

## Equal Voices Event - Fair Election Funds in Illinois

### Fair Election Funds give democracy back to the people.

*“Public financing gave me the opportunity to compete and succeed, allowing me to represent individuals whose voices are historically ignored.”*

- *Letitia James*, the first African-American woman to be elected NY Attorney General.

**Not everyone has an equal voice in our government.** Only 3% of campaign funds in Illinois elections come from “small” donations of \$150 or less, while megadonors and party organizations flood campaigns with contributions in the tens of thousands or even millions. The result is a government that isn’t representative of voters - or responsive enough to their needs.

**Illinoisans are ready to join the nationwide Fair Elections movement.** The Illinois Senate passed a public financing bill in 2017. In 2015, 79% of Chicago voters approved an advisory referendum that would establish a Fair Elections Fund, but the city council failed to act. It’s time to join New York, Los Angeles, Seattle, Denver, Baltimore, and other jurisdictions that are using this vital reform to create a more ethical and equitable government that’s accountable to the people it serves.

**Fair Election Funds increase candidate and donor diversity.** Public financing programs have been shown to increase the number of women and people of color in elected office, and to increase the diversity of people who donate to campaigns and participate in the political process. The impact is particularly pronounced in historically disenfranchised communities; New York City’s program caused donor participation in minority communities to increase by as much as *twenty-four times*.

**Fair Election Funds reduce pay to play politics.** When candidates rely on ordinary citizens to fund their campaigns instead of special interests and machine insiders, the whole system changes. The potential for “pay to play” corruption is reduced, corrupt politicians are less insulated from competition, and representatives have more incentive to enact equitable policies that benefit everyone, not just a select few. Officials become accountable to the constituents who need them the most, not those who pay them the most.

#### How it works.

- **Small donor matching:** a small donation is turned into a large one with matching public funds. For example, a 9:1 match turns a \$10 contribution into a \$100 contribution
- **“Democracy vouchers”:** provide voters with a set amount of public funds to contribute to their favored candidate

**Want to learn more? Here’s how to reach us:**

**Mary Miro**, Reform for Illinois, Reform for Illinois, [mary@reformforillinois.org](mailto:mary@reformforillinois.org)

**Alisa Kaplan**, Policy Director, Reform for Illinois, [alisa@reformforillinois.org](mailto:alisa@reformforillinois.org)

**Audra Wilson**, Executive Director, League of Women Voters

**Elizabeth Lindquist**, Issues Specialist for Campaign Finance Reform for League of Women Voters of Illinois.

**Hannah Kim**, Public Interest Advocate, [hkim@illinoispirg.org](mailto:hkim@illinoispirg.org)

**Abe Scarr**, State Director, Illinois, PIRG, [abe@illinoispirg.org](mailto:abe@illinoispirg.org)

**Jay Young**, Executive Director, Common Cause, [JYoung@commoncause.org](mailto:JYoung@commoncause.org)

**Georgia Logothetis**, Common Cause, [GLogothetis@commoncause.org](mailto:GLogothetis@commoncause.org)

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#### **Additional Resources:**

**LWVUS Position In Brief: Campaign Finance Reform** | <https://www.lwvil.org/campaign-finance.html>

#### **Who's funding state and local campaigns in Illinois**

Illinois Sunshine by Reform for Illinois | <https://illinoissunshine.org/>

#### **How to give everyone an equal voice in our elections with public campaign financing**

The Brennan Center | [www.brennancenter.org/issues/public-financing](http://www.brennancenter.org/issues/public-financing)

#### **Who my local, state, and federal representatives are**

Common Cause | [www.commoncause.org/find-your-representative/](http://www.commoncause.org/find-your-representative/)