
LOS ANGELES CITY ETHICS COMMISSION

N E W S

...preserving the public trust

For Immediate Release:

Tuesday, November 14, 2006

For Information Contact:

David Tristan (213) 978-1960

CITY ETHICS COMMISSION APPROVES FULL PUBLIC FINANCING FOR CITY ELECTIONS

Commission to Send Recommendations to City Council for Further Review

At its regular monthly meeting today, the Los Angeles City Ethics Commission voted to approve a voluntary system of full public financing for candidates seeking elective City office. Following a lengthy public hearing, Commissioners voted 4-1 to send the package to the City Council for further study by both the Council and the City's network of Neighborhood Councils. Making it clear that they considered the plan a comprehensive roadmap for further consideration of the issues, several Commissioners also expressed the view that the Council should be open to changes to the Commission's recommendations based on Neighborhood Council feedback. In particular, how much candidates should have to raise to qualify for the program, and how much of those qualifying contributions should be raised within their own districts, were two issues Commissioners cited for additional public input. Built on provisions similar to those in the City's current voter-authorized Public Matching Funds system, the proposal approved by the Commission today is designed to encourage broader participation in the electoral process, to free candidates to campaign on the issues and without the demands of excessive fundraising, and to reduce the influence of special interests.

"This comprehensive package represents a vital step toward more open and accountable City elections," said Commission President Gil Garcetti. "By sending the package to the City Council for further consideration, we hope to generate even more public engagement throughout the City on these important issues."

Under the Commission's plan, which was developed over a series of ten Commission hearings and three public workshops by Commission staff, candidates would receive a grant of public funds to run their campaigns after first demonstrating their viability as candidates by raising

200 N. Spring Street • City Hall 24th Floor • Los Angeles, CA 90012 • (213) 978-1960
ethics.lacity.org

limited amounts of qualifying money from sources within the City. Individuals choosing to run as publicly funded candidates would also be required to limit their overall spending and use of personal funds, agree to debate their opponents, and agree to forego all other private fundraising in their campaigns. After considering how the new program would be funded, the Commission turned down a Chief Legislative Analyst recommendation to fund the program in part through a special parcel tax. Instead, the Commission recommended that the program be funded through the City’s General Fund.

As recommended by the Ethics Commission, key provisions of the proposal include the following:

- **To qualify for the program, candidates must raise a threshold amount of “qualifying contributions” to demonstrate their viability.** The amount a candidate must raise is the same as is currently required to qualify for partial public financing. City Council candidates must raise \$25,000, candidates for City Attorney or Controller must raise \$75,000, and Mayoral candidates must raise \$150,000. The contributions must come from individuals who reside within the City of Los Angeles and may not exceed \$250 for Council candidates or \$500 for Citywide candidates.
- **The fundraising window for City elections would be shortened.** Currently, candidates can begin fundraising either 18 or 24 months before a primary election. Under the Commission’s proposal, all candidates could begin fundraising 12 months before a primary election.
- **Eligible candidates would receive grants to fund their campaigns in primary and general elections.** They could also qualify for additional reserve funds in a general election that could be spent only to offset independent expenditures and large personal spending by a nonparticipating opponent. The grant amounts vary, based on the office sought:

Office Sought	Grant (Primary)	Grant (General)	Reserve (General)
Mayor	\$3,500,000	\$3,000,000	\$1,000,000
City Attorney	\$1,500,000	\$1,200,000	\$400,000
Controller	\$1,000,000	\$750,000	\$250,000
City Council	\$350,000	\$300,000	\$100,000

- **Like the existing matching funds program, which was authorized and funded by the voters in June 1990, the Commission recommends voter approval to authorize and fund this new program.** The Commission has estimated that between \$9 million and \$15 million per fiscal year would be required to successfully fund the new program. The Commission recommends that a General Fund appropriation of \$11.6 million per year be added to the City Charter.

For more information, please visit the Commission’s Web site at <http://ethics.lacity.org> or contact the City Ethics Commission at (213) 978-1960.

#

200 N. Spring Street • City Hall 24th Floor • Los Angeles, CA 90012 • (213) 978-1960
ethics.lacity.org