

I believe that government works best when it is open, transparent, and honest. To restore Americans' trust in government, Congress must act to clean up our elections and ensure that all Americans have an equal voice in Washington.

Public Funding of Federal Elections

I have long supported creating a public funding system for House, Senate, and Presidential elections. Currently, candidates for Congress need to raise millions of dollars to have a reasonable chance of success. Public financing would reduce the potential for corruption that arises when candidates are reliant on wealthy donors. Equally important, public financing would allow candidates to stop focusing on the money chase and put their entire focus on the issues that matter to voters. And it would allow incumbent Members of Congress to spend less time raising money for their next reelection campaign and more time doing the people's work in Congress.

In March 2011, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 359 which would repeal the public funding of presidential election campaigns. I opposed this bill and the sentiment of weakening public funding for our federal elections. This bill would implicitly increase the influence of private funding and heighten the effect that money has on federal elections. Although H.R. 359 passed the House of Representatives, it is not likely to be acted upon by the Senate.

I am a cosponsor of the Fair Elections Now Act ([FENA](#)), which would provide public funds to match small contributions. Each dollar of private contributions, up to a cap of \$100, would be matched with \$5 dollars of public funds. This federal matching system would encourage candidates to seek many small contributions rather than rely on a few large benefactors. To ensure that only serious candidates could receive public funds, candidates would be required to raise 1500 contributions of \$100 or less from their home state in order to qualify for matching funds.

Disclosure of Campaign Contributions

Americans have a right to know who is financing the political ads they see on television and the

campaign literature that lands in their mailboxes. During election seasons, Americans see hundreds of TV ads, often run by organizations with vague, positive-sounding names, yet federal law does not require the organizations that run these ads to tell voters where they get their money. Knowing who finances an organization helps voters decide whether that organization is a trustworthy source. For example, when you see a TV ad or mailer about energy policy, it would be helpful to know whether it was financed by big oil companies or by grassroots donors.

Political candidates are already required by federal law to disclose their campaign donors. I believe third party organizations should be required to do so, too. This is particularly important in light of the U.S. Supreme Court's recent ruling in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*. In this ruling, the Court reversed a longstanding precedent and allowed corporations to spend money on elections. In 2010, I voted for the Disclose Act for this purpose. The Disclose Act passed the House of Representatives, but did not make it further in the legislative process.

Congressional Ethics Reform

Being a Member of Congress is a position of high responsibility. That responsibility should be matched with high standards of ethical conduct. Members of Congress should lead by example.

When the Democratic Party took control of Congress in 2007, we passed major ethics and lobbying reforms to address the issues of corruption and misconduct. These reforms barred Members of Congress and their staff from accepting significant gifts except from immediate family members. The reforms also tightened restrictions on accepting trips paid for by private organizations, barred former Members of Congress from lobbying for two years after leaving office, and required annual ethics training for all Congressional staff.

To improve oversight and enforcement of ethics rules, the House of Representatives created an independent and bipartisan Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE), which has the power to investigate possible violations of House rules. The OCE can pass its findings to the House's bipartisan Ethics Committee, and can also publicize its findings.

More information:

Search the [Federal Election Commission's](#) disclosure database.

[Office of Congressional Ethics](#)

[H.R. 1404, the Fair Elections Now Act](#)

[H.R. 5175, Democracy is Strengthened by Casting Light on Spending in Elections Act](#)

[H.R. 359, Repeal public funding of presidential election campaigns](#)