

Public Subsidy Grant Program Appropriation

Toplines

- This proposal would build on our established system of public financing by adding funding to ensure it's working as originally intended.

How it works

- In addition to the PCR, Minnesota has a block grant public subsidy program funded partially by the political party check-off on income tax and property tax return forms, and partially from a standing \$1 million appropriation.
- This is also awarded to those who sign the public subsidy agreement and is split evenly amongst candidates who comply.
- In order to qualify for the public subsidy program, candidates must agree to abide by campaign spending limits, contribute a maximum of \$5,000 to their campaign committee personally, return unused public funds at the end of the campaign cycle, make no independent expenditures, and comply with closed captioning requirements for folks who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- We are proposing to substantially increase the budget allocation in order to make the program a viable source of funding for candidates to run and win. This idea is scalable, up to the cap in statute, which prohibits candidates from receiving more than 50% of the spending limit.

Why it's right for Minnesota

- Currently, the grant program check is usually sent to candidates after the August primary and is nominal compared to the true costs of campaign spending, often yielding complaints from campaigns about "late" and "ineffective" money. By increasing the funding, we would ensure candidates are receiving a meaningful contribution that allows them to run and win under the public subsidy.
- The use of the public subsidy has diminished over time while the cost of campaigns is on the rise. Fewer and fewer candidates are using the program, but by increasing the funding, more candidates would be expected to participate.
- As outside spending increases, candidates aren't always able to control the dominant narrative of their campaigns. Their voters/future constituents are often frustrated by the amount of mail, advertisements, and outreach they're getting from outside spending groups, and often think they're working in coordination with the candidate. Increasing the grant program allocation would allow candidates to be able to focus on voter outreach and ensure their own messaging can cut through the noise of outside spending.

Prepared by We Choose Us policy team

Lilly Sasse, Director

lilly@wechooseusmn.com