefits from Voter-Owned Elections

- ✓ VOE brings people back into the process: typical Portlanders are genuine *participants* in deciding who can run for city office.
- ✓ Candidates run based on *community support* rather than fundraising ability. This provides options for *new voices* in elections.
- ✓ *Voters* – not big contributors – are the focus of campaigns.
- ✓ Once elected, VOE candidates can focus on *community interests* rather than concerns of big dollar campaign donors.

2010 Referral Needs Grassroots Conversations to Defeat “Sound Bite” Opposition

Reform opponents in 2005, most of them major contributors to past city elections, hid their real concern – that they’d lose power in City Hall – and instead argued over the enactment process. To their credit the 2005 City Council did what we elected them to do – make tough and innovative decisions – and adopted Voter-Owned Elections.

This set the stage, however, for a referral on the November 2010 ballot to Portland voters from the City Council on retaining our city’s innovative Voter-Owned Elections program. This referral will bring back reform opponents. Deep-pocketed opponents couldn’t qualify a repeal initiative to the May 2006 ballot because they didn’t have the grassroots support needed to collect enough valid signatures.

But opponents will be back in 2010 to try and take away Voter-Owned Elections.

Winning a vote on VOE will require many conversations by reform supporters with colleagues, friends, and family members. Offsetting a big money “sound bite” opposition campaign will take work and we need your help.