

HB 1773-FN-A – relative to campaign contributions and expenditures

Rm. 308

Tuesday, January 16, 2018

Time: 4:06

Madam Chair and members of the committee:

It is clear to the great majority of Americans, including Granite Staters, and especially those of us in the campaign finance reform arena, that there is too much money in politics, and that the result is an ever-growing reliance on, and loyalty to, the donor class. Indeed, as Americans, we do not have to connect the dots in that regard, because members of congress recently were blatantly honest in their public remarks about their duty to pass legislation in order to appease their donors, prevent retaliation, and to improve their prospects for future campaign financing.

This Big Money corruption of our elections system:

- 1) Has minimized the voice of ordinary citizens. A court ruling from 41 years ago equated money with speech. Translated, that means that those with limited financial means have limited speech. I believe that limitation includes everyone in this room.
- 2) Has created very unfavorable conditions for candidates of ordinary means to run for office. In fact, aspiring to elected office is becoming more and more restricted to those with money, or connected to those who have it or can raise it, and with it comes the requisite quid pro quo.
- 3) Has resulted in gridlock, as elected officials must pander to their donors.

The UNH survey center included a question in its Fall 2016 Granite State Poll designed to gauge residents' opinions on a proposed campaign finance law. In that survey, 67 percent of residents favored a proposed new law to help reduce the

influence of big money in elections (46% strongly, 21% somewhat). Only 7% opposed such a law.

Quoting from a PPP survey conducted just last month:

“A new Public Policy Polling survey finds that overwhelming bipartisan majorities believe big money in New Hampshire elections is a problem, and support Civic Dollars to fix this issue. Eighty percent of voters—including 79% of Democrats, 74% of Republicans, and 85% of Independents—believe big money in NH elections is a problem. A bipartisan majority (63%)—including 70% of Democrats, 50% of Republicans, and 68% of Independents—also supports a proposal to give each registered voter four \$25 certificates, or Civic Dollars, to donate to political candidates who refuse to accept money from large donors and out-of-state donors. Majorities of Democrats (71%), Republicans (59%), and Independents (66%) would be more likely to support a candidate who funds his campaign with Civic Dollars than a candidate who funds his campaign with large and out-of-state donations.”

This bill would elevate the political voices of voters by providing them with the means to participate easily, directly and meaningfully in our elections. I believe that with a civic dollar in hand, voters will be more inclined to do the necessary research to vet the array of candidates before them in order to assign their dollars appropriately.

This bill is a hybrid of refining current law with a new section that administers the civic dollar component. It is an opportunity for this legislature to empower citizen involvement. I urge all in this room to take the time to refine this bill as needed, and, consistent with the wishes of NH residents to create a system that reduces the influence of large and out-of-state campaign contributions, pass it favorably out of committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob Perry, Strafford, NH