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## **Why the Fair Elections Ballot Question? Report on Extreme Influence of Big Money in Mayor's Race Leaves No Doubt**

**Chicago, IL** – The need for Chicago's Fair Elections ballot question was underscored today by a stunning new report detailing the outrageous number of large contributions coming from donors outside Chicago to the city's mayoral candidates.

The Illinois PIRG Education Fund's report found that big donations completely eclipse small donations to the five mayoral campaigns. Contributions greater than \$1,000 account for more than 86% of the money contributed to the five Chicago mayoral candidates, while less than 2% of the money contributed comes from contributions of less than \$150. What's more, the top *two* donors gave more than all of the at least 1,601 small donors combined.

"This report demonstrates how Chicago politics is being negatively influenced by big special interests and the super rich," said Brian Gladstein, Director of Programs and Strategy Common Cause Illinois. "In response, we need a matching campaign financing system to amplify the voices of every Chicagoan. That is why we created the Fair Elections campaign to allow more diverse people to run for office and win based on the issues and not who can raise the most money."

Not only are large donations almost entirely funding the five mayoral campaigns, but just over half (52%) of the contributions are from people who do not even live in Chicago. Out-of-city influence also grows with the size of the donation: 60% of the money was from donors who gave \$25,000 or more, 80% of the money was from donors who gave \$80,000 or more.

These findings paint a clear picture as to why Chicago voters should vote YES to the Fair Elections ballot question, which calls for a campaign financing system that shuts out the corrupt influence of large donors like the ones dominating this year's mayoral race, along with elections across the state. Voting YES for Fair Elections is the one thing voters can do to reshape every Chicago race for generations to come. The referendum calls for a campaign finance system like NYC's and LA's that relies on small donors and a limited match of public funds, putting a stop to wealthy donors and corporate lobbyists who too often sway elections.

Today is a Day of Action for Fair Elections Illinois, a campaign by Common Cause Illinois. People across the city will be contacting voters to tell them how their vote can make sure future Chicago elections are not controlled by special interests and the very rich.

The Illinois PIRG Education Fund reports that the analysis examined contributions to the five mayoral candidates between 2011 and December 31st, 2014, the end of the last quarterly report. A significant amount of money has been contributed since then, which Illinois PIRG Education Fund will analyze once the campaigns and campaign reports are completed. The report can be read [here](#).

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