

# COMMON CAUSE

[ *News from the front lines* ]



## **BOB EDGAR LEADING COMMON CAUSE**

Meet Bob Edgar, the new president of Common Cause.

Edgar arrived over the summer as president and CEO of Common Cause. The former general secretary of the National Churches of Christ USA, he replaces Chellie Pingree, who left the organization to run for elected office in Maine. Edgar is also a former six-term congressman who represented the Seventh Congressional District outside of Pennsylvania from 1975 to 1987, before losing a US Senate race to Sen. Arlen Specter (R-PA).

That race fueled Edgar's frustration with the undue influence of money in politics and he became an active supporter of public financing of political campaigns, today a centerpiece of Common Cause's agenda. Ironically, Sen. Specter, Edgar's opponent in 1986, is a close ally of Common Cause's efforts to pass federal legislation that would establish a voluntary system of public funding for congressional races.

Edgar has a Bachelor of Arts degree from Lycoming College, Williamsport, Pa., and a master of divinity degree from the Theological School of Drew University, Madison, N.J. He has also been president of the Claremont School of Theology. He holds four honorary doctoral degrees.

Bob is also the author of "Middle Church," a call to progressive people of faith to take back the moral high ground from the right-wing extremists and make America a better and more united country.

Edgar can be reached at [redgar@commoncause.org](mailto:redgar@commoncause.org)

## **GET IT STRAIGHT IN 2008**

Get It Straight in 2008!

That's a phrase you're going to hear from us a lot in the New Year.

After years of war, corruption, abuse of power, and disregard for the Constitution and the rule of law, the American spirit has taken quite a beating. It's time for fundamental change and renewal.

Common Cause in 2008 will fight for real change. Our energy and resources will go to exposing abuse of power and corruption, passing public financing reforms in at least five more states, making our election systems more secure and accessible and fighting to maintain a free and open Internet.

Check out our website at [www.getitstraight.org](http://www.getitstraight.org) for more details.

We will make 2008 a year of real progress on public financing – the only solution that can genuinely break the grip that powerful special interests have on American politics. And, after years of disregard for the fundamental principles of our Democracy, we will make sure the rule of law is restored and the constitutional balance of power is strengthened.

We'll keep you posted.

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# in the STATES

## "CLEAN ELECTIONS" MOVING IN THE STATES

We are working at all levels – federal, state, local – to lessen the role of big money in politics, to open up the process, and to change policy outcomes for the public good, rather than for special interests.

“Clean elections” is a reform that provides a voluntary system of public funding for candidates, who in turn agree to abide by strict fundraising and spending limits. Public funding ensures that candidates are beholden to all voters, not just those who give large contributions to their campaigns. Clean elections transform campaigns into true contests of ideas and merit, rather than fundraising prowess.

Simply put, it works. Three states – Maine, Connecticut and Arizona – have instituted the systems for all statewide and legislative elections. Publicly financed elections for some public offices, including judgeships, exist in four additional states, and the solution has been implemented in two major cities.

Clean elections also draw rave reviews from those who run under the system, while producing more diverse fields of candidates. Voters like it because it means candidates spend significantly less time fundraising and more focused on constituents’ concerns.

Common Cause is working to build support for clean elections legislation in Congress, as well as in several states in 2008 and 2009.

- In Maryland, we came within one vote of passing a clean elections bill earlier this year, giving us momentum to succeed in the 2008 session.
- In New Mexico, we’re working to expand existing clean elections law for certain offices to the state legislature and gubernatorial elections. After a victory in Albuquerque in 2006, we are looking to pass clean elections in Sante Fe this year.
- California’s campaign finance laws are among the weakest in the nation and our goal is to pass clean elections reform statewide. We will be building toward that goal by working to pass clean elections in some cities, including Los Angeles, San Jose and San Diego.

## CALIFORNIA COMMON CAUSE LEADING EFFORT TO IMPROVE REDISTRICTING

California Common Cause has taken the first step to place a ballot measure before voters in November 2008 to reform California’s redistricting method.

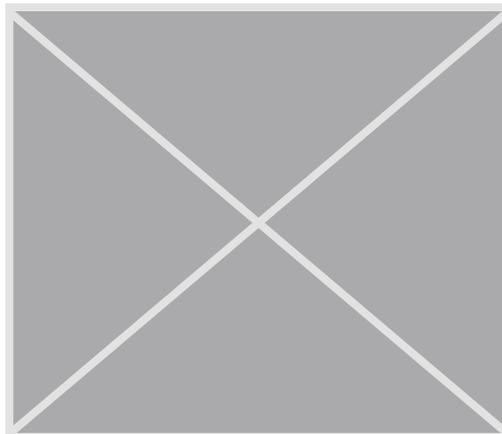
The proposal would create a 14-member independent citizen commission to redraw state legislative district lines, replacing the current system of self-interested state legislators drawing boundary lines to protect their turf.

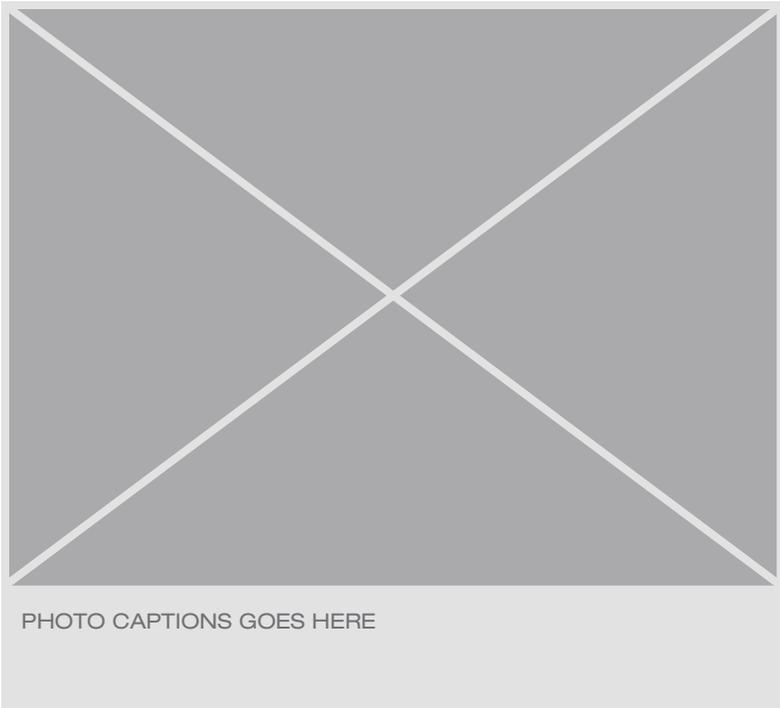
According to Kathay Feng, executive director of California Common Cause, “This is a reform that puts voters back in control. Right now, we have a system in which elected officials choose the voters they want to represent, not the other way around, as it should be.”

The proposed ballot initiative would guarantee that the maps will be debated in the open with public meetings — every aspect of the process would be open to scrutiny by the public and the press.

Visit the California Common Cause website to learn more and get involved:

<http://www.commoncause.org/california>





## VOLUNTEERS, YOUTH INTERNS: THE SPIRIT OF COMMON CAUSE

The Washington Connection is the not so hidden secret of Common Cause. Our interns and volunteers combat special interests' influence on the political system and public policy using shoe leather, telephones, email, blogs and a whole lot of coffee. They act as a liaison between the "inside" legislative campaigns, in DC and the states, and our "outside" grassroots activists everywhere.

There are countless examples of when the Washington Connection has been pivotal to our success: the 2002 landmark McCain-Feingold reform law and public financing in Arizona, Connecticut, Maine, New Mexico, and North Carolina, passed due to pressure on senators and representatives from our members.

We have an exciting program to engage young activists in our campaigns, working in collaboration with Democracy Matters, Mobilize.org and other youth engagement organizations. We are proud sponsors and participants in Mobilize.org's *Party for the Presidency* and the *Democracy Matters Summit* this winter.

Contact Ian Storrar to learn more about the Washington Connection and youth engagement.

Call him at (202) 736-5755, or email at [istorrar@commoncause.org](mailto:istorrar@commoncause.org).

## BIRD-DOGGING IN IOWA

In an effort to raise the profile of public financing in the 2008 presidential race, Common Cause launched a campaign in Iowa, hiring staff and recruiting dozens of new volunteers to "bird dog" the presidential candidates by showing up at public events and asking them about their support for public financing of congressional races.

Working in coordination with former Rep. Berkeley Bedell (D-IA), and former Rep. Jim Leach (R-IA), Common Cause jumped into the political hotbed that is Iowa leading up the nation's first caucuses in December. We recruited more than 100 activists who trailed candidates and asked them at public events about their support for public financing. Common Cause President Bob Edgar traveled to Iowa to meet with the activists, and visited the editorial board of the *Des Moines Register* for a discussion of the issue.

**IT'S TIME TO TAKE  
THIS MONEY  
OUT OF CIRCULATION.**



Until we get big special-interest money out of politics our elected officials will never be free to tackle health care or global warming or any of the problems we all desperately want solved.

Depending on wealthy special interests to fund American elections creates a political system that works for big donors, but not for the rest of us. It corrupts our democracy. It may ultimately destroy it.

And the American people know it. They're fed up and demanding change. 74% want public financing for congressional candidates who agree to spending limits and accept only small individual contributions. They want big money out of politics. *Now!*

And now there's a bill before Congress – the Fair Elections Now Act – that gets the job done. Do you know where the candidates stand on this hot-button issue? Common Cause has done your homework for you. Check the chart below. If your favorites are on the wrong side, take the time to set them straight.

Make sure they know how important it is that they support Fair Elections Now!

GETTING BIG MONEY OUT OF POLITICS: WHERE DOES EACH CANDIDATE STAND?	
Candidates who have committed in writing to work for public financing of elections:	
Candidates who speak favorably about public financing but have made no written commitment:	
Candidates who appear to have no position:	
Candidates who have indicated that they oppose public financing:	

By mail, Common Cause requested each candidate's position on public financing of elections. We report this position as of 12/15/07. This is not an endorsement of any candidate.

COMMON CAUSE [www.CommonCause.org/bigmoney](http://www.CommonCause.org/bigmoney)  
Building Power. Accelerating.

## EDGAR ESTABLISHES PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL

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In his ongoing effort to reach out to new voices, ideas and perspectives, Common Cause President Bob Edgar has established the Common Cause President's Council, an informal body of supporters, donors, politicians and others who will meet periodically to discuss the organization's work.

The council held its first day-long meeting Monday, Nov. 26 in our Washington, DC office, attended by more than 75 people, plus dozens of others who dialed into the meeting. If you have an interest in participating, please contact Bob's assistant, Eric Williams [ewilliams@commoncause.org](mailto:ewilliams@commoncause.org)

## A GIFT THAT PROVIDES YOU WITH INCOME

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Would you like to make a gift in support of Common Cause Education Fund (CCEF) **and** would you like to receive income for the rest of your life?

If the answer to this question is "yes," you will want to consider the establishment of a **charitable gift annuity** with CCEF. This is a simple contract between you and the Common Cause Education Fund (CCEF). You transfer cash or appreciated securities to CCEF, and we pay you a fixed income for life—part of which is tax-free. In most instances, the income you receive from this gift will exceed the income you would receive from a stock dividend, certificate of deposit or U.S. Treasury note.

If you would like to receive a personalized illustration of the benefits you would receive by establishing this type of gift, please call John A. Briscoe Vice President of Development at (917) 207-4434 or e-mail [jbriscoe@commoncause.org](mailto:jbriscoe@commoncause.org). All inquiries are confidential and imply no obligation.

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