



SMALL DONOR FUNDED ELECTIONS

- To Ensure a Government by the People -

A Small Donor Funded Elections Program will ensure our elected officials are accountable to their constituents, not wealthy special interests.

Our democracy is based on the premise that every individual, regardless of how wealthy they are, has an equal voice in our elections. But too often, large campaign contributions determine who can run for and win office, and ultimately what priorities our government tackles. Our democracy is knocked out of balance when candidates feel they have to spend their time courting wealthy and corporate special interests to fundraise for their elections instead of talking to constituents.

In jurisdictions with small donor funded elections, candidates can run for office on the strength of their ideas and support from their communities, instead of on access to large and corporate donors. Bringing this program to Prince George's County will build a more accessible and accountable local government.

How Does it Work?

A Small Donor Funded Election program enables candidates with proven community support to win elected office without accepting large or corporate contributions. Instead of taking large donations from special interests and wealthy individual donors, participating candidates can only accept contributions below a certain dollar amount from everyday residents. These donations then receive matching funds through the Small Donor program, with the smallest contributions matched at the highest rate. This allows candidates to remain true and accountable to their citizen base and to compete effectively against candidates supported largely by corporate special interests. Small Donor Funded Election programs ensure a government by the people.

Maryland is a leader in advancing Small Donor Funded Election Programs.

In 2014, Montgomery County became the first county in the state to establish a small donor matching program for county council and executive elections. It incentivizes small contributions by providing matching funds to candidates who don't accept any large contribution or contributions from special interests such as corporations or PACs. In the summer of 2017, the Howard County Council established a similar small donor program that candidates can utilize for the 2022 election. At the gubernatorial level, both Governor Hogan and Democratic candidate Mizeur, outsiders to the political establishment, used a public funding program for their campaigns in 2014.

Small Donor Funded Elections allow candidates to run without big donors.

Instead of spending time seeking donations from large and corporate donors, candidates who demonstrate a wide base of grassroots support by collecting small donations, can run for office

with a combination of small donations and matching funds, with the smallest donations matched at the highest rate.

For example, a council candidate running for a district seat in Prince George's must:

- Show community support and viability to qualify for the program by raising \$7,500 from at least 150 county residents;
- Take no more than \$150 from each donor;
- Take NO donations from special interest groups such as corporations or PACs;

Once qualified, small contributions are matched as follows:

- The first \$25 is matched 6:1, yielding \$175 to the candidate;
- The second \$50 is matched 4:1, so \$75 will yield \$425 to the candidate;
- The third \$75 is matched 1:1, so \$150 will yield \$575 to the candidate.
- Only contributions from county residents are matched.

There are different benchmarks for at-large council and executive candidates and a slightly higher match rate for executive candidates.

Matching funds for Small Donor candidates will be limited to \$75,000 for district, \$250,000 for at-large and \$1,000,000 for executive candidates

How much does it cost?

The cost of a Small Donor Funded Election Program is based on population size and the average costs to run for office. In general, the program costs \$2 per taxpayer per year and is a tiny fraction of a percent of a county's operating budget.

Just as we pay for pollworkers and voting machines, a Small Donor Funded Election Program is a critical investment in the health of our democracy. It will help ensure that politicians are using our tax dollars to address the most important unmet needs in Prince George's County instead of carving out benefits for their biggest donors.

ASK OUR COUNTY COUNCIL TO INTRODUCE AND PASS A SMALL DONOR PUBLIC FINANCING PROGRAM FOR PRINCE GEORGE'S.

Sign a petition to the council: <http://bit.ly/2wx4zrz>

Have Questions? Email: fair.elections.prince.georges@gmail.com

Visit: <http://www.fairelectionsmaryland.org/>

Small Donor Public Financing is supported by the Prince George's Fair Election Coalition: Clean Water Action, CASA In Action, Common Cause of Maryland, Community Research, Democracy Initiative, Every Voice, Maryland PIRG, Maryland LCV, Our Revolution Prince George's, Progressive Cheverly, Progressive Maryland, Sierra Club – Prince George's Group, Working Families Party