

Middle School Clean Election Teacher Notes

You can find information on the campaign spending and financing in the 2004 presidential campaign on websites like the Washington Post – www.washingtonpost.com or at www.opensecrets.org. Open Secrets even suggests research projects that can be done on campaign financing using its website. This website also includes a list of tax-exempt organizations that engage in political activities.

Definitions of key terms:

527s: Tax-exempt organizations that engage in political activities, often through unlimited soft money contributions. Most 527s are advocacy groups trying to influence federal elections through voter mobilization efforts and issue ads that tout or criticize a candidate's record. 527s must report their contributors and expenditures to the IRS, unless they already file identical information at the state or local level. Their ads must not use the words “vote for” or “vote against” a candidate.

Bundling: A PAC method whereby contributions are collected from like-minded individuals (each limited to \$2000) and presented to a candidate or party as a “bundle,” thus increasing their influence.

Issue advocacy: Unlimited and undisclosed spending by an individual or group on communications or advertisements that do not use words like “vote for” or “vote against”.

McCain-Feingold: Under this federal campaign reform law, an individual can give a maximum of \$2000 to an individual political candidate and \$5000 to a PAC.

PAC: Political Action Committee organized to influence elections and legislation.

Soft money: Money contributed for party-building purposes that do not have to be disclosed under federal law.

Teacher Notes

Clean Elections Video Guide and Questions

You may obtain the Clean Elections videos from
www.publiccampaign.org (202-293-0222)

A Clean Election Candidate must do the following:

1. Collect a set number of \$5 contributions in their districts
2. Agree to voluntary spending limits
3. Not accept campaign money from private donors
4. Not contribute personal campaign money

In return, the Clean Elections Candidate receives:

Full public funding for primary & general election

The basic unit of democracy in Arizona elections is:

The \$5 bill

Why?

Maximum individual contribution

STATISTICS: In the 2002 General Election in Arizona:

- 28 of the 32 major statewide candidates for office ran publicly financed campaigns.
- 7 of the 8 candidates for Governor ran under the Clean Elections law.
- Arizona elected a candidate who ran under the Clean Elections law for governor - Janet Napolitano.
- 45% of the representatives elected to the State House ran under the Clean Elections law.
- 17% of the State Senators ran under the Clean Elections law.
- In the Legislative races, 32 of the 90 seats are held by Clean Elections candidates.
 - 36% of Arizona's Legislature is comprised of Clean Elections elected officials.
 - The Arizona House of Representatives has 27 Clean Elections elected officials.
 - The Arizona Senate has 5 Clean Election elected officials.
- 7 of the 9 statewide offices are held by Clean Elections candidates. Governor, Secretary of State, Attorney General, Treasurer, Corporation Commission 2 year seat, Corporation Commission 4 year seat and Mine Inspector.
- 89 of the 170 candidates were Clean Elections candidates.
- Candidates running for governor were required to collect at least 4000 \$5 contributions and agree to abide by strict spending limits.
- Democrats and Republicans share the Clean Elections program.
 - 22 Republicans were elected with Clean Election funds.
 - 17 Democrats were elected with Clean Election funds.

How is the history of Clean Elections in Maine similar to Arizona?

- 77% of the Maine Senate and over half of the Maine House ran under the Clean Elections law
- 60% of candidates ran under the Clean Elections law (2000 = 30%)
- 71% of Democrats and 54% of Republicans
- the number of contested primaries increased by 61%

Discussion Questions for Clean Elections Funding Systems

Why do you think it is important for citizens to understand Clean Elections funding?

To understand how a candidate receives funding and the requirements for running under the Clean Elections law.

What are the political advantages and disadvantages for candidates that choose to run under the Clean Elections law?

Advantage: If you run under the Clean Elections law and your opponent does not, would that attract voters?

Disadvantage: Those who oppose Clean Elections might run against you.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of Clean Elections for the public?

Advantages: Less influence of special interests; more direct contact with representatives.

Disadvantages: Special interest groups (ex. veterans, farmers) do not have an effective way to be heard; candidates do not have the flexibility (due to "set" funding) to saturate the media with their message

Why do you think a candidate might decide against running under the Clean Elections law?

Money? Special interest support? Other reasons?

Who might oppose Clean Elections?

Lobbyists? PACs? Wealthy donors? Independently wealthy individuals who could finance their own campaigns? Constitutional scholars?

What arguments could be made by opponents of Clean Elections?

*Unconstitutional limit to free speech by banning individual contributions over \$5.
Violates the 1st Amendment.*

*Independently wealthy individuals cannot finance their own campaigns.
Actually reduces citizen ability to be involved in the democratic process by
restricting the ability to contribute to the candidate of choice.*

*With the \$2000 individual contribution limit in place, we have already limited the
influence of special interests enough.*

Individual's tax dollars going to support the candidates you may oppose.

Why is it important to know which candidates are running publicly financed campaigns and which candidates are running traditionally financed campaigns?

*You may want Information regarding PAC's. etc. that are supporting traditional candidates
You may want to know why a candidate chose to run under the Clean Elections law (i.e., didn't think he/she could raise enough funds, didn't want to be tied to special interest groups, etc.)*

What assumptions could you make about a candidate, based on his/her choice to run under the Clean Elections law or not? Are those assumptions fair?

This answer is based on a student's opinion.

Is how a candidate runs more important than a candidate's stand on important issues? Why or why not?

A candidate's stand on important issues is of vital importance, but so is where a candidate receives campaign funding.

Resources

Burns, James MacGregor, et al. *Government by the People* (and accompanying work book). New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002.

Investing in Democracy – Center for Governmental Studies – pamphlet that comes with video. *State of the Union* poster available from Public Campaign.

www.publiccampaign.org

State of Arizona Citizens Clean Elections Commission: www.ccec.state.az.us