



Center for Governmental Studies *Solutions for Democracy*

Campaign Finance and Political Reform Accomplishments

Introduction

Since its founding in 1983, the Center for Governmental Studies (CGS) has become one of the most successful and effective campaign finance and political reform organizations in the nation. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, CGS' work includes public education, research, books, reports, model laws, statutory drafting and legislative and judicial consulting.

CGS wrote, proposed or helped generate dozens of new campaign finance and political reform laws, ordinances and ballot initiatives. CGS experts respond to hundreds of requests for assistance each year. CGS staff members have testified in legislative, judicial and administrative proceedings as expert witnesses in campaign finance, ballot initiatives and judicial elections. CGS created important innovations in campaign finance, ethics, ballot initiative and judicial reform. CGS has been included in numerous U.S. Supreme Court *amicus curiae* brief on cases addressing campaign finance reform. CGS drafted numerous successful model laws and regulations to assist state and local agencies and civic groups pursue meaningful political reform.

Campaign Finance and Political Reform Innovations

CGS is a nationally acknowledged source of creative new approaches to traditional campaign finance and political reform problems. CGS innovations are being adopted in a number of state and local jurisdictions. Some of these innovations include:

- **Full Public Financing** or “clean money” laws that eliminate the influence of large private contributions altogether.
- **Partial Public Financing** laws that encourage candidates to raise small contributions by matching them at higher ratios with public funds.
- **Small Contributor PACs** that can give candidates somewhat larger contributions, provided that those PACs are broad based, have a large membership and receive all their funds in small (e.g., under \$25) amounts.
- **Aggregate contribution limits** that prevent candidates from receiving more than a limited percentage (e.g., 25%) of their total contributions from all non-individual (PACs, corporations, labor unions) contributors combined.
- **Anti-laundering reforms** that require the recipients of laundered contributions to turn them over to the government (rather than returning them to the contributor or keeping them).
- **Anti-bundling provisions** which diminish the undue influence of individuals who raise

and deliver large numbers of contributions.

- **Spending ceilings** that are lifted to offset excessive spending by wealthy opponents or independent expenditure committees.
- **Techniques to lower the costs** of public financing, such as only providing public funds to candidates whose opponents have also qualified for public funds.
- **Incentives to limit candidate spending** without public financing – such as “variable contribution limits,” which have been adopted in California, Kentucky, Rhode Island and a number of cities.
- **Model Electronic Disclosure** laws that require candidates to file their campaign contribution and expenditure data electronically.
- **Free ballot pamphlet statements** for judicial candidates coupled with restrictions on deceptive slate mailers.
- **Seed money exemptions** that enable new candidates to jump-start their campaigns with larger up-front contributions.
- **Ballot initiative reforms** to encourage flexibility, improve drafting and initiate early interactions with the legislature.
- **Redistricting reforms** to improve the fairness of political district line drawing.
- **Ballot and sample ballot designations** that indicate which candidates have accepted expenditure ceilings.
- **Innovative disclosure requirements** that require all advertisements by independent expenditure committees to identify their largest contributors.
- **Record keeping provisions** that prevent a candidate from cashing a contributor’s check where the contributor’s occupation and employer are not disclosed.
- **New enforcement provisions** that create citizen rights of action to sue for campaign violations and impose stiffer criminal penalties.

Adopted Measures across the United States

CGS has prepared a number of successful political reform laws, ordinances and ballot measures for jurisdictions across the U.S. These include legislation and regulations that have been adopted, as well as proposals which have been introduced or are pending. The following lists some of the campaign finance reforms enacted as a direct result of CGS efforts.

- **Connecticut** – Assisted citizen groups and government agencies with comprehensive campaign finance law, including full public financing program, passed by the State Legislature. (2005)
- **Albuquerque, NM** -- Assisted citizen groups in drafting public financing measure that received overwhelming voter approval. (2005)
- **New York City, NY** – Provided research and recommendations that provided basis for City Council to adopt three laws, including requirements that all city council candidates, not just candidates who accept public financing, adhere to contribution limits and submit campaign disclosure reports to the City Campaign Finance Board. (2004)
- **Miami-Dade County, FL** – Assisted Miami-Dade County draft local government public campaign financing bill, adopted by the County Board of Commissioners. (2001)
- **American Bar Association** – Prepared Model Code of Judicial Conduct, including conflicts of interest and campaign finance regulations. (2000)

- **Massachusetts** – Helped proponents draft Clean Money Initiative enacted by voters. (1998)
- **Vermont** – Helped proponents draft full public financing legislation. (1998)
- **Arizona** – Helped public interest coalition draft a new state public financing law, adopted by state election. (1998)
- **Maryland** – Adopted Electronic Filing law, based on “White Paper” published by CGS. (1997)
- **Texas** – Enacted new campaign finance law for judicial elections based on variable contribution limits. (1996)
- **Maine Initiative 3** – Full public financing law, adopted by voter approval of statewide ballot initiative. (1996)

Key Measures in California

Through its California Governance Project, CGS has prepared a number of successful political reform laws, ordinances and ballot measures for state and local California jurisdictions. These include legislation, ordinances and regulations that have been adopted, as well as proposals that have been introduced or are pending. Following are some of the campaign finance laws, ordinances and ballot initiatives that have been adopted in California as a direct result of CGS efforts.

- **San Francisco** – Helped draft partial public campaign financing legislation for mayoral candidates. Approved by Board of Supervisors. (2006)
- **Pasadena** -- Served as a consultant to a city task force, which successfully asked the voters to amend the Taxpayer Protection Act, a measure that regulates decisions of council members after they receive campaign contributions, income or gifts from individuals or groups appearing before them. (2006)
- **San Francisco** – Worked with Board of Supervisors to pass legislation addressing electioneering communications. Legislation passed Board and was signed into law by the Mayor. (2005)
- **Novato** – Novato City Council passed comprehensive proposal requiring additional disclosure. CGS staff testified many times before the City Council, which adopted the measure. (2004)
- **Los Angeles** – Assisted the Los Angeles City Ethics Commission in drafting a package of amendments to the local public campaign financing law, based on the CGS report, *Eleven Years of Reform*, adopted by the Los Angeles City Council. (2003)
- **Sacramento (city)** – Provided technical assistance in drafting public financing ordinance and testified several times before council regarding law adopted by Sacramento City Council. (2003)
- **Ventura County** – Assisted County Supervisors in drafting a comprehensive campaign financing law, adopted by the Ventura County Board of Supervisors. The law includes voluntary spending limits linked to variable contribution limits, increased campaign finance disclosure and other related provisions. (2003)
- **Kern County** – Assisted County in drafting successful campaign finance reform law adopted by voters. Measure imposes contribution limits on all county candidates, allows candidates to accept voluntary spending limits in exchange for no filing fees. (2002)

- **California Proposition 208** – Drafted “Political Reform Act of 1996,” sweeping statewide campaign finance reform ballot initiative. Contained expenditure ceilings, “variable contribution limits,” true disclosure in campaign advertising, bans on off-year fundraising, limits on total and aggregate non-individual contributions and other reforms (passed by 61% of the voters in November 1996, superseded by Proposition 34 in 2000).
- **California Fair Political Practices Commission Regulations** – Series of state regulations adopted to implement Proposition 208, including definitions of lobbyists and affiliated entities, revolving door restrictions, application to judges, etc. (1996 to 2000)
- **San Francisco County Proposition O** – Measure adopted by voters that established public financing and spending limits for county races. (2000)
- **Oakland** – Public financing and spending limits. (1999)
- **Los Angeles County** – Variable contribution limits with expenditure ceilings, based on CGS recommendations and model laws, adopted by 77% vote. (1996)
- **San Jose** – Variable contribution limits with expenditure ceilings, based on CGS’ recommendations and model laws. Advisory referendum approved by voters. (1996)
- **Burbank** – \$250 contribution limit ordinance, adopted by city council. (1996)

Conclusion

CGS has published more than 20 major books and reports on campaign finance, political and media reform. CGS distributes these and other CGS studies to citizens, civic groups and elections officials throughout the nation. Most of the reports are available on the CGS website, www.cgs.org or by calling the Center for Governmental Studies, (310) 470-6590.