

September 20, 2018

Los Angeles City Council  
200 N. Spring Street  
City Hall - 3rd Floor  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

*Sent via email*

RE: Amendments to Campaign Finance Laws

Dear Honorable Councilmembers:

We, the undersigned organizations representing a broad spectrum of L.A.'s communities, are writing to ask your support for amending the City's Campaign Finance Laws in order to make our elections fairer and more democratic in time for the 2020 election cycle. We urge you to enact all of the Ethics Commission Recommendations (transmitted to Council on August 30, 2018). In addition, we strongly urge you to lower the maximum match per contributor from the current amount of \$250 to \$100 so that small donors are truly empowered.

Democracy — government of the people, by the people, for the people — is one of our highest aspirations as a country. Our democracy has never been perfect. But democracy's principles have inspired millions, including those who fought to enfranchise themselves. The daily news headlines remind us that democracy is under attack, around the world and in our own nation.

Unfortunately, our elections have become increasingly expensive and saturated with mega-contributions. Over the last decade, the Supreme Court's decisions in cases like *Citizens United* and *McCutcheon* have opened the floodgates to unprecedented amounts of dark, unaccountable money. Americans are more cynical about our system of government than ever before. In Los Angeles, turnout plummeted from 76% in 1969 to just over 10% in 2015. Angelenos are disconnected from their government; the lack of participation deprives us of the civic engagement we need to address our city's great challenges like homelessness, housing affordability, transportation, policing, and environmental injustice.

The City Council currently has an important opportunity to go beyond symbolic resolutions on *Citizens United* and pass municipal campaign finance reform that lessens the influence of big money and enables candidates to spend less time fundraising from high-level contributors. Done right, campaign finance reform will make our government more responsive to the needs and aspirations of our city's everyday residents and better able to confront the challenges we face.

The good news is that the City of Los Angeles already has a Public Matching Funds Program that is intended to allow candidates without networks of wealthy contributors to mount viable campaigns for City Council and Citywide offices. Unfortunately, the program has not kept pace with realities of campaign spending and is

not fulfilling its intent in practice. Approved by voters in 1993, the program was initially a success. It resulted in a significant increase in female representation on Council to five out of fifteen members in the late 1990s, but has struggled to reach that number in the decades since. It's no longer functioning as effectively as it should. While a majority of contributions submitted to the matching funds program now come from those contributing less than \$100, those contributing over \$100 to candidates constitute approximately 90% of the value of all contributions submitted. Its high qualification requirements make L.A.'s public financing system the most inaccessible in the nation. The match ratio and maximum funding per candidate have not increased in line with peer cities or inflation. This is especially concerning because the alignment of the City's elections with the State/Federal cycle will cause skyrocketing campaign costs as competition for advertising space, vendors, staff, and consultants increases.

The primary justification for aligning our elections was to increase voter turnout and engagement. With voter turnout projected to be two to six times higher than recent city elections, candidates will need the resources to contact that many more voters. It is imperative that the campaign finance system adjusts accordingly. The fundraising window for the 2020 elections opened on September 3, 2018 so it's especially important that the City Council takes quick action on this matter. The Council has been given a proposal that culminated from an eight-month review of our campaign finance system. The Ethics Commission's Recommendations are based on public input, thoughtful deliberation, and the expert analysis of the Commission staff.

\* \* \*

**1. We urge you to adopt the Commission's proposal for empowering small donors with a 6:1 match rate and increasing the overall public financing available to candidates.**

**Increase the Matching Funds Rate**

We strongly support raising the current match rate to 6:1 for both the primary and general elections. This rate would put Los Angeles on par with localities New York City, Berkeley (CA), Portland, and Montgomery County, MD. Increasing the rate will allow candidates to communicate with a broader and more diverse base of constituents, instead of focusing on the wealthiest of donors. A 6:1 match rate will allow candidates to reach the maximum funding rapidly, which is crucial because they can only begin receiving funds when they qualify for the ballot, 90-120 days before the primary.

**Increase the Per-Candidate Maximum Amounts**

We strongly support increasing the total amount of matching funds given to qualifying candidates, as recommended by the Ethics Commission. The total amount of funding available hasn't increased at all since the program's establishment. The proposed increase fully accounts for inflation (as measured by the CPI) since that time.

Financing is not an obstacle to this increase. The Trust Fund which finances the Matching Funds Program will have a surplus of more than \$19 million as of June 30, 2019. This surplus is projected to grow significantly in the absence of reforms.

**2. We support the Commission's recommendations for making the Matching Funds program more accessible with lower initial qualification requirements.**

**Eliminate the Redundant Qualifying Signature Requirement**

We strongly recommend eliminating the requirement that candidates gather an extra 500 signatures to qualify for the full matching funds. This additional requirement does nothing to encourage constituent contact as well-funded campaigns simply pay signature-gatherers. Candidates are already required to gather 500 signatures to get on the ballot.

**Lower the In-District Contribution Requirement**

We support a decrease in the number of in-district financial contributions required to qualify for the matching funds program from 200 to 100. Requiring 200 contributions from local residents can impede campaigns from getting started in the first place, especially in less affluent districts. Our wealthiest council district has a median household income nearly twice that of our poorest district. Requiring 100 in district contributions will more than adequately test the campaign's ability to attract local support. Only two municipalities require in district contributions (none in CA), and they require no more than 75. It's worth noting that our aggregate threshold of \$25,000 in city contributions is twice that of any municipality in the nation. The commission did not believe any increase to the aggregate in City contribution requirement of \$25,000 was necessary.

**3. We strongly support the requirement that candidates participate in a town hall or debate before receiving matching funds.**

In the current system, candidates only have to agree to participate in a debate to receive funding, not to actually participate in one. We think it is important to ensure that candidates don't skirt this important civic responsibility by requiring actual participation in order to access public funds. In order to prevent obstructionism by candidates who opt out of public funding, and to speed up the ability of grassroots candidates to gain access to funding, we support allowing participation in a fully public town hall to substitute for participation in a debate. This town hall should require that the public and media be allowed to ask questions and that all other candidates are allowed to participate.

**4. We urge you to decrease the maximum match per contributor to \$100.**

Currently the city only matches the first \$250 of a contribution. Under the current 2:1 match, that means a public match of \$500. But under the proposed 6:1 system, a \$250

contribution would result in a public match of \$1,500. We think public funds would be better spent on amplifying the power of smaller donors.

Berkeley's 6:1 system limits the match to only the first \$50 of a contribution. When NYC increased their match rate to 6:1 they lowered the max match per contributor to \$175. Los Angeles is an outlier nationally in allowing such large donations to be matched. As the City considers increasing the match to 6:1 and lowering barriers to participation, we strongly recommend that the maximum match per contributor be lowered accordingly. Setting the maximum match at \$100 would ensure that we aren't strengthening our biggest donors, and that the Public Matching Funds program fulfills its original intent.

The Ethics Commission considered but did not adopt this recommendation. We believe it is an essential component to a campaign finance system that empowers small donors and creates a responsive, democratic city government.

\* \* \*

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. As our elected representatives, we hope you will take action to defend and advance democracy. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions you may have. We look forward to working with you on these vital reforms.

Sincerely,

American Indian Movement Southern California (AIM SoCal)  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Los Angeles (AAAJ)  
Bernie Sanders Brigade  
Bike the Vote  
California Clean Money Campaign  
California for Progress  
Coalition to Preserve LA  
Community Health Councils  
East LA Community Corporation (ELACC)  
Esperanza Community Housing  
Food & Water Watch Los Angeles  
Idle No More SoCal  
Holman United Methodist Church  
Korean American Coalition Los Angeles (KAC)  
Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance (KIWA)  
LA Forward  
LA Voice  
Leadership for Urban Renewal Network (LURN)  
League of Women Voters of Los Angeles (LWVLA)

March and Rally Los Angeles  
Monthly Democratic Luncheon  
Money Out Voters In (MOVI)  
Muslims for Progressive Values  
Our Gov LA  
People Power Los Angeles| West  
Pilipino Workers Center  
Represent Us: Los Angeles-San Gabriel Valley Chapter  
Strategic Actions for a Justice Economy (SAJE)  
Unrig LA  
Youth Justice Coalition (YJC)

*Additional Signers Pending*



LA Forward + 127 Angelenos  
3660 Wilshire Blvd, Suite 602  
Los Angeles, CA 90010

September 20, 2018

Los Angeles City Council  
200 N. Spring Street  
City Hall - 3rd Floor  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

*Sent via email*

RE: Amendments to Campaign Finance Laws  
Ethics Commission's Report (Council File 12-1269-S5)  
Ryu Motion (Council File 15-1088-S1)

Dear Honorable Councilmembers:

Nearly 125 of us citizens of Los Angeles have signed a petition asking you to amend the City's Campaign Finance Laws so elections will be fairer and more democratic in time for the 2020 election cycle. We urge you to enact all of the Ethics Commission Recommendations (transmitted to Council on August 30, 2018). In addition, we strongly urge you to lower the maximum match per contributor from the current amount of \$250 to \$100 so that small donors are truly empowered.

Democracy — government of the people, by the people, for the people — is one of our highest aspirations as a country. Our democracy has never been perfect. But democracy's principles have inspired millions, including those who fought to enfranchise themselves. The daily news headlines remind us that democracy is under attack, around the world and in our own nation.

Unfortunately, our elections have become increasingly expensive and saturated with mega-contributions. Over the last decade, the Supreme Court's decisions in cases like *Citizens United* and *McCutcheon* have opened the floodgates to unprecedented amounts of dark, unaccountable money. Americans are more cynical about our system of government than ever before. In Los Angeles, turnout plummeted from 76% in 1969 to just over 10% in 2015. Angelenos are disconnected from their government; the lack of participation deprives us of the civic engagement

we need to address our city's great challenges like homelessness, housing affordability, transportation, policing, and environmental injustice.

The City Council currently has an important opportunity to go beyond symbolic resolutions on *Citizens United* and pass municipal campaign finance reform that lessens the influence of big money and enables candidates to spend less time fundraising from high-level contributors. Done right, campaign finance reform will make our government more responsive to the needs and aspirations of our city's everyday residents and better able to confront the challenges we face.

The good news is that the City of Los Angeles already has a Public Matching Funds Program that is intended to allow candidates without networks of wealthy contributors to mount viable campaigns for City Council and Citywide offices. Unfortunately, the program has not kept pace with realities of campaign spending and is not fulfilling its intent in practice. Approved by voters in 1993, the program was initially a success. It resulted in a significant increase in female representation on Council to five out of fifteen members in the late 1990s, but has struggled to reach that number in the decades since. It's no longer functioning as effectively as it should. While a majority of contributions submitted to the matching funds program now come from those contributing less than \$100, those contributing over \$100 to candidates constitute approximately 90% of the value of all contributions submitted. Its high qualification requirements make L.A.'s public financing system the most inaccessible in the nation. The match ratio and maximum funding per candidate have not increased in line with peer cities or inflation. This is especially concerning because the alignment of the City's elections with the State/Federal cycle will cause skyrocketing campaign costs as competition for advertising space, vendors, staff, and consultants increases.

The primary justification for aligning our elections was to increase voter turnout and engagement. With voter turnout projected to be two to six times higher than recent city elections, candidates will need the resources to contact that many more voters. It is imperative that the campaign finance system adjusts accordingly. The fundraising window for the 2020 elections opened on September 3, 2018 so it's especially important that the City Council takes quick action on this matter. The Council has been given a proposal that culminated from an eight month review of our campaign finance system. The Ethics Commission's Recommendations are based on public input, thoughtful deliberation, and the expert analysis of the Commission staff.

\* \* \*

**1. We urge you to adopt the Commission's proposal for empowering small donors with a 6:1 match rate and increasing the overall public financing available to candidates.**

**Increase the Matching Funds Rate**

We strongly support raising the current match rate to 6:1 for both the primary and general elections. This rate would put Los Angeles on par with localities New York City, Berkeley (CA), Portland, and Montgomery County, MD. Increasing the rate will allow candidates to communicate with a broader and more diverse base of constituents, instead of focusing on the wealthiest of donors. A 6:1 match rate will allow candidates to reach the maximum funding rapidly, which is crucial because they can only begin receiving funds when they qualify for the ballot, 90-120 days before the primary.

### **Increase the Per-Candidate Maximum Amounts**

We strongly support increasing the total amount of matching funds given to qualifying candidates, as recommended by the Ethics Commission. The total amount of funding available hasn't increased at all since the program's establishment. The proposed increase fully accounts for inflation (as measured by the CPI) since that time.

Financing is not an obstacle to this increase. The Trust Fund which finances the Matching Funds Program will have a surplus of more than \$19 million as of June 30, 2019. This surplus is projected to grow significantly in the absence of reforms.

### **2. We support the Commission's recommendations for making the Matching Funds program more accessible with lower initial qualification requirements.**

#### **Eliminate the Redundant Qualifying Signature Requirement**

We strongly recommend eliminating the requirement that candidates gather an extra 500 signatures to qualify for the full matching funds. This additional requirement does nothing to encourage constituent contact as well-funded campaigns simply pay signature-gatherers. Candidates are already required to gather 500 signatures to get on the ballot.

#### **Lower the In-District Contribution Requirement**

We support a decrease in the number of in-district financial contributions required to qualify for the matching funds program from 200 to 100. Requiring 200 contributions from local residents can impede campaigns from getting started in the first place, especially in less affluent districts. Our wealthiest council district has a median household income nearly twice that of our poorest district. Requiring 100 in district contributions will more than adequately test the campaign's ability to attract local support. Only two municipalities require in district contributions (none in CA), and they require no more than 75. It's worth noting that our aggregate threshold of \$25,000 in city contributions is twice that of any municipality in the nation. The commission did not believe any increase to the aggregate in City contribution requirement of \$25,000 was necessary.

### **3. We strongly support the requirement that candidates participate in a town hall or debate before receiving matching funds.**

In the current system, candidates only have to agree to participate in a debate to receive funding, not to actually participate in one. We think it is important to ensure that candidates don't skirt this important civic responsibility by requiring actual participation in order to access public funds. In order to prevent obstructionism by candidates who opt out of public funding, and to speed up the ability of grassroots candidates to gain access to funding, we support allowing participation in a fully public town hall to substitute for participation in a debate. This town hall should require that the public and media be allowed to ask questions and that all other candidates are allowed to participate.

**4. We urge you to decrease the maximum match per contributor to \$100.**

Currently the city only matches the first \$250 of a contribution. Under the current 2:1 match, that means a public match of \$500. But under the proposed 6:1 system, a \$250 contribution would result in a public match of \$1,500. We think public funds would be better spent on amplifying the power of smaller donors.

Berkeley's 6:1 system limits the match to only the first \$50 of a contribution. When NYC increased their match rate to 6:1 they lowered the max match per contributor to \$175. Los Angeles is an outlier nationally in allowing such large donations to be matched. As the City considers increasing the match to 6:1 and lowering barriers to participation, we strongly recommend that the maximum match per contributor be lowered accordingly. Setting the maximum match at \$100 would ensure that we aren't strengthening our biggest donors, and that the Public Matching Funds program fulfills its original intent.

The Ethics Commission considered but did not adopt this recommendation. We believe it is an essential component to a campaign finance system that empowers small donors and creates a responsive, democratic city government.

\* \* \*

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. As our elected representatives, we hope you will take action to defend and advance democracy.

Sincerely,  
127 Angelenos

Blanca Jimenez  
Los Angeles, CA 90001

Kim McGill  
Los Angeles, CA 90003

Matt Lambert  
Los Angeles, CA 90004

Kay Gallin  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Ralph Lopez  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Nicholas Brown  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Genevieve Liang  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Maro Kakoussian  
Los Angeles, CA 90014

Damon Brown  
Los Angeles, CA 90016

Sarah Evans  
Los Angeles, CA 90016

James Hubbard  
Los Angeles, CA 90018

Dena Schwimmer  
Los Angeles, CA 90019

Adam Smith  
Los Angeles, CA 90019

Nora Gilbert  
Los Angeles, CA 90020

Shulamite Green  
Los Angeles, CA 90024

David Levitus  
Los Angeles, CA 90025

Joseph Scott Anthony  
Los Angeles, CA 90025

Genevieve Marcus  
Los Angeles, CA 90025

Judy Sachter  
Los Angeles, CA 90025

Nathan Bartley  
Los Angeles, CA 90025

Elvira De Santiago  
Los Angeles, CA 90026

Ferne Jacobs  
Los Angeles, CA 90026

Marjorie Kaye  
Los Angeles, CA 90026

Kristina Lear  
Los Angeles, CA 90026

Erika Nanes  
Los Angeles, CA 90026

Alexandra Romanoff  
Los Angeles, CA 90026

Kelsey Stefanson  
Los Angeles, CA 90026

Amelie Cherlin  
Los Angeles, CA 90027

Carol Gordon  
Los Angeles, CA 90027

Kate Grodd  
Los Angeles, CA 90027

Celeste Hong  
Los Angeles, CA 90027

Carey Kayser  
Los Angeles, CA 90027

Keith Keith  
Los Angeles, CA 90027

Leslie Klein  
Los Angeles, CA 90027

Mark Knowles  
Los Angeles, CA 90027

Paul Priebe  
Los Angeles, CA 90027

Dana Simmons  
Los Angeles, CA 90027

Dorothy Wilkinson  
Los Angeles, CA 90027

Luke Klipp  
Los Angeles, CA 90027

Craig Colton  
Los Angeles, CA 90027

Lisa Wallace  
Los Angeles, CA 90027

Larissa Gomes  
Los Angeles, CA 90027

Aixa Fielder  
Los Angeles, CA 90028

Mary McAuliffe  
Los Angeles, CA 90028

Sascha Stanton-Craven  
Los Angeles, CA 90028

Marilyn Katz  
Los Angeles, CA 90028

Erich Bollmann  
Los Angeles, CA 90029

Evan Beattie  
Los Angeles, CA 90029

Sonia Gonzalez  
Los Angeles, CA 90031

Michael Cardoza  
Los Angeles, CA 90032

Dylan Gasperik  
Los Angeles, CA 90032

Patrice Anita  
Los Angeles, CA 90034

Kimberly Emerson  
Los Angeles, CA 90034

Anne-Marie Schaaf  
Los Angeles, CA 90034

Bradley Falk  
Los Angeles, CA 90035

Tristan Scremin  
Los Angeles, CA 90035

Rick Blanc  
Los Angeles, CA 90035

Judith Anderson  
Los Angeles, CA 90036

Brad Kaiserman  
Los Angeles, CA 90038

Gregor Reti  
Los Angeles, CA 90038

Matthew Bogdanow  
Los Angeles, CA 90039

Lyle Henry  
Los Angeles, CA 90039

Jonathan Matz  
Los Angeles, CA 90039

Brett Shears  
Los Angeles, CA 90039

Enver Gjokaj  
Los Angeles, CA 90039

Tillie Boyle  
Los Angeles, CA 90041

Tal Allweil  
Los Angeles, CA 90042

Liz Amsden  
Los Angeles, CA 90042

Tim O'Brien  
Los Angeles, CA 90042

Rob Quan  
Los Angeles, CA 90042

Sasha Rappaport  
Los Angeles, CA 90042

Nerllyn Eskenassy  
Los Angeles, CA 90044

Rose Henderson  
Los Angeles, CA 90044

Judy Alter  
Los Angeles, CA 90045

Graciela Huth  
Los Angeles, CA 90045

Joseph Szabo  
Los Angeles, CA 90045

Sidney Winston  
Los Angeles, CA 90047

Carmel Dagan  
Los Angeles, CA 90048

Sara Lowry  
Los Angeles, CA 90048

Lynne Weiske  
Los Angeles, CA 90048

Valerie Hurt  
Los Angeles, CA 90048

Joseph Dadgari  
Los Angeles, CA 90049

Karen Hellwig  
Los Angeles, CA 90056

Charles Croft  
Los Angeles, CA 90057

Mike Sinkov  
Los Angeles, CA 90057

Ann Bein  
Los Angeles, CA 90064

Alexander Demay  
Los Angeles, CA 90064

Nancy Lee  
Los Angeles, CA 90064

George Nickle  
Los Angeles, CA 90064

David Loughnot  
Los Angeles, CA 90064

Jessica Craven  
Los Angeles, CA 90065

Chip Phillips  
Los Angeles, CA 90065

Gloria Schneider  
Los Angeles, CA 90065

Damian Church  
Los Angeles, CA 90065

Don Bush  
Los Angeles, CA 90066

Deborah O'Connor  
Los Angeles, CA 90066

Calvin Sloan  
Los Angeles, CA 90066

Prisca Gloor  
Los Angeles, CA 90066

Nick Starr  
Los Angeles, CA 90066

Allyson Lambert  
Los Angeles, CA 90067

Silvia Grossmann  
Los Angeles, CA 90068

Lawrence Jimenez  
Los Angeles, CA 90068

Rick Mitton  
Los Angeles, CA 90068

Marc Silverman  
Los Angeles, CA 90068

Marsha Thomason-Sykes  
Los Angeles, CA 90068

Joe Wolcott  
Los Angeles, CA 90068

Laurice Sommers  
Los Angeles, CA 90068

Eirene Donohue  
Los Angeles, CA 90068

Chris Van Hook  
Los Angeles, CA 90272

Jane Rubin Gerstein  
Los Angeles, CA 90291

Mir Faugno  
Los Angeles, CA 90293

Margaret Flood  
Los Angeles, CA 90293

Donnal Poppe  
Los Angeles, CA 91325

Paul Klinger  
Granada Hills, CA 91344

Carlos Amador  
Granada Hills, CA 91344

Georgia Brewer  
Los Angeles, CA 91401

Donald Goodman  
Van Nuys, CA 91401

Paula Seliga  
Van Nuys, CA 91401

Carolina Goodman  
Van Nuys, CA 91401

Wayne Williams  
Los Angeles, CA 91403

Lloyd Niven  
Los Angeles, CA 91604

Marlene Leone  
Valley Village, CA 91607

Sarah Carbiener  
Valley Village, CA 91607

Miguel Rivera  
Los Angeles, CA



Supporting Los Angeles Public Financing Boost

WHEREAS, the influence of large amounts of private money in elections sets the conditions for corruption and/or the appearance of corruption; and

WHEREAS, a more robust public financing system in Los Angeles would ensure that more money in campaigns comes from donors within the communities that are represented by the politicians running in those districts; and

WHEREAS, a more robust public financing system in Los Angeles would ensure that more money in campaigns comes from donors within the communities that are represented by the politicians running in those districts and would reduce the corrupting influence of large money donations; and

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Valley Grassroots for Democracy asks the Los Angeles City Council to hold a vote on Councilmember David Ryu's motion directing the Ethics Commission to prepare an ordinance on increasing the city's public matching funds rate to 6:1, and to hold a vote on Councilmember Mike Bonin's motion requesting the Commission consider a ballot measure for the 2018 election cycle asking Los Angeles voters to decide whether they want a full public financing for system all city elected offices; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be sent to all fifteen members of the Los Angeles City Council.

Written by Adrienne Burk, President, Valley Grassroots for Democracy  
Wayne Williams, California Clean Money Campaign  
April 16, 2017

Los Angeles City Council  
200 N. Spring Street  
City Hall - 3rd Floor  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
Sent via email

RE: Amendments to Campaign Finance Laws

Dear Los Angeles City Council Members:

Today, your honorable has a chance to assure its 4 million residents that the City Council is a strong voice for good government and a champion of making our local elections more democratic and more fair.

We at the Coalition to Preserve LA have joined a true spectrum of community and civic organizations to ask you to back all amendments to the City's Campaign Finance Laws contained in the Ethics Commission Recommendations, transmitted to Council on August 30, 2018.

In addition, we, as groups from across Los Angeles, and with many different missions, speak with one clear voice in urging you to lower the "maximum match per contributor" to \$100 from the current amount of \$250. *This is a crucial change that will truly empower L.A.'s small donors, a vibrant and well-grounded population who are among our most engaged, diverse, and informed residents.*

Why should the City Council care about encouraging small donors? Because today's lead stories on KNBC, KABC, KCBS, the *L.A. Times*, *Daily News*, *La Opinion* and other key providers of local news tell us that democracy is under attack both globally and nationally. In concert with that, more elections are saturated with mega-contributions.

We know and appreciate that each of you 15 Council Members has decried L.A.'s plummeting voter turnout in local elections, which is unfolding as Americans grow more pessimistic about our system of government than at any point since the nation's founding.

In L.A., even amidst ongoing and vibrant public debate over scores of local issues, voter turnout has plummeted from 76% in 1969 to just over 10% in 2015. The message is that Angelenos are disconnected from their government.

We know that you are concerned about this lack of participation in L.A. It narrows and harms the civic dialogue needed to address our vast city's greatest challenges, such as:

- Homelessness and affordable housing
- Transportation and traffic
- Policing
- Environmental injustice
- Pressing sustainability issues including: **A)** our dying urban tree canopy without which the deadly heat-island effect will grow each year, and **B)** our distressing new ranking as

the worst city, among the 75<sup>th</sup> biggest cities in the U.S., in providing parks per urban dweller, especially vivid in our low-income areas.

The City Council has before it a serious opportunity to go beyond symbolic resolutions on Citizens United and approve municipal campaign finance reform that lessens the influence of big money and enables candidates to focus less on finding high-end donors.

Done right, campaign finance reform will make our government more responsive to L.A.'s everyday residents and better able to confront the challenges cited above, and those still to come.

The good news is that L.A. has an existing Public Matching Funds Program, aimed at allowing candidates for office who lack these networks of wealthy contributors, to mount viable campaigns for city elected offices.

But the 1993 program approved by voters no longer fulfills its intent. At first, the Public Matching Funds Program succeeded, and garnered positive media attention and glowing reviews: *Los Angeles saw a major, and crucial, jump in female representation to 5 women out 15 City Council members in the late 1990s. There is no debate over the fact that these 5 key leaders brought strong, fresh, effective ideas to City Hal. All Angelenos were better for it.*

The program today is failing. Most contributions submitted to the matching funds program are from small donors who give less than \$100. It isn't hard to imagine these caring and engaged residents, sending in their \$50 and \$80 donations. But those who give more than \$100 constitute about **90% of the monetary value** of all contributions in city elections.

Today's L.A.'s too-high qualification rules make our public financing system the most inaccessible in the U.S.

Here's why:

The "match ratio" and maximum funding per candidate have not increased in line with our peer cities **or with years and years of inflation**. And no, with the City's elections timed to unfold during the State and Federal elections, it is no secret that campaign costs will skyrocket amidst heightened competition for ad space, vendors, election staff and consultants.

Aligning L.A.'s elections with state and federal hopefully will increase voter turnout and engagement: it's projected to draw two to six times more voters to the polls than our current city elections do. That's huge.

But our out-of-step, aged campaign finance system must be adjusted accordingly. With the fundraising window for the 2020 elections open as of September 3, it's imperative that the City Council act quickly on the following modernizations:

The City Council has before it the Ethics Commission's Recommendations, based on impressive public input, transparent debate, and expert analysis by Commission staffers. We urge you to adopt its proposals to:

1) Empower small donors with a 6:1 match rate and boost overall public financing available to candidates: **Increase the Matching Funds Rate and Increase the Per-Candidate Maximum Amounts.** Financing is not a problem here. The Trust Fund that finances the Matching Funds Program will have a *\$19+ million surplus* as of June 30, 2019. This untapped surplus will continue to balloon up in the absence of these proposed reforms.

2) Make the Matching Funds Program accessible by lowering the initial qualification requirements: **Eliminate the Redundant Qualifying Signature Rule** that candidates must gather an extra 500 signatures to qualify for full matching funds. This burden doesn't encourage constituent contact -- well-funded campaigns just pay signature-gatherers. And, **Lower the In-District Contribution Rule.** Decrease to 100 the number of in-district financial contributions need to qualify for the Matching Funds Program. Requiring a candidate-hopeful to find 200 local donors is *clearly an equity-based obstacle* in districts where households simply do not have anything left the rent, utilities, food and other essentials. *This pressing equity issue is why just 2 cities in the U.S. require in-district contributions –and these 2 cities require only 75 in-district contributions.*

3. **Require candidates to participate in a town hall/debate before receiving matching funds.** However, we must create fully public town halls if they are allowed to act as substitutes for public debates. This means the City Council must ensure that the public and media pose questions at these town halls, and that all other candidates get to participate.

**4. Decrease the maximum match per contributor to \$100.** Los Angeles currently matches the first \$250 of a contribution, making it an outlier in the nation. Under our current 2:1 match, we create a public match of \$500. But under the now-proposed 6:1 system, a \$250 contribution would result in a staggering match of \$1,500. *Public funds instead should go to increasing the power of smaller donors.* Berkeley's 6:1 system activates the match on the first \$50 of a contribution. New York City increased their match rate to 6:1 and lowered the Max Match Per Contributor to \$175. *We urge you to lower the maximum match per contributor to \$100.* The Ethics Commission considered but did not adopt this recommendation. But it is an essential component to creating system that empowers small donors and in turn creates a responsive, democratic city government.

To sum up, Coalition to Preserve LA urges you to enact all of the Ethics Commission Recommendations, transmitted to Council on August 30, 2018, **and in addition we strongly urge you to lower the maximum match per contributor to \$100**, down from the current \$250, to bring back small donors who played a vital role our urban history and health, by bringing incredible women and rich diversity to the Los Angeles City Council.

Thank you for your consideration of this issue. Its importance against the backdrop of national controversies over governing are more pressing than ever. As our elected representatives, we hope you will agree and take action to advance democracy.

Sincerely,

Jill Stewart  
Executive Director  
Coalition to Preserve LA  
6500 Sunset Blvd  
Los Angeles 90028

We at the Coalition to Preserve LA have joined a true spectrum of community and civic organizations to ask you to back all amendments to the City's Campaign Finance Laws contained in the Ethics Commission Recommendations, transmitted to Council on August 30, 2018.

In addition, we, as groups from across Los Angeles, and with many different missions, speak with one clear voice in urging you to lower the "maximum match per contributor" to \$100 from the current amount of \$250. *This is a crucial change that will truly empower L.A.'s small donors, a vibrant and well-grounded population who are among our most engaged, diverse, and informed residents.*

Why should the City Council care about encouraging small donors? Because today's lead stories on KNBC, KABC, KCBS, the *L.A. Times*, *Daily News*, *La Opinion* and other key providers of local news tell us that democracy is under attack both globally and nationally. In concert with that, more elections are saturated with mega-contributions.

We know and appreciate that each of you 15 Council Members has decried L.A.'s plummeting voter turnout in local elections, which is unfolding as Americans grow more pessimistic about our system of government than at any point since the nation's founding.

In L.A., even amidst ongoing and vibrant public debate over scores of local issues, voter turnout has plummeted from 76% in 1969 to just over 10% in 2015. The message is that Angelenos are disconnected from their government.

We know that you are concerned about this lack of participation in L.A. It narrows and harms the civic dialogue needed to address our vast city's greatest challenges, such as:

- Homelessness and affordable housing
- Transportation and traffic
- Policing
- Environmental injustice
- Pressing sustainability issues including: **A)** our dying urban tree canopy without which the deadly heat-island effect will grow each year, and **B)** our distressing new ranking as the worst city, among the 75 biggest cities in the U.S., in providing parks per urban dweller, especially vivid in our low-income areas.

The City Council has before it a serious opportunity to go beyond symbolic resolutions on Citizens United and approve municipal campaign finance reform that lessens the influence of big money and enables candidates to focus less on finding high-end donors.

Done right, campaign finance reform will make our government more responsive to L.A.'s everyday residents and better able to confront the challenges cited above, and those still to come.

The good news is that L.A. has an existing Public Matching Funds Program, aimed at allowing candidates for office who lack these networks of wealthy contributors, to mount viable campaigns for city elected offices.

But the 1993 program approved by voters no longer fulfills its intent. At first, the Public Matching Funds Program succeeded, and garnered positive media attention and glowing reviews: *Los Angeles saw a major, and crucial, jump in female representation to 5 women out 15 City Council members in the late 1990s. There is no debate over the fact that these 5 key leaders brought strong, fresh, effective ideas to City Hal. All Angelenos were better for it.*

The program today is failing. Most contributions submitted to the matching funds program are from small donors who give less than \$100. It isn't hard to imagine these caring and engaged residents, sending in their \$50 and \$80 donations. But those who give more than \$100 constitute about **90% of the monetary value** of all contributions in city elections.

Today's L.A.'s too-high qualification rules make our public financing system the most inaccessible in the U.S.

Here's why:

The "match ratio" and maximum funding per candidate have not increased in line with our peer cities **or with years and years of inflation**. And no, with the City's elections timed to unfold during the State and Federal elections, it is no secret that campaign costs will skyrocket amidst heightened competition for ad space, vendors, election staff and consultants.

Aligning L.A.'s elections with state and federal hopefully will increase voter turnout and engagement: it's projected to draw two to six times more voters to the polls than our current city elections do. That's huge.

But our out-of-step, aged campaign finance system must be adjusted accordingly. With the fundraising window for the 2020 elections open as of September 3, it's imperative that the City Council act quickly on the following modernizations:

The City Council has before it the Ethics Commission's Recommendations, based on impressive public input, transparent debate, and expert analysis by Commission staffers. We urge you to adopt its proposals to:

1) Empower small donors with a 6:1 match rate and boost overall public financing available to candidates: **Increase the Matching Funds Rate and Increase the Per-Candidate Maximum Amounts**. Financing is not a problem here. The Trust Fund that finances the Matching Funds Program will have a \$19+ million surplus as of June 30, 2019. This untapped surplus will continue to balloon up in the absence of these proposed reforms.

2) Make the Matching Funds Program accessible by lowering the initial qualification requirements: **Eliminate the Redundant Qualifying Signature Rule** that candidates must

gather an extra 500 signatures to qualify for full matching funds. This burden doesn't encourage constituent contact -- well-funded campaigns just pay signature-gatherers. And, **Lower the In-District Contribution Rule**. Decrease to 100 the number of in-district financial contributions needed to qualify for the Matching Funds Program. Requiring a candidate-hopeful to find 200 local donors is *clearly an equity-based obstacle* in districts where households simply do not have anything left for the rent, utilities, food and other essentials. *This pressing equity issue is why just 2 cities in the U.S. require in-district contributions –and these 2 cities require only 75 in-district contributions.*

**3. Require candidates to participate in a town hall/debate before receiving matching funds.**

However, we must create fully public town halls if they are allowed to act as substitutes for public debates. This means the City Council must ensure that the public and media pose questions at these town halls, and that all other candidates get to participate.

**4. Decrease the maximum match per contributor to \$100.** Los Angeles currently matches the first \$250 of a contribution, making it an outlier in the nation. Under our current 2:1 match, we create a public match of \$500. But under the now-proposed 6:1 system, a \$250 contribution would result in a staggering match of \$1,500. *Public funds instead should go to increasing the power of smaller donors.* Berkeley's 6:1 system activates the match on the first \$50 of a contribution. New York City increased their match rate to 6:1 and lowered the Max Match Per Contributor to \$175. *We urge you to lower the maximum match per contributor to \$100.* The Ethics Commission considered but did not adopt this recommendation. But it is an essential component to creating a system that empowers small donors and in turn creates a responsive, democratic city government.

To sum up, Coalition to Preserve LA urges you to enact all of the Ethics Commission Recommendations, transmitted to Council on August 30, 2018, **and in addition we strongly urge you to lower the maximum match per contributor to \$100**, down from the current \$250, to bring back small donors who played a vital role in our urban history and health, by bringing incredible women and rich diversity to the Los Angeles City Council.

Thank you for your consideration of this issue. Its importance against the backdrop of national controversies over governing are more pressing than ever. As our elected representatives, we hope you will agree and take action to advance democracy.

Sincerely,

Jill Stewart  
Executive Director  
Coalition to Preserve LA  
6500 Sunset Blvd  
Los Angeles 90028



Honorable L.A. City Councilmembers,

I am the founder of Represent Los Angeles-San Gabriel Valley. Represent Us, a nonpartisan 501(c)(3), has dozens of chapters across the country with one aim: a fairer electoral process that is not beholden to money, but rather a candidate's message, qualifications, and will to equally represent all constituents regardless of their wealth.

Represent Los Angeles-San Gabriel Valley has submitted multiple letters to the Ethics Commission in support of the campaign finance reforms suggested by the Unrig L.A. coalition. Thus, rather than reiterate what is stated in those letters, I want to share with you a story.

I am a lawn bowler. Lawn bowling is similar to curling, but on turf. I was a proud member of Team U.S., representing the United States in international play.

There are not many lawn bowling greens in the U.S., but those that exist are prized possessions of the lawn bowling community. I trained and socialized at the lawn bowling greens in Alhambra, CA. The City stopped caring for the greens in the 90s, so the lawn bowlers took it upon themselves to purchase equipment and maintain the facility. Most of our members were senior citizens. Some had disabilities. Most spoke English as a second language. We were a majority minority club.

One day, the Community Services Director came to the facility and told us that the lawn bowling greens were going to be bulldozed to make room for a parking structure. We were told that there was nothing we could do about it and the Director laughed at us when we said we would approach the city council about the matter. Then the city council laughed at us, then insulted us, then publically attacked us for what we would do next. We started digging. What we found, and later exposed, astonished us.

The City had been misusing state and federal funds for decades. City Hall was doling out sweetheart no-bid contracts to favored sons and daughters, placing family members on city commissions, and approving large development projects with little-to-no oversight and respect for state and local laws.

The same people had been in power for 30 years. The community had become indifferent. Alhambra voters simply tuned out. Why?

Alhambra operates under an at-large voting system with no campaign finance laws. Alhambra's elected leaders are supported by special moneyed interests who write large campaign checks to their favored candidates, stifling any opposition.

After a year-long fight, the parking structure was scrapped, but the lawn bowlers still lost their bowling greens, and with it a sense of community and purpose. This is the cost of unchecked money in politics. Poor or absent campaign finance laws don't just diminish our democratic institutions, they corrode the social fabric of our communities. They strip residents of equity, dignity, and justice.

[www.represent.us](http://www.represent.us)



That is why I am asking the Los Angeles City Council to support improvements to L.A.'s campaign finance system that will increase transparency and accountability and further level the political playing field by reducing barriers to elected office for grassroots candidates and nonincumbents. Represent Los Angeles-San Gabriel Valley fully supports Unrig L.A.'s recommendations for campaign finance reform in Los Angeles. We hope the City Council will too.

Sincerely,  
Sean McMorris,  
Chapter Leader, Represent Los Angeles-San Gabriel Valley



Richard Williams <[richard.williams@lacity.org](mailto:richard.williams@lacity.org)>

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## Public Comment Council File 15-1088-S1 RE: The Ethics Commission's Report is Council File 12-1269-S5

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**WAYNE WILLIAMS** <[wwclick@mac.com](mailto:wwclick@mac.com)>

Thu, Sep 20, 2018 at 4:47 PM

To: [Richard.williams@lacity.org](mailto:richard.williams@lacity.org), [Holly.wolcott@lacity.org](mailto:Holly.wolcott@lacity.org)

RE: The Ethics Commission's Report is Council File 12-1269-S5

Hello Richard and Holly,

I'm Wayne Williams, a Los Angeles resident and a board member of the California Clean Money Campaign.

We support the 6 to 1 matching fund proposal and we fully support our leading proposal of a \$100 contribution limit for a number of reasons, including avoiding the appearance of Incumbency Protection with the currently proposed limits.

The purpose of public funding in Los Angeles, as clearly stated in the city charter, is to support small contributions which a \$100 contribution limit insurers.

The Ethics Commission's proposed large contribution limit is the equivalent of giving large contributors \$3000 for their contributions, which isn't right, or fair to the public on many levels.

Council Member Ryu's recent proposal brings us close to this dollar amount and looks to create a compromise solution that represents a viable alternative to the large donation amount previously presented .

The smaller donation limit amount is about engaging and encouraging small donors, where as large dollar contributions work against the concept of citizens participation in government.

Let's make elections affordable and equitable for all and move this overall proposal with these minor requested adjustments to the City Council for discussion and a supportive vote.

Thank you,

Wayne Williams

Wayne Williams  
Board Member  
California Clean Money Campaign

Secretary/Treasurer  
California Clean Money Action Fund

Email: [wwclick@mac.com](mailto:wwclick@mac.com)  
(818) 905-8097

"If money is speech, then speech is no longer free" - Derek Cressman

Los Angeles City Council Rules Committee  
200 North Spring St.  
City Hall, Room 340  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

To Council President Wesson and Members of the Rules Committee:

On behalf of California Common Cause, we thank you so much for considering the Los Angeles Ethics Commission's proposed changes to the city's campaign public financing program. We greatly appreciate the Ethics Commission's re-commitment to strengthening the program and urge the Rules Committee to pass the recommendations so that they can be discussed and voted on by the entire City Council.

There has been growing public concern around special interest money flowing to city officials' election campaigns and we strongly believe this range of reforms would restore public trust in local democracy.

#### Matching Funds Rate

We strongly support the Ethics Commission's recommendation to raise the current match rate to 6:1 for both the primary and general elections. This rate would put Los Angeles on par with cities such as New York and Berkeley and counties such as Montgomery County, MD. Boosting the rate will have a positive impact of incentivizing candidates to communicate with a broader and more diverse base of constituents in neighborhoods across the city, instead of focusing only on the wealthiest of donors.

#### In-District Contribution Requirement

We support a requirement that candidates raise a certain number of contributions within their districts (for City Council) or within the city of Los Angeles (Citywide candidates). Candidates must demonstrate some basis of support within their communities. But we are in agreement with the Ethics Commission that the current requirement of 200 in-district contributions may be unduly burdensome to some candidates, and support lowering that figure to 100 as advised by the Commissioners.

#### Qualifying Signature Requirement

We also agree with the Ethics Commission's recommendation to eliminate the requirement that candidates gather an extra 500 signatures to qualify for the full matching funds. This additional requirement does nothing to encourage constituent contact as most campaigns simply pay signature-gatherers.

#### Debate Participation Requirement

We support the Commission's recommendation that candidates should be required to participate in a town hall or debate before receiving matching funds. We would add, however, that a qualified debate or town hall should:

1) be open to and advertised the public and media, 2) invite more than one candidate to attend, 3) allow constituents/audience to interact with candidates. We also believe that a qualifying event should be hosted by third parties, or potentially more than one candidate, but not just a single candidate.

#### Increasing the Per-Candidate Maximum Amounts

We support the Commission's recommendation to increase the total amount of matching funds given to qualifying candidates, adjusted for CPI. We agree with the numbers proposed by Ethics staff in the Commission's transmittal report.

#### Contributor Certification

We support developing standardized procedure for campaign donors to follow to sign a form attesting to their contribution, whether that be a paper form or online form. Not only would this provide some accountability to the system, but also protect contributors and candidates alike. And such a form would make it easier for Ethics staff to track contributions if there later on there is a complaint.

The following was not among the recommendations proposed by the Ethics Commission. However, we strongly advise the City Council to also fully consider this proposal going forward.

#### Restrictions on Developer Contributions

We agree with Councilmember David Ryu that a ban on contributions from developers would be a positive step toward reforming our elections, opening them up to a broader array of candidates, and developing a more even playing field for candidates of varying economic backgrounds.

In the event that such a ban is found to be difficult to administer, we strongly recommend a clean ban on all non-individual contributions, similar to the federal ban and San Diego's ban.

#### Conclusion

California Common Cause urges the Rules Committee to pass along the Ethics Commission's stronger and more equitable approaches to Los Angeles' campaign finance system on to the full City Council for a vote. We believe such changes will increase voter participation in local elections, broaden the kinds of donors who contribute and encourage more people of various economic backgrounds and political views to run for office.

Sincerely,

Sylvia Moore, Southern California Organizer

Kathay Feng, Executive Director

California Common Cause

