

RESPONSES OF STATE AUDITOR SUZANNE BUMP
TO COMMON CAUSE QUESTIONNAIRE
August 19, 2014

1) Are you concerned about the amount of money in politics and what would you do to promote policies to limit its influence in elections and governing?

Do you support public financing of elections? Please be specific about which offices it should cover and any other information about what kind of support should be provided.

Do you support a constitutional amendment to allow the government to limit political spending and to clarify that corporations do not have the same rights as people? Why or why not.

As campaigns have become increasingly complex and expensive, the problem of money in politics has become more acute - to the point that I believe it poses a real threat to our democracy. Unfortunately, the US Supreme Court seems indifferent to this reality, making constitutional amendment a necessary process. I regard corporations as creatures of the law, the rights of which can and should be limited to serve legitimate commercial or charitable interests, and that advocacy for and against candidates for public office should be not among them. I also believe that timely disclosure requirements should extend to all donors of all entities engaging in political advocacy. This information is crucial to the ability of voters to make informed decisions.

When I ran for the position of State Auditor in 2010, I participated in the public finance system in Massachusetts, voluntarily accepting spending limits in exchange for a certain level of matching funds. Again this election year, I have accepted the spending limits, although the shrinking pool of voluntary taxpayer contributions makes it unlikely that there will be matching funds available to down-ballot candidates like myself. I believe that this system is fair and should be available to all statewide candidates. It however cannot produce the desired public benefits with such a small pool of available funds and limits that fail to account for the legitimate costs attendant to a campaign for higher office, especially that of Governor. In order to be a viable alternative to the current system, changes must be made.

2) What would you do to bring more transparency to government operations?

If you want accountability in government, you have to devote resources to it - to establish goals and performance measures, to hire competent staff and provide managers with the budgets, technology and authority to maintain integrity in governmental operations and to pass judgment on outcomes. Similarly, transparency has to be an active, front-end function in government. Decision-making processes must be articulated and governance structures must accommodate public input and oversight.

For me, this is not theoretical. The office of the State Auditor is an essential part of the checks and balances system of our Commonwealth, and I believe it must model the behavior it expects of others in government. Therefore, all audits and reports are available on-line, including our

annual internal quality assurance report and the results of the peer reviews of the office conducted by the National State Auditors Association.

3) The legislature passed a terrific elections bill earlier this year that will make great steps towards modernizing our elections. Would you support Election Day registration for the commonwealth? Is there anything else you think we should do to improve our elections in Massachusetts?

I applaud the newly enacted changes to improve the voting process in Massachusetts. I understand and appreciate the impetus behind same-day voter registration, but am concerned about its effective implementation. Like many worthy ideas, it will be costly to implement, requiring more technology, training and personnel.

4) What do you think should be done, if anything, about the issue of political patronage?

I believe that an elected official should be able to assemble a leadership team that she/he can count on to share a common vision and values and to communicate these by word and deed throughout the organization. I further believe there should be few restrictions, apart from obvious ones to preserve integrity or avoid conflicts of interest, as to who may be selected for these leadership positions.

Apart from that, I believe that all hiring should be subject to a legitimate posting, screening and interview process designed to select qualified persons, and that all personnel should be subject to meaningful annual performance reviews. A recommendation from a political figure, like a recommendation from a past employer, teacher or mentor is appropriate, but should be considered only after an initial positive interview and to the extent that it conveys relevant information about the applicant's qualifications. This is the policy I have implemented in the State Auditor's office, along with performance-based pay raises and promotions.

Obviously, to devise a system driven by patronage without regard to competence or experience is to disadvantage the public to be served, the co-workers of the hiree, and the whole concept of trust in government.