

Campaign Finance and Ethics Organizations Endorse the Charter Review Commission's Democracy Dollars Proposal

We, the undersigned organizations, write to fully endorse the Democracy Dollars proposal before the Austin Charter Review Commission. Our organizations have worked on campaign finance and ethics reform for many years and have developed in-depth knowledge and expertise in these areas. The Austin Democracy Dollars proposal is well-written and well-thought out; it would strengthen our democratic institutions in Austin and increase people's faith in their government. The proposal would:

- 1) Enhance Austin's newly-adopted 10-1 district system's goal of fair representation by ensuring candidates' donations come from their district and not a few wealthy outside areas.
- 2) Ensure that our city's government represents the will of the public and not wealthy donors and special interests; and
- 3) Encourage Austin mayoral and city council candidates to spend their time with their constituents, rather than wealthy donors.

We believe this proposal has two major advantages to other approaches: 1) it allows non-wealthy Austinites to contribute to candidates of their choosing and to become engaged in our city elections; and 2) it allows non-wealthy candidates with strong community support to run competitively with donations from voters in their districts.

The proposal is clearly legal, based on Supreme Court precedent from Buckley v. Valeo in 1976. See also Elster v. City of Seattle (King County District Court, Nov. 2, 2017) (upholding Seattle's Democracy Voucher program). The proposal has proven itself in Seattle and similar proposals have been recommended by campaign finance experts for years.

We strongly support the Austin Democracy Dollars' proposal and ask that the Commission recommend it to the Council and that the Council put it on the ballot in November 2018 for the voters to decide.

Common Cause Texas
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Public Citizen Texas
Adrian Shelly
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Common Ground for Texans
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