



N.C. Voters for Clean Elections

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PROMINENT CAMPAIGN DONORS CALL FOR ALTERNATIVE TO "CAMPAIGN MONEY CHASE"

Hundreds of large campaign donors from North Carolina's business, law, and banking professions are saying the system of private campaign fundraising is seriously broken.

At a press conference in Raleigh today, former U.S. Senator Robert Morgan and former Congressman Tim Valentine announced the formation of a group called "Campaign Donors for Campaign Reform" to promote a "Voter-Owned" public campaign program as an alternative to the current financing system. Under public financing, candidates could receive a public grant to run their campaigns— but only if they first collected hundreds of small, qualifying contributions from voters and agreed to strict spending and fundraising limits.

"Political fundraising has become a never ending money chase," said Robert Morgan who wrote the letter asking people to endorse campaign public financing reform. "The fundraising arms race threatens the integrity of our elections."

More than 700 donors, who have contributed \$7 million for NC elections since 2000, signed on as "Campaign Donors for Campaign Reform" and endorsed public financing. They include:

- *Former bank CEOs* - William Burns, John Forlines, Robert Mauldin, Thomas Storrs
- *Textile/furniture* - Crandall Bowles, G.W. Carr, Maurice Koury, Jack Lail, Allen Mebane
- *Builders*- Roddy Jones, Roger Perry, WA Parker, Harvey Gantt, Smedes York, GR Kindley
- *Former Supreme Court justices* - Jim Exum, Henry Frye, Burley Mitchell, Francis Parker
- *Medicine*- Stuart Bondurant, Dave Bruton, Jim Congleton, Nicholas Stratas, Henry Zaytoun
- *Attorneys* - Al Adams, Don Beskind, Russell Robinson, Bob Spearman, Chessie Thigpen
- *Notables* - John Hope Franklin, Wm. Friday, Phil Hanes, Dean Smith, Jeanette & Wallace Hyde, Frank Daniels, Phil Blumenthal, Assad Meymandi, Charles Sanders
- *Agribusiness* – John Prestage, Tom Gilmore, Olivia Holding, W.T. Herring II, Nick Weaver
- *Business leaders* - John McNairy, James Tanner, Mac Campbell, Carol & Bob Mattocks, Roger L. Page, Mack Pearsall, Sam Erby, J.A. Dalpiaz, Lanty Smith, H.M. Weaver
- *Former officials* - Janice Faulkner, Marshall Rauch, Ed Renfrow, Wib Gulley, Ruth Cook, Ronnie Smith, Mack Jarvis, Tom Ross, George Anderson, Gene Rogers, Sarah Morrow

Members of the group cited the “endless hustle for campaign money,” the growing role of special interest money, public perception about “pay-to-play” politics, and the rising costs of campaigns – which have tripled in the last decade – as reasons why a system of campaign public financing was needed.

Robert Morgan noted that the testimony of eyewitnesses to the day-to-day details of the current privately financed campaign system provides a compelling argument for reform. “When the very people who for years have funded North Carolina campaigns say the system is fundamentally broken, you’ve got a real problem,” Morgan said. He emphasized that the campaign donors include a mixture of Republicans, Democrats, and Independents from a wide range of professions and from every part of the state.

Democracy North Carolina, a Durham-based watchdog group, coordinated the effort to gather the endorsements in conjunction with NC Voters for Clean Elections (NCVCE), a broad coalition that includes AARP, NAACP, the NC Bankers Association, and NC Council of Churches. The group backs a public financing option for elections in North Carolina and is working this session to expand the state’s appellate judicial program to a limited number of Council of State offices and legislative seats.

Molly Beacham, Director of Development at Democracy North Carolina cited the success of voluntary public financing programs in Arizona, Maine, and North Carolina as reasons why the idea should be expanded. “These programs are working to make elections better for everybody involved – candidates, donors, and especially voters,” she said.

In 2006, eight of the 12 state Supreme Court and Court of Appeals candidates were participants in the program, and in 2004, 12 of the 16 candidates participated. New Mexico recently adopted a judicial public financing program modeled on NC, and other states, including Wisconsin, Washington, Pennsylvania, and Illinois are considering similar legislation.

Other participants cited their interest in bills this session that would expand campaign public financing to Council of State elections. “Campaign public financing would free Council of State candidates from having to raise money from the industries their office regulates, and as a result these agencies would be freed from the perception of a conflict of interest,” said Paul Stock, General Counsel for the NC Bankers Association. “This system is about increasing confidence in government and improving the state as a whole.”

Chase Foster, coordinator for NCVCE, said the event today dramatizes the widespread support for public financing. “Support for campaign public financing among campaign donors is part of a growing movement of support that now includes thousands of former elected officials, business groups, religious and civic leaders and citizens,” said Foster. “This event sends a clear message to legislators that the time for voluntary public financing in elections is now.”

SEE LIST OF DONORS AT: <http://www.democracy-nc.org/downloads/CD4CR-2pgList-May2007.pdf>

SEE SUPPORT STATEMENT: <http://www.democracy-nc.org/downloads/CD4CRSupportStatement.pdf>