

The Case for Voter-Owned Elections in Chapel Hill

► **Voter-Owned Elections in Chapel Hill will enhance the quality of local elections.**

- A Voter-Owned Elections program allows candidates to spend less time fundraising and more time discussing solutions to the Town's problems; it puts voters at the center of elections.
- By reducing the importance of wealth, Voter-Owned Elections reduces the influence of special interests and encourages participation by a broader range of candidates.
- A Voter-Owned Elections program is an investment in the integrity of an election process that is open to all and that encourages accountability to voters.

► **Voter-Owned Elections can address the problem of big money in local elections before the price tag becomes too large in Chapel Hill.**

- City Council and Mayoral candidates in some NC cities are spending over \$100,000 to campaign for local positions paying less than \$10,000 a year.
- The \$200,000 expenditure of "Citizens for a Better Orange County" on its anti-transfer tax campaign shows that Chapel Hill elections are vulnerable to big money spending.
- A Voter-Owned Elections program allows candidates to run competitively with small donor and public support, without going into debt or relying on special-interest donors.

► **Voter-Owned Elections are already effective in North Carolina and in U.S. cities.**

- North Carolina's public financing programs for appellate judges and three Council of State offices have won the support of all kinds of candidates, as well as a broad range of civic groups, from the NC Bankers Assn. to the Council of Churches to NAACP.
- Portland, OR and Albuquerque use VOE programs for their elections. In both cities, voter participation and the number of candidates have increased, while special interest donations have diminished.

For more info, contact Democracy North Carolina at 919-286-6000 ext. 15 or visit www.democracy-nc.org

How the VOE Program in Chapel Hill Will Work

- Participation in the program is optional.
- Candidates can receive a public grant for a campaign – but only if they collect a threshold number of \$5-to-\$20 donations from Chapel Hill voters and abide by strict spending and fundraising limits.
- Town Council candidates must raise at least 75 qualifying contributions, adding up to at least \$750 but no more than \$2,250. Mayoral candidates must raise at least 150 qualifying contributions adding up to a minimum of \$1,500 but no more than \$4,500.
- Candidates may also spend seed money: up to \$750 for the Town Council and \$1,500 for Mayor.
- The maximum public grant is \$3,000 for Town Council candidates and \$9,000 for Mayoral candidates. Grant money that is unspent must be returned.
- "Rescue funds" provide additional money to candidates facing high-spending opposition.
- A special fund finances the grants. Money is allocated to the fund as part of the Town budget (less than \$30,000 a year) and from voluntary donations and candidate reimbursements.