

THE NEW HAMPSHIRE VOTER-OWNED ELECTIONS ACT

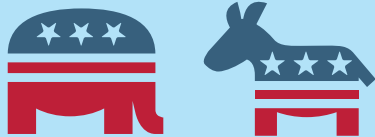


Voters agree:
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Voters overwhelmingly agree that our current campaign finance system is broken. The root problem is that the system is based entirely on *private* contributions, often large donations from a small, unrepresentative slice of the electorate. We need a competing system that allows candidates to run viable campaigns with small contributions from ordinary citizens—*Voter-Owned Elections*.

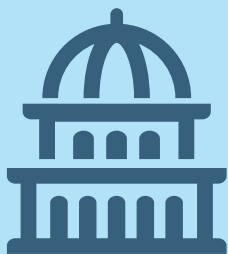
The system envisioned in this bill reflects the common values and collaborative effort of 6 New Hampshire legislators, 3 Republicans and 3 Democrats. In this very purple state, bipartisanship is key.

The basic model. The proposed system is entirely voluntary. Qualifying candidates for governor and executive council are eligible to receive “Voter Dollars” and, if they win their primary contests, additional grants. In election years, registered voters receive four certificates, worth 25 Voter Dollars each, that they may contribute to participating candidates of their choice. The Voter Dollar approach is truly transformational, incentivizing candidates to seek contributions from a broad swath of the electorate, and incentivizing everyday citizens to identify candidates who deserve their support. New Hampshire's very late primary makes it difficult for candidates to raise enough money for the general election from small donations alone. Grants for primary winners solve that problem.



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Qualification. To become eligible for Voter Dollars, candidates need to first show that they can generate enough public support to mount a viable campaign. An executive council candidate must collect at least 500 private contributions of \$5 to \$125 each, a gubernatorial candidate 2,500 contributions of \$5 to \$250 each. Qualifying contributions must come from registered voters residing within the candidate's district. In addition, the candidate must publicly disavow “independent expenditures,” funds spent by outside groups or individuals on the candidate's behalf.



**Voter
Dollars:** Truly
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Requirements of candidates. Participating candidates must agree not to accept aggregate private contributions from any one donor greater than \$125 (for council) and \$250 (for governor) for the primary, similar amounts for the general election. No more than 10% of private contribution totals may come from out-of-state sources, and candidates may not accept contributions from businesses and lobbyists. There are also strict limits on the use of personal funds and funds carried over from previous campaigns, plus caps on the amount any one candidate can receive from Voter Dollars.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is participation mandatory?

No. The program is entirely voluntary.

Why is this system limited to campaigns for governor and executive council?

The governor and executive council are responsible for far reaching decisions affecting how New Hampshire tax dollars are spent. Accordingly, they are targets of intense lobbying and the recipients of considerable campaign support from organizations and individuals with a stake in those decisions. And from a practical standpoint, starting with just six races is a manageable way to determine the system's strengths and weaknesses. Adding legislative races to the Voter-Owned Elections system is a logical next step, and the bill contains provisions for that.

Is this a good use of taxpayer money?

Yes. The Voter-Owned Elections system is a long-term investment. It will save taxpayer dollars by reducing the pressure on officeholders to grant favors to special interests. We pay through the nose for the system we have now.

Has this approach been successful in other states?

Yes. Besides the states of Maine, Connecticut, and Arizona, a number of cities have instituted public financing. We have the benefit of knowing which approaches have worked and which have not.

How much will it cost?

The most current estimate is \$2.7 million annually. Much depends on levels of participation. Early years of the program may cost significantly less.

Where will the money come from?

Funding sources are varied: voluntary donations, increased registration fees for lobbyists and PACs, unspent public contributions to campaigns; fines for violations of election laws; interest; general funds not otherwise appropriated.

Will the program provide enough support for participating candidates to win?

Yes. Winning candidates don't need to raise the *most* money; they just need *enough* money. All dollar figures can be adjusted for inflation, and the bill contains provisions for altering grant amounts and the various limits if necessary.

Participating candidates are required to publicly disavow independent expenditures on their behalf. How can they compete against the flood of outside money being spent in support of nonparticipating opponents?

Voters are becoming increasingly leery of the power that independent spending groups hold over the candidates they support. We are at a point where a candidate's disavowal of outside money offers a significant political advantage over a nonparticipating opponent who makes no such claim.



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