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# Hawaii Showing the Way Toward Cleaner Elections

Posted: 03/05/2013 4:39 pm



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With luck and some hard work, there could soon be another good reason for the rest of us to love - - and maybe emulate -- Hawaii.

Legislators in the Aloha state are pushing toward approval of a broad overhaul of the state's system of public financing of campaigns for the State

Senate and House of Representatives. If it passes, the legislation would let candidates in 2016 and beyond raise enough money to run winning campaigns without relying on large, special interest donations.

The Hawaii proposal would require participating House candidates to collect \$5 contributions from each of 250 voters and Senate hopefuls to get \$5 from each of 350. Once they meet those thresholds, candidates would receive matching funds from the state roughly equal to the average spent by candidates in the most recent election.

"Hawaii's legislative candidates have had a public financing option for decades, but it has been so badly funded and publicized, that few have used it," said Carmille Lim, executive director of Common Cause Hawaii. "This plan would let candidates break their dependence on big dollar contributors by providing them with enough public money to run competitive races."

More than \$6 million was spent on legislative campaigns in Hawaii last year, according to



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figures compiled by the National Institute on Money in State Politics.

Similar programs, often called "fair elections" or "clean elections" plans, are in use in Arizona, Connecticut, and Maine and in a number of localities scattered across the country. North Carolina's judicial elections are run using a fair elections system and the Kentucky House of Representatives just approved a similar plan for elections to the Bluegrass State's Supreme Court.

In addition to offering candidates an alternative to soliciting big dollar donations, and dealing with all the strings that inevitably are attached to them, these programs typically give voters a more diverse group of candidates from which to choose. They encourage homemakers, working moms and dads, small business owners and others who might be attracted to public service -- but don't have the time or the business and professional connections needed to raise big money -- to go ahead and run.

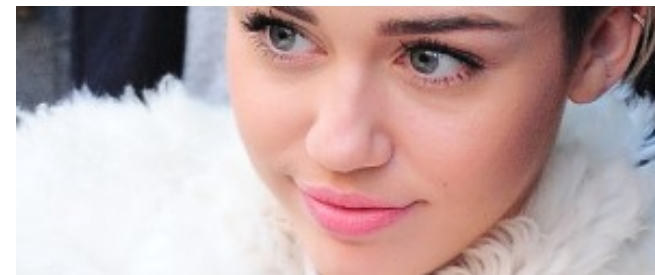
"An increasing number of Hawaii residents are familiar with this system's success in other states. Given their growing awareness of, and disappointment in money's influence in politics, Hawaii residents are becoming more vocal in their support of a publicly funded election system," Lim said.

In an AARP survey done several years ago, 86 percent of residents agreed that campaign contributions 'moderately or greatly influence' policymaking. One freshman Maui representative ran on the existing partial public funding program and beat the incumbent. And in Hawaii County Council races last year, five of nine councilors won their races using the existing public financing program.

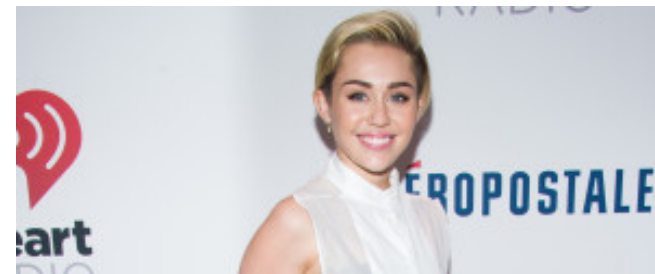
The Hawaii drive for public financing of campaigns is another illustration of how Americans are pushing back against the Supreme Court's ruling in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* that corporations have the same rights as people, including the right to spend unlimited amounts of money on our elections.

Voters in Montana, Colorado and most of Massachusetts approved ballot measures last November instructing their members of Congress to support a constitutional amendment

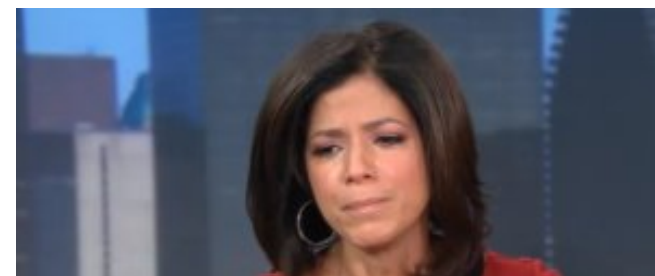
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overturning Citizens United and permitting Congress and the states to impose reasonable limits on political spending. Legislatures in at least nine other states, including Hawaii, have approved similar calls for an amendment.

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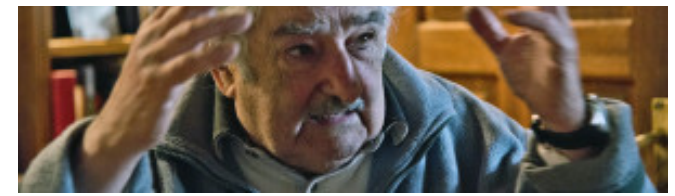
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So what's stopping a candidate from simply not taking any donations, or at least only small ones, from individuals?

Then the voters could choose that candidate.

No need for public financing.

11 MAR 11:40 AM

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This wouldn't affect Super PACs at all. Super PACs simply spend money on speech. The government may not limit speech.

11 MAR 11:34 AM

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**Joe The Nerd Ferraro** (hp\_blogger\_Joe The Nerd Ferraro)

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i am sorry - but it is wrong to have public financing of elections.  
it is just another great way to find corruption in the system/

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This is a excellent idea, the less money is in politics, the more effective the representation will be within the government.

You want to cut the waste out of government, start with cutting the strings that attach politicians to wealthy donors and special interests.

5 MAR 5:32 PM

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**Joe The Nerd Ferraro** (hp\_blogger\_Joe The Nerd Ferraro)

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tell you what -  
you get this thing passed.

You make it easy to run against anyone who votes for this in the next election.

All you have to do is show snippets of ads from the previous election and say "This is where your tax dollars are going."

The law will be removed along with everyone one of your candidates.

5 MAR 9:11 PM

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