

2022 Issue Paper: Money in Politics

Position Statement

The League of Women Voters of Washington, as stated in its Program in Action 2021-2023, believes that:

- The funding level of the PDC [Public Disclosure Commission] should provide for sufficient staff to audit all appropriate reports including those of lobbyists. Public education should be a funded function of the PDC. (CF-1)
- Regular and full disclosure of campaign finances for both ballot issues and candidates is necessary before primary and general elections. (EL-4)

The LWV of the United States, as stated in its [Impact on Issues 2020-2022](#), supports:

- Public financing of elections, either voluntary or mandatory, in which candidates must abide by reasonable spending limits.
- Enhanced enforcement of campaign finance laws that includes changes to ensure that regulatory agencies are properly funded, staffed, and structured to avoid partisan deadlock in the decision-making process.
- Abolishing Super PACs (political action committees) which may raise unlimited sums of money from corporations, unions, and individuals but is not permitted to contribute to or coordinate directly with parties or candidates.
- Restrictions on direct donations and bundling by lobbyists, which may include monetary limits as well as other regulations.

Summary of Issues for the 2022 Legislative Session

- **Public financing of campaigns**
Because of the high expense of campaigns, the possibility of running for office is often out of reach for someone who does not have significant personal wealth or access to those who do. It also makes it extremely difficult for a candidate to not accept corporate donations. An alternative to the situation in other states is to provide some public funds to legitimate candidates.
- **Closing the “revolving door”**
Currently, it is possible for a high-level government employee or elected official to leave their job one day and returned the next as a lobbyist. This practice allows undue influence by special interest groups. It also enables the corrupt practice of lobbyists promising lucrative jobs to elected officials or legislators in exchange for a favorable vote or decision. We have and will continue to support a bill (SB 5170) that requires a one-year cooling-off period before high-ranking government officials, including elected officials, could return as lobbyists.
- **Public Disclosure Commission Request Legislation**
Initial Draft: <https://www.pdc.wa.gov/engage/news/send-us-your-feedback-proposed-legislation>

Revised Draft: <https://www.pdc.wa.gov/engage/commission-meetings/regular-commission-meeting-october-28-2021>

- **Updating campaign reporting**
Moving the deadlines for reporting from 21 and 7 days before election to every week in the month prior to election day. This ensures voters have weekly access to updated campaign financing information to match the longer period ballots are available for voting.
- **Disclosing grassroots lobbying**
Timely disclosure of campaigns and funding spent to influence legislation consistent with what is required for election campaigns.
- **Including disclaimers on misleading advertising**
Clarify for the voter when political ads are endorsing a candidate that is running in a different election or a race other than the current one, and ads that encourage votes for a person who is not a candidate as of the date the ad is run.

Supporting the Public Disclosure Commission

The PDC has an enormous task in tracking and regulating campaign donations and expenditures as well as lobbyists' activities. Since its inception, it has been underfunded and understaffed and did not have the authority to be as effective as possible. Each session the League strives to ensure that the agency has sufficient funding for operations, and the flexibility to fund technical improvements to information systems.

Issue Chair: Cindy Madigan, 360-305-7951, cmadigan@lwvwa.org