



Mr. Chair, members, my name is George Beck, I am on the Board of Clean Elections Minnesota, a non-partisan non-profit organization that promotes electoral policies that reflect the will of the people and not the power of money. We support SF 1405 that increases the political contribution refund amount, and SF 2845 that provides a cubic match for small donations.

The benefits of public financing of elections for the people of Minnesota and the reasons it strengthens our democracy are very significant:

1. These programs increase the proportional importance of small donors and average Minnesotans so that candidates do not depend as much on large contributors, lobbyists or special interests.
2. They encourage legislators to look to all constituents and creates a stronger relationship between them.
3. They support first time candidates, can increase the diversity of candidates, and the number of contested seats.
4. They eliminate income as a significant factor for participation.
5. They encourage voters to participate in political campaigns.
6. They limit spending in political campaigns.
7. They mean less time spent fundraising by elected officials

A study by the Center for Governmental Studies stated that Minnesota's public finance program has for decades been considered one of the finest in the nation with a higher participation rate than other states. (88.5 % of candidates participated recently) Raising the refund will increase its effectiveness.

At a time when the influx of large sums of money in politics threatens the legitimacy of our democratic processes and when cynicism is increasing among voters, these programs become even more important. Legislators are not beholden to special interests that seek to dominate decision-making.

Public financing of elections has good public support. Sixty-two percent of American citizens support public financing and 85% support fundamental change in campaign finance.

Please support these bills.