



Legislation Text

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Clerk 4/15/2007

A MOTION expressing the intent of the council to research the subject of
campaign financing.

WHEREAS, increasing amounts of money are being spent nationwide each year on election campaigns,
and

WHEREAS, many elected officials and candidates for elective office are therefore finding it necessary
to spend increasing amounts of time on fundraising and less time interacting with voters and engaging in a
vigorous public debate about the issues of the day, and

WHEREAS, the increasing dependence of election campaigns on large financial contributions has
reduced public trust in government by, at a minimum, creating the perception that wealthier citizens and groups
hold a disproportionate influence over elected officials and candidates for office and, therefore, on public
policy, and

WHEREAS, the current campaign finance system discourages competition for office by providing an
advantage to incumbents and experienced fundraisers, and

WHEREAS, the current campaign finance system thereby presents ongoing barriers to effective
political participation by those who lack significant disposable income or the ability to raise large sums of
money, and

WHEREAS, public financing would recast the political campaign as a debate about ideas and
experience rather than fundraising ability, and

WHEREAS, public financing would promote broader participation in civic life by reducing the barriers

to running for public office or meaningfully participating in politics, and

WHEREAS, public financing would not infringe upon the First Amendment protection of free speech because acceptance of public funds would be voluntary and candidates could choose not to receive public funds, and

WHEREAS, seven states and two major cities have instituted systems for public financing of some of their elections, and

WHEREAS, bills have been introduced in the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate to provide full public financing for congressional elections;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

The council intends to conduct research on the following subjects and to report the results of its research by May 12, 2008:

- A. Review of existing local law pertaining to campaign financing;
- B. Review of trends in the cost of campaigns for elective local offices;
- C. Options for updating local law, including, but not limited to, significantly lowering maximum contribution limits and exploring public financing and matching funds, with a view toward the experience of other jurisdictions that have implemented public financing for campaigns;
- D. Review of lessons learned in the seven states and two cities where public campaign financing has been implemented, including identifying any potential obstacles and impediments to implementation of public financing of campaigns.
- E. The history of public financing in Seattle and King County prior to 1993;
- F. Estimates of the costs associated with such updates, including implementation

and oversight of public campaign financing; and

G. Options for funding those costs.