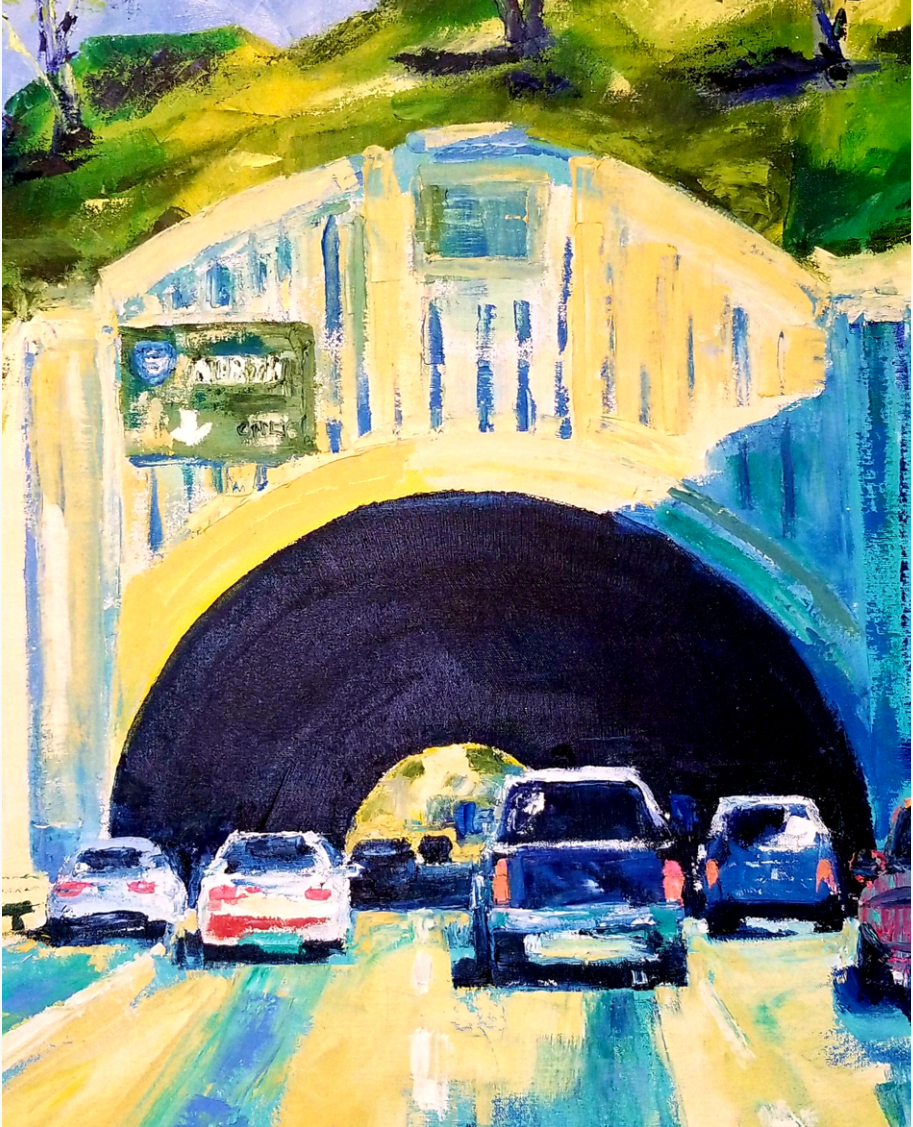


EXPLORING REFORM

**A Compendium of Research, Reports, and
Modeling of Democracy Vouchers in Los Angeles**



**Tom Latkowski
Michael Draskovic**


los angeles for
democracy
vouchers

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Introduction

Campaign finance plays an important role in Los Angeles politics, and will be a key component of any reform efforts. On June 13, 2023, the Los Angeles City Council passed Motion 23-0359, indicating an interest in democracy vouchers as a future reform to the city’s campaign finance system. Given this increased interest in reform, this report is intended to serve as a resource for researchers, advocates, and government officials interested in the details underlying a democracy vouchers program.

Building on our previous research, this report contains three sections:

1. Research into the current state of campaign finance in Los Angeles.
2. Information about democracy vouchers, and a list of the most relevant existing reports on Seattle’s democracy vouchers program.
3. Modeling of the effects that a democracy vouchers program would have in Los Angeles.

At the end of the compendium, we’ve included an appendix from the California Clean Money Campaign (CCMC), detailing their suggestions and recommendations for a hybrid democracy vouchers and lump sum grant system (“full public financing”) similar to full public financing systems in Arizona and Maine, along with modeling of the cost and effects of such a hybrid system). We’re grateful to Trent Lange of CCMC for their support of our efforts.

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Initial polling shows that strong majorities of Angelenos support these reforms to our campaign finance system. We hope this compendium serves as a helpful guide to the impact democracy vouchers could have on the city of Los Angeles, and we're grateful to the many individuals and groups who provided valuable insights during this process.

Research into money in LA politics

Los Angeles City has 18 elected officials: the Mayor, the City Controller, the City Attorney, and 15 members of the City Council. Since 2001, the Los Angeles City Ethics Commission has published data regarding contributions to and expenditures from local campaigns. Using this data, we analyzed the contribution sources and spending history of Los Angeles candidates over the past 20 years.¹ Note that all dollar amounts are adjusted for inflation to 2022 dollars.

Much of our analysis uses ZIP code level data. For racial demographics, for example, ZIP codes are the most granular level of data we can use, without knowing the racial identification of each individual donor. Looking at overall ZIP code demographics is a somewhat crude breakdown. Nonetheless, this data provides a helpful picture of the state of campaign finance in Los Angeles.

Our previous analyses of Los Angeles campaign finance used demographic data from the 2010 Census. For this analysis, we've pulled data from the 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, and 2020 American Community Surveys. Although the overall trends remain the same, demographic changes over this decade mean there are some discrepancies between this report and our "Elevating

¹ More information on how we performed our analysis is available here: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ssbNjW_mQ_CvN-bTUQZhyE0oz1e5fj0l60ZHgV5HS4Y

A folder containing our code and data is available here: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1a3H9AFwaIBwwGQWa01aVO40WPGGoILzX>

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More Voices”² and “Empowering Los Angeles”³ reports.

For each election cycle, we’ve included three visualizations:

- A pie chart, showing the breakdown of campaign funding by source: matching funds, people in Los Angeles,⁴ special interests in Los Angeles, people outside Los Angeles, or special interests outside Los Angeles;
- A packed bubble chart, showing the breakdown of money from inside versus outside of Los Angeles; and
- A map of Los Angeles, showing the breakdown of donations per capita by ZIP code, next to a map of the city’s racial demographics by ZIP code.⁵

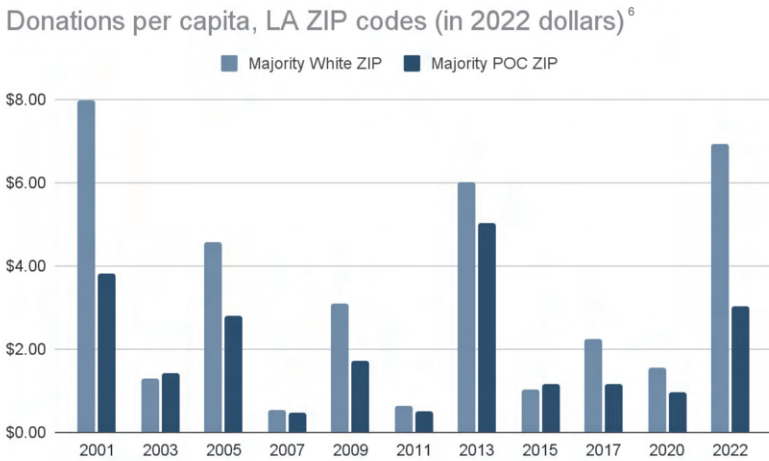
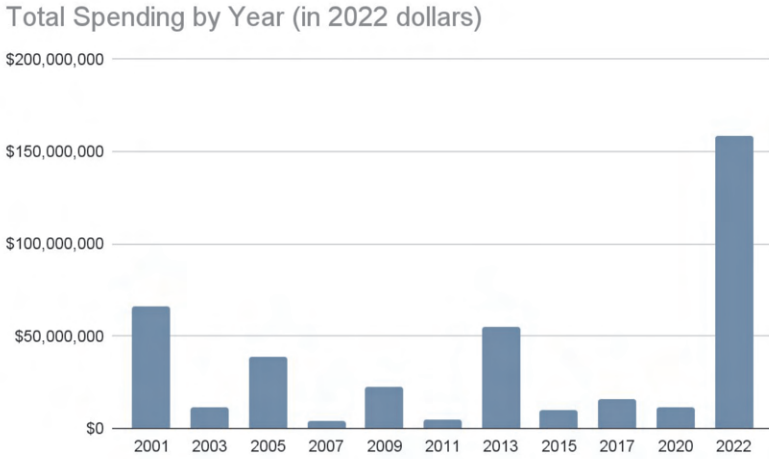
² <https://www.lademocracyvouchers.org/elevating-more-voices/>

³ <https://www.lademocracyvouchers.org/new-report-on-democracy-vouchers-empowering-los-angeles/>

⁴ Note that when we refer to “Los Angeles,” we mean the City of Los Angeles unless we specifically state that we are referring to Los Angeles County

⁵ Depending on the total amount of spending in a cycle, graphics showing donations per capita by ZIP code are scaled differently in different years. Within each year, the scaling is consistent. Note also that because some ZIP codes include portions of multiple cities, our ZIP code maps of Los Angeles do not perfectly mirror geographic maps of Los Angeles. We have used data from the US Census Bureau to determine which ZIP codes qualify as “Los Angeles City.”

Elections over time

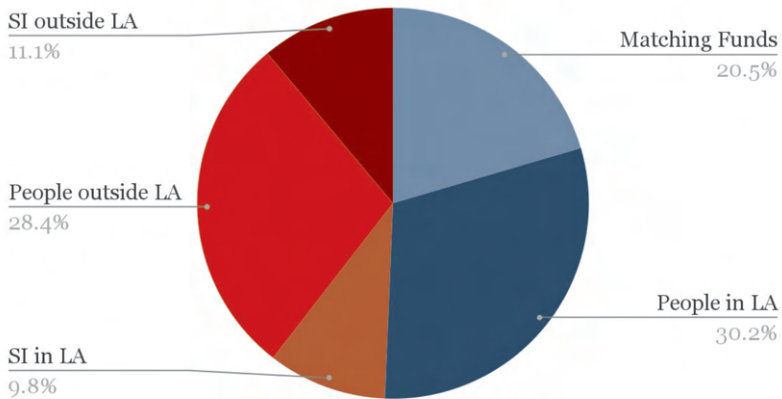


⁶ Note: 2022 donations per capita exclude Rick Caruso and Ramit Varma (large self-funders).

2001 Elections

- \$39.8 million in total contributions (\$65.8 million in 2022 dollars), including \$26 million on the mayoral race (\$43 million in 2022 dollars)
- Within Los Angeles, donations per capita from majority white ZIP codes were 2.10 times greater than from ZIP codes with a majority people of color

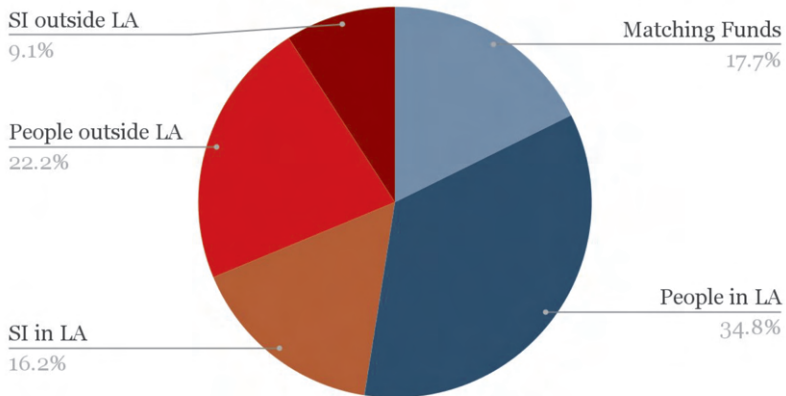
Dollar Source, 2001 Elections



2003 Elections

- \$7.4 million in total contributions (\$11.8 million in 2022 dollars)
- Within LA, there was no racial donation gap visible at the ZIP code level in 2003⁷

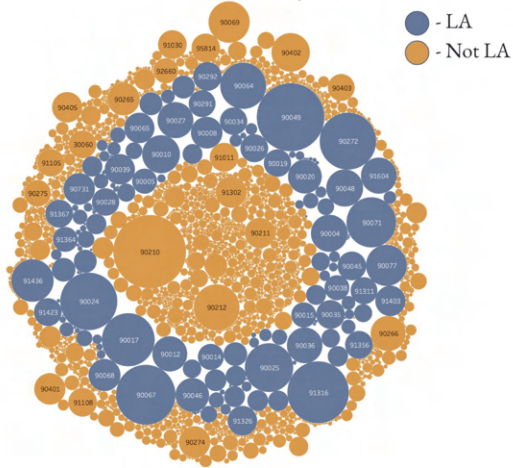
Dollar Source, 2003 Elections



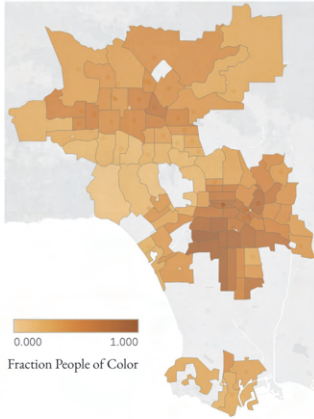
⁷ Donations per capita were within 10% in majority white and majority POC ZIP codes. Note that this uses data from the 2011 American Community Survey, not from 2003.

RESEARCH INTO MONEY IN LA POLITICS

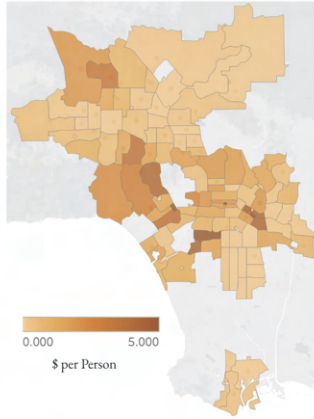
2003 Dollars Donated by ZIP Code



Racial Demographics



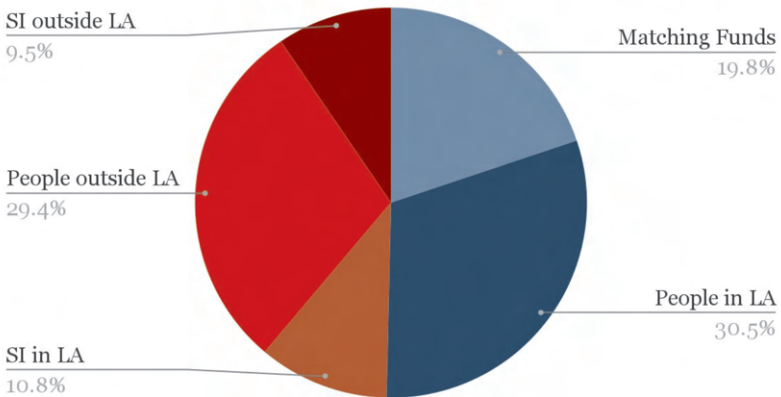
Donations/Capita



2005 Elections

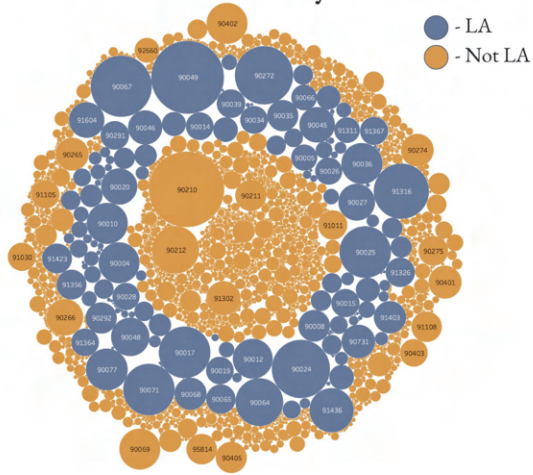
- \$25.9 million in total contributions (\$38.8 million in 2022 dollars), including \$19.7 million on the mayoral race (\$29.5 million in 2022 dollars)
- Within Los Angeles, donations per capita from majority white ZIP codes were 1.63 times greater than from ZIP codes with a majority people of color

Dollar Source, 2005 Elections

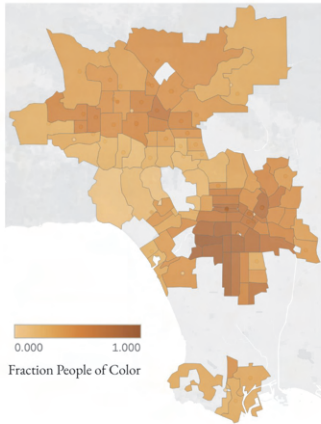


RESEARCH INTO MONEY IN LA POLITICS

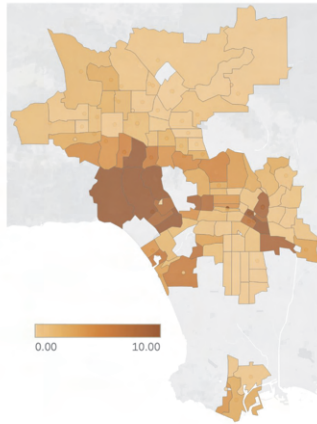
2005 Dollars Donated by ZIP Code



Racial Demographics



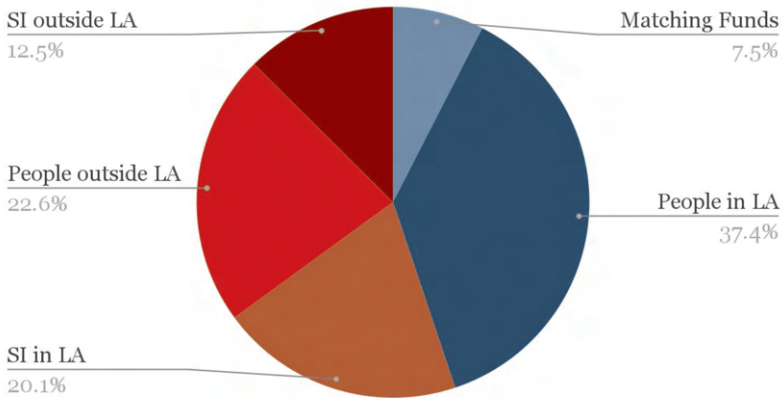
Donations/Capita



2007 Elections

- \$2.8 million in total contributions (\$4 million in 2022 dollars)
- Within LA, there was no racial donation gap visible at the ZIP code level in 2007⁸

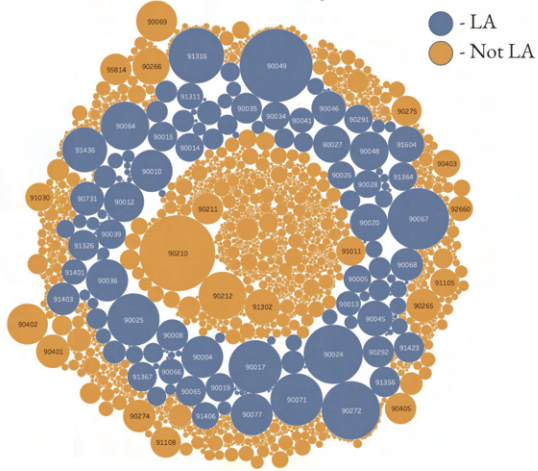
Dollar Source, 2007 Elections



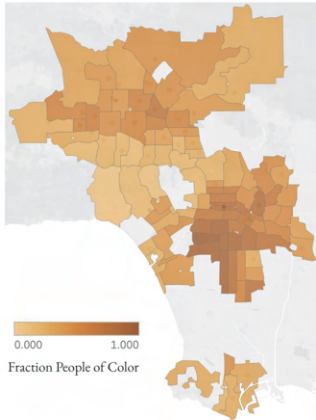
⁸ Donations per capita were within 15% in majority white and majority POC ZIP codes. Note that this uses data from the 2011 American Community Survey, not from 2003.

RESEARCH INTO MONEY IN LA POLITICS

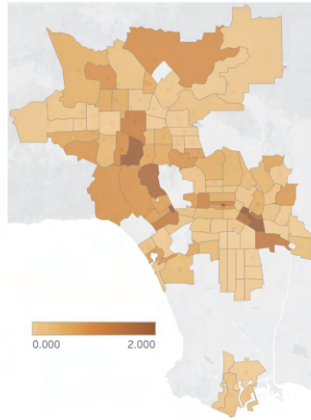
2007 Dollars Donated by ZIP Code



Racial Demographics



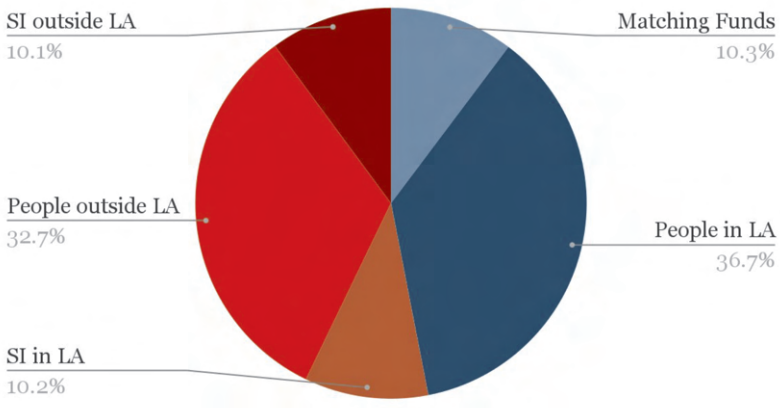
Donations/Capita



2009 Elections

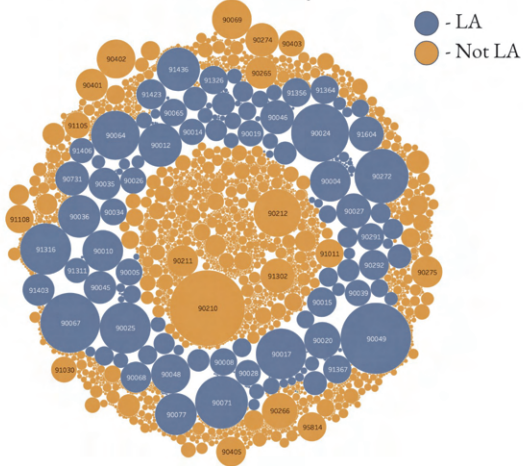
- \$16.6 million in total contributions (\$22.6 million in 2022 dollars), including \$3.7 million on the mayoral race (\$5 million in 2022 dollars)
- Within Los Angeles, donations per capita from majority white ZIP codes were 1.82 times greater than from ZIP codes with a majority people of color

Dollar Source, 2009 Elections

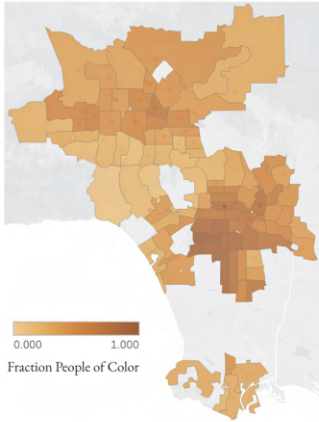


RESEARCH INTO MONEY IN LA POLITICS

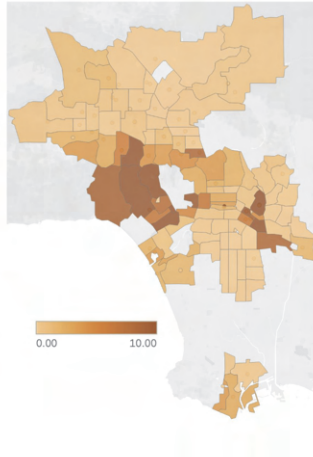
2009 Dollars Donated by ZIP Code



Racial Demographics



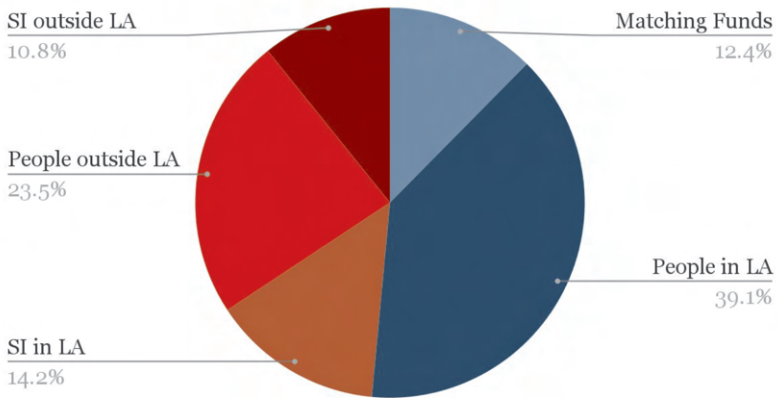
Donations/Capita



2011 Elections

- \$3.6 million in total contributions (\$4.7 million in 2022 dollars)
- Within Los Angeles, donations per capita from majority white ZIP codes were 1.23 times greater than from ZIP codes with a majority people of color

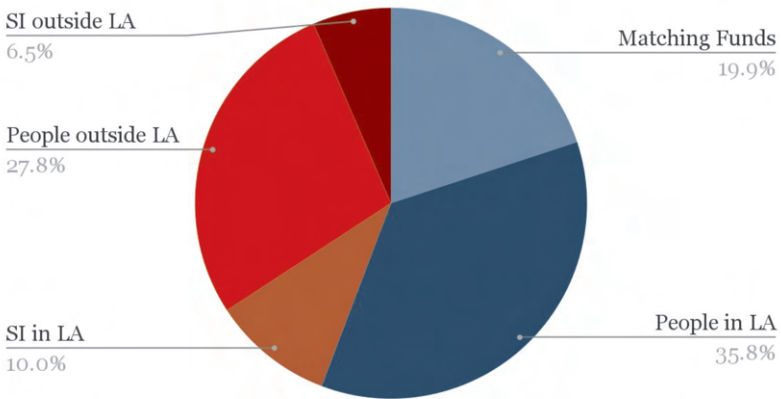
Dollar Source, 2011 Elections



2013 Elections

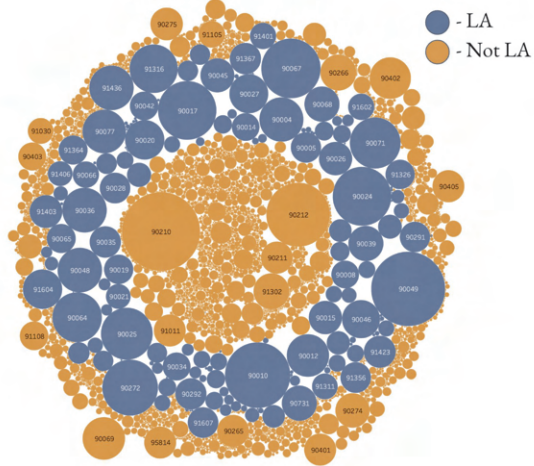
- \$43.8 million in total contributions (\$55 million in 2022 dollars), including \$25.3 million on the mayoral race (\$31.8 million in 2022 dollars)
- Within Los Angeles, donations per capita from majority white ZIP codes were 1.20 times greater than from ZIP codes with a majority people of color

Dollar Source, 2013 Elections

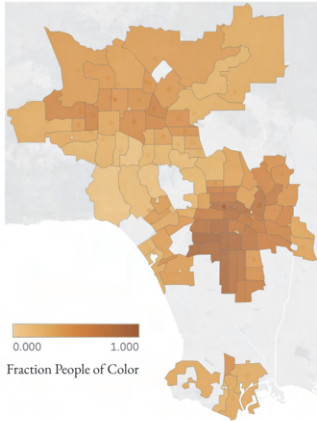


RESEARCH INTO MONEY IN LA POLITICS

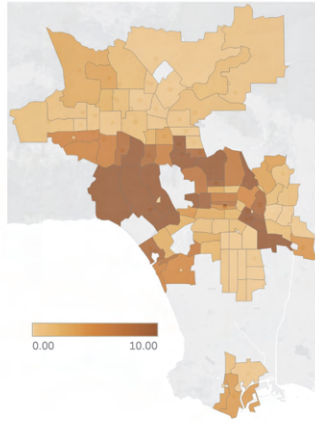
2013 Dollars Donated by ZIP Code



Racial Demographics



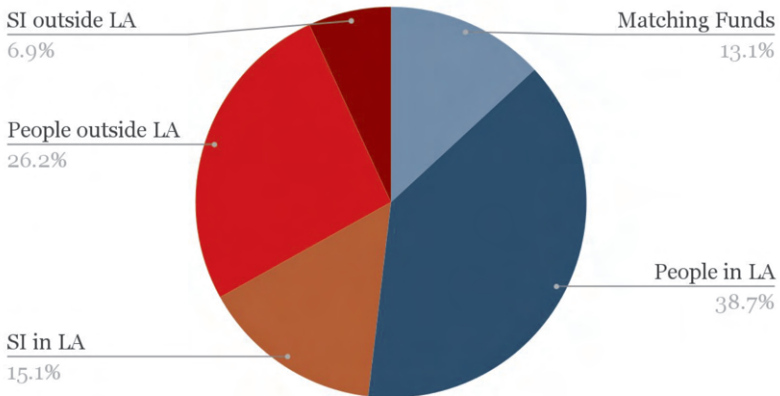
Donations/Capita



2015 Elections

- \$7.8 million in total contributions (\$9.6 million in 2022 dollars)
- Within LA, there was no racial donation gap visible at the ZIP code level in 2015⁹

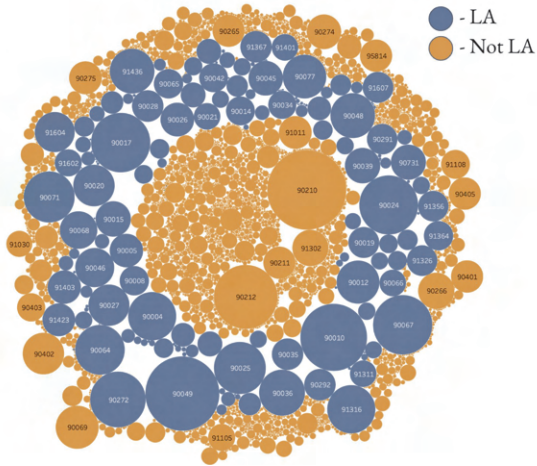
Dollar Source, 2015 Elections



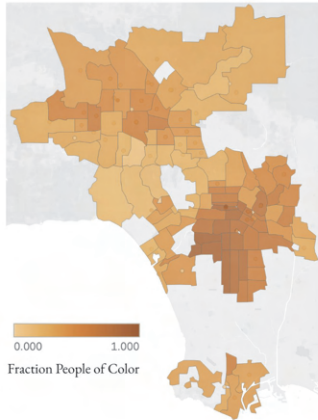
⁹ Donations per capita were within 15% in majority white and majority POC ZIP codes. This section used data from the 2015 American Community Survey.

RESEARCH INTO MONEY IN LA POLITICS

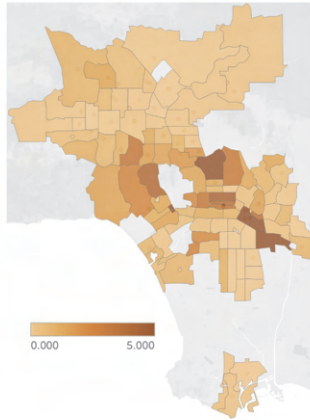
2015 Dollars Donated by ZIP Code



Racial Demographics



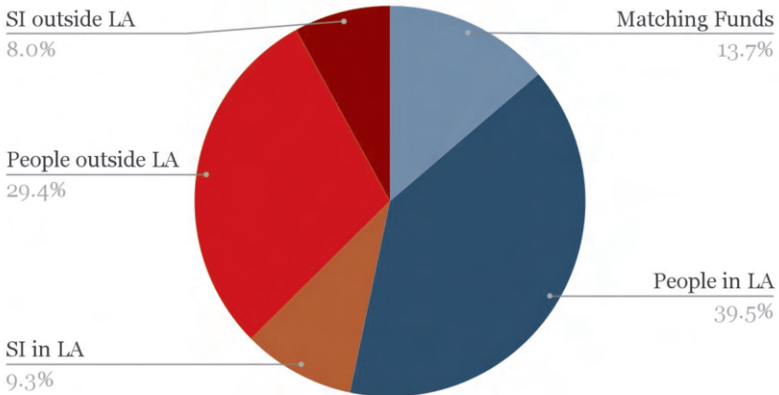
Donations/Capita



2017 Elections

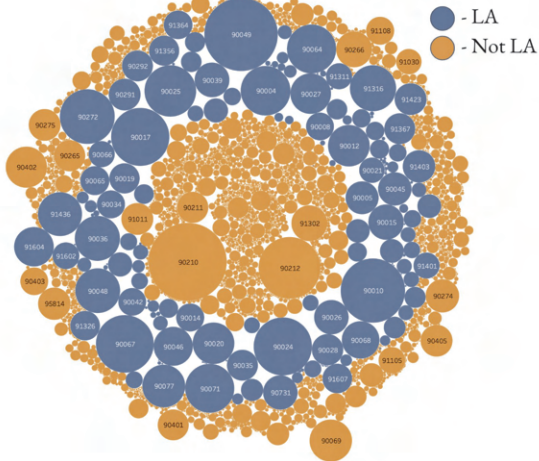
- \$13.3 million in total contributions (\$15.9 million in 2022 dollars), including \$4.8 million on the mayoral race (\$5.7 million in 2022 dollars)
- Within Los Angeles, donations per capita from majority white ZIP codes were 1.93 times greater than from ZIP codes with a majority people of color

Dollar Source, 2017 Elections

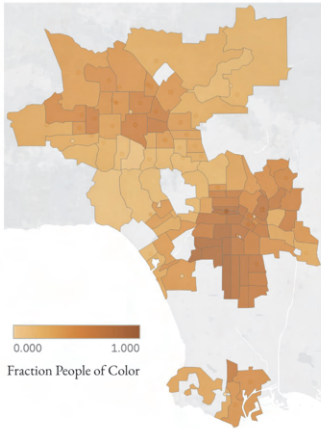


RESEARCH INTO MONEY IN LA POLITICS

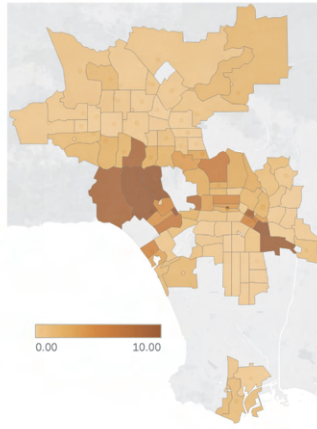
2017 Dollars Donated by ZIP Code



Racial Demographics



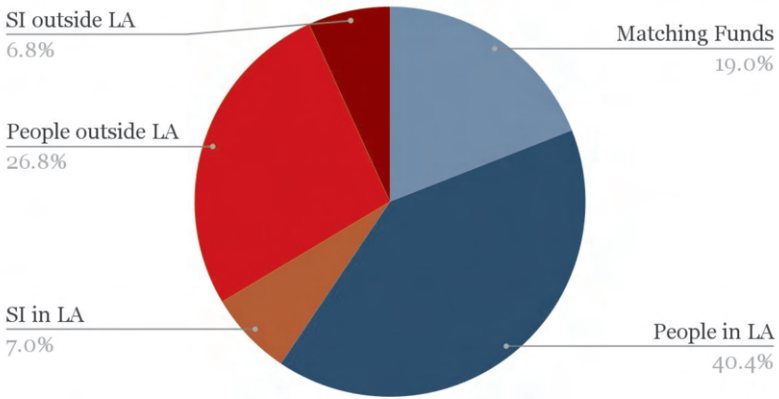
Donations/Capita



2020 Elections

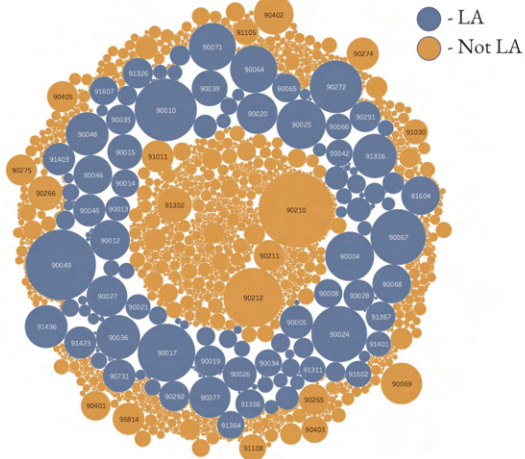
- \$10.4 million in total contributions (\$11.8 million in 2022 dollars)
- Within Los Angeles, donations per capita from majority white ZIP codes were 1.63 times greater than from ZIP codes with a majority people of color

Dollar Source, 2020 Elections

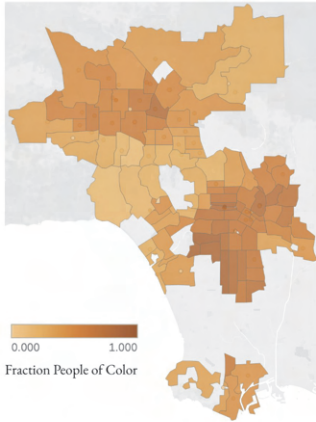


RESEARCH INTO MONEY IN LA POLITICS

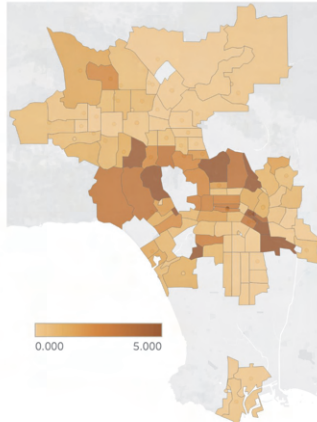
2020 Dollars Donated by ZIP Code



Racial Demographics



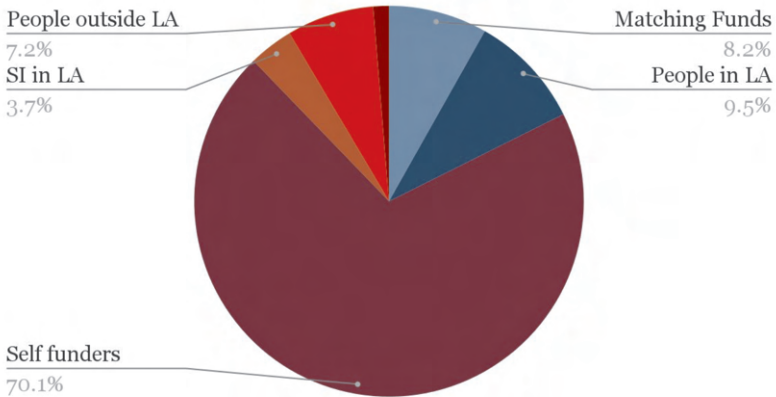
Donations/Capita



2022 Elections

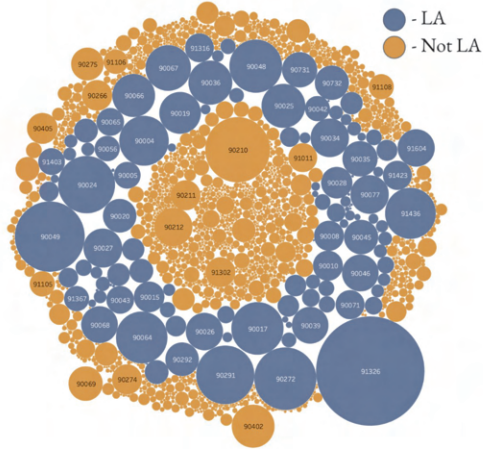
- \$158.7 million in total contributions, including \$129.7 million on the mayoral race
- Within Los Angeles, donations per capita from majority white ZIP codes were 2.28 times greater than from ZIP codes with a majority people of color (excluding wealthy self funders)

Dollar Source, 2022 Elections

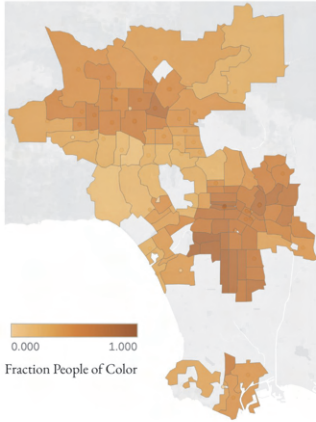


RESEARCH INTO MONEY IN LA POLITICS

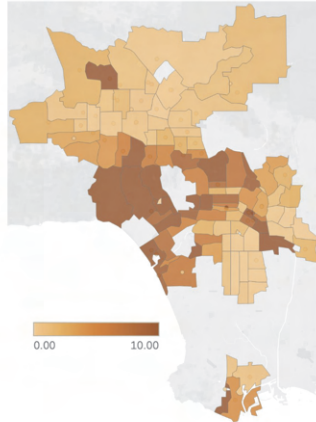
2022 Dollars Donated by ZIP Code ¹⁰



Racial Demographics



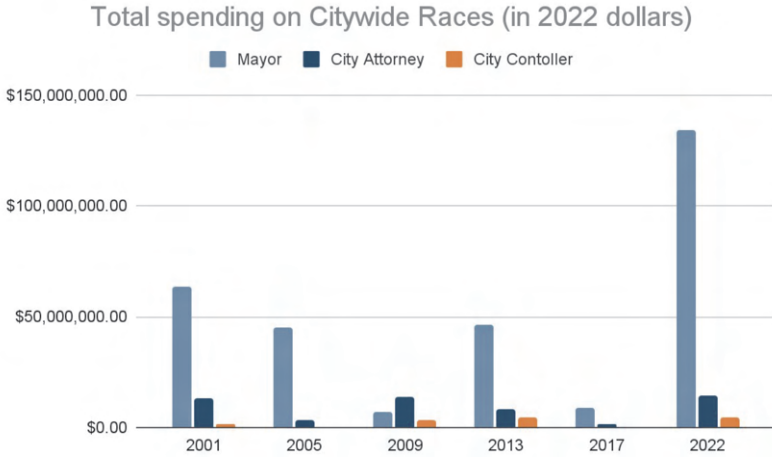
Donations/Capita



¹⁰ Excludes wealthy self funders

Campaign Spending

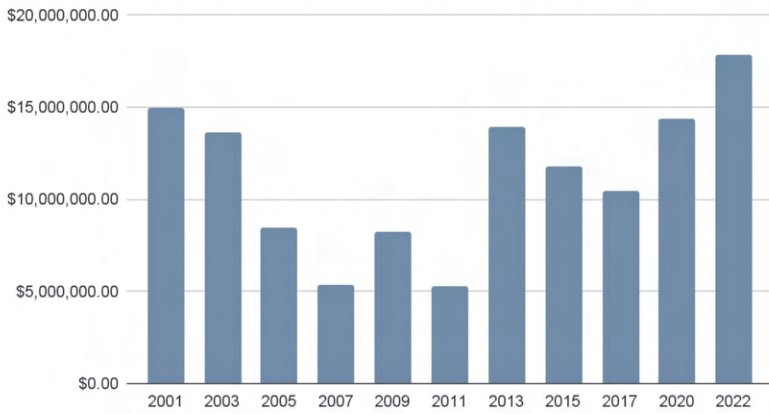
This section shows spending over time by position.¹¹



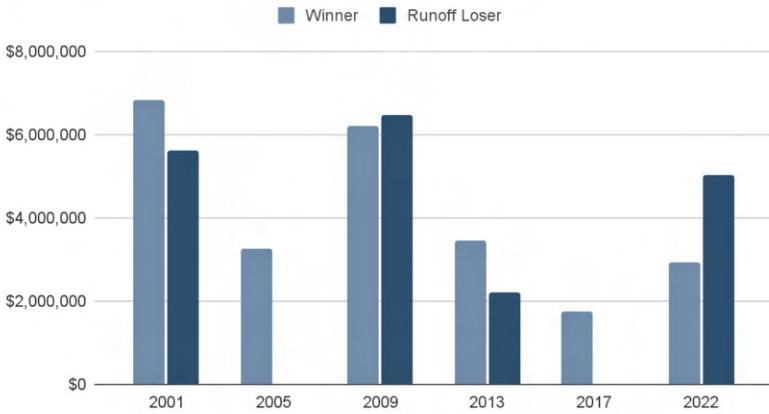
¹¹ Our full data on campaign spending is available here: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ROkQngP-txtkzO845Np-krBVg4_VmdYn1uL3ic3eV14/

RESEARCH INTO MONEY IN LA POLITICS

Total Spending on City Council Races (in 2022 dollars)

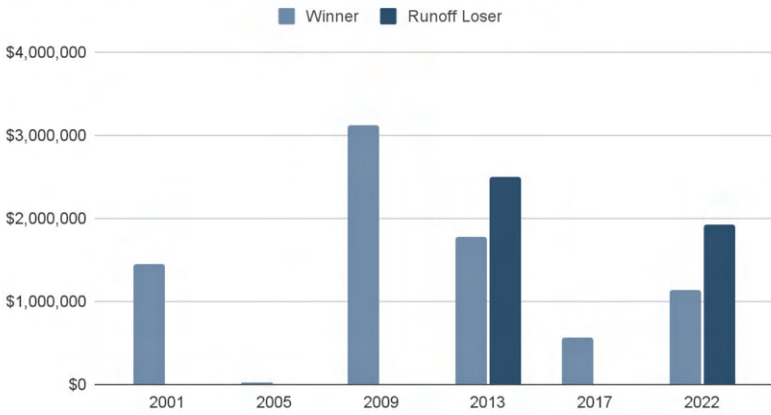


City Attorney Election Spending (in 2022 dollars)

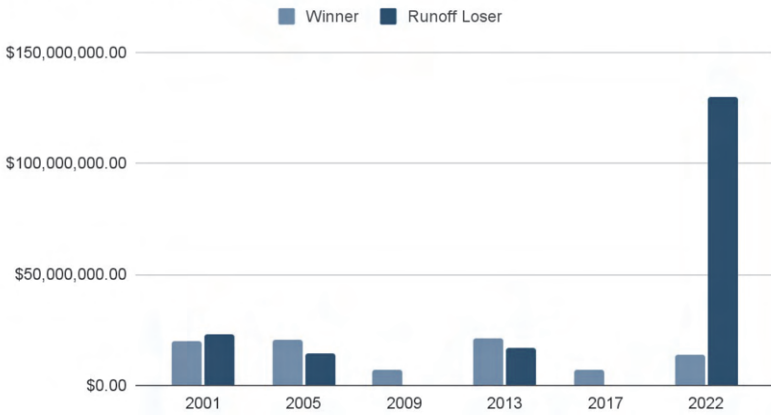


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City Controller Election Spending (in 2022 dollars)

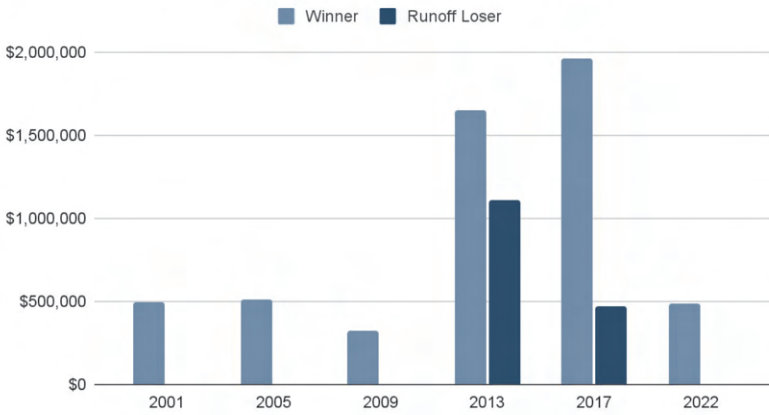


Mayoral Election Spending (in 2022 dollars)

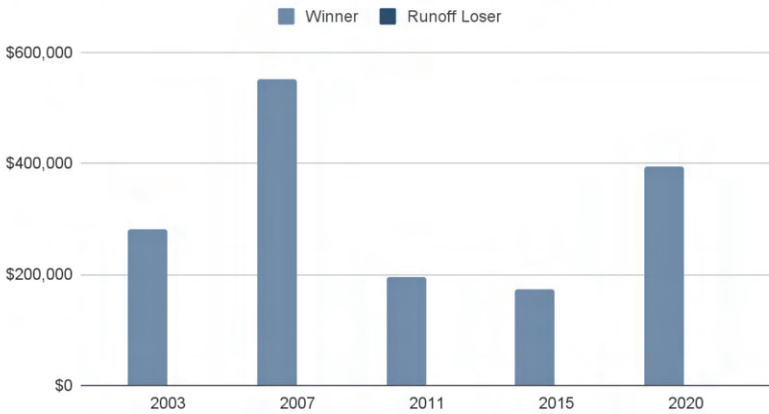


RESEARCH INTO MONEY IN LA POLITICS

Council District 1 Election Spending (in 2022 dollars)

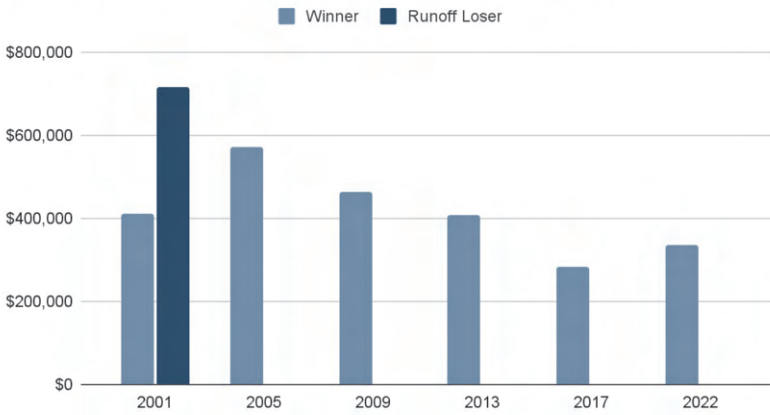


Council District 2 Election Spending (in 2022 dollars)

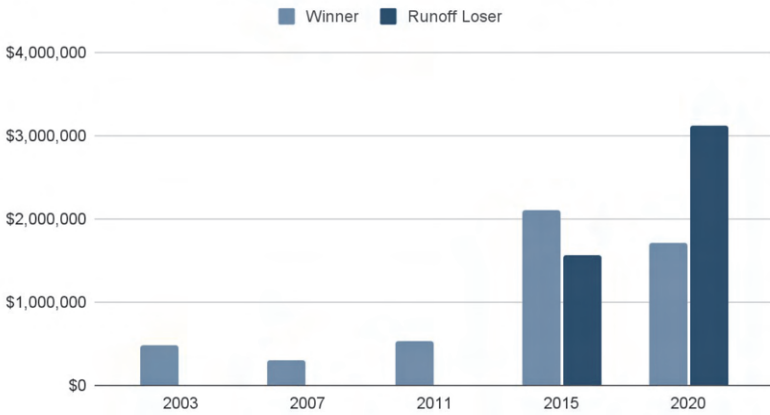


EXPLORING REFORM

Council District 3 Election Spending (in 2022 dollars)

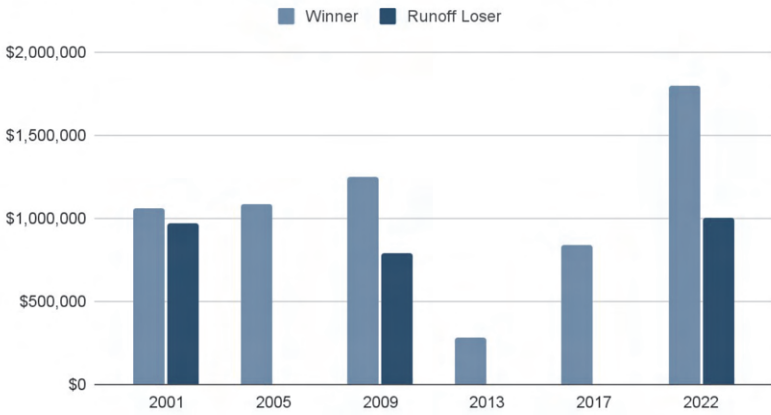


Council District 4 Election Spending (in 2022 dollars)

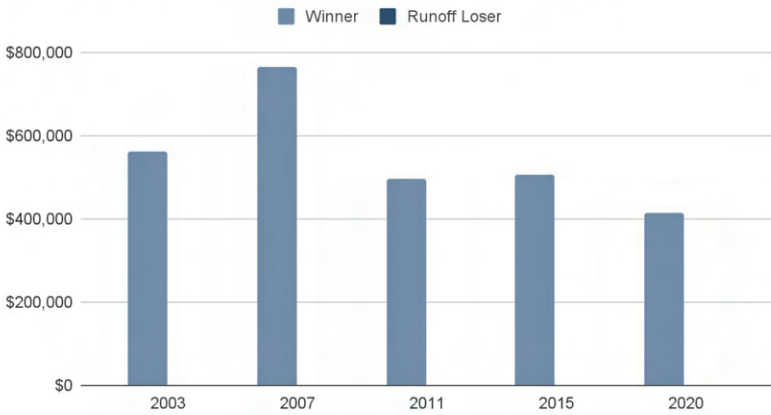


RESEARCH INTO MONEY IN LA POLITICS

Council District 5 Election Spending (in 2022 dollars)

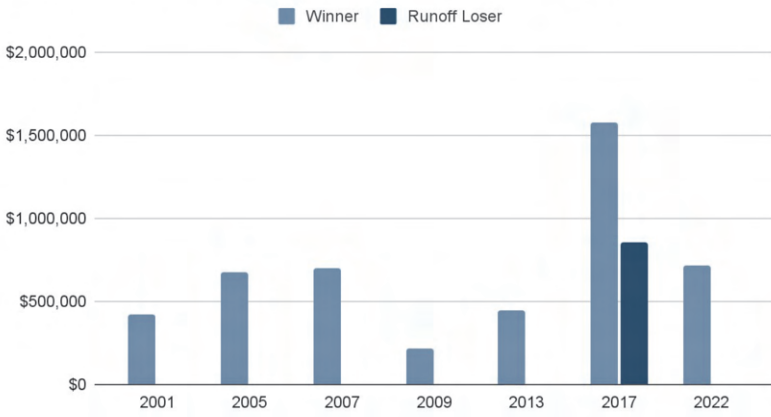


Council District 6 Election Spending (in 2022 dollars)

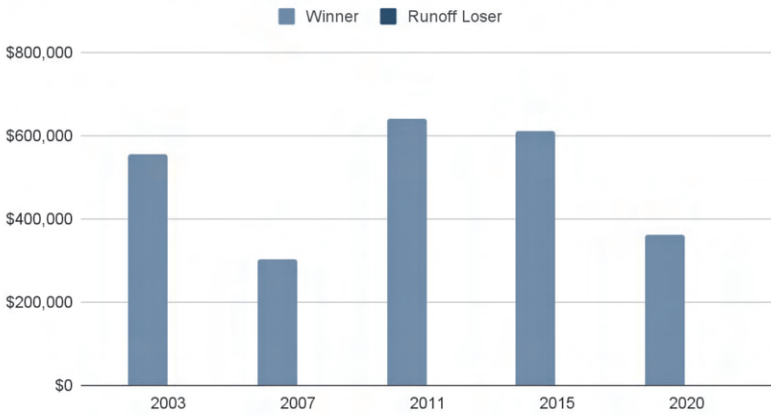


EXPLORING REFORM

Council District 7 Election Spending (in 2022 dollars)

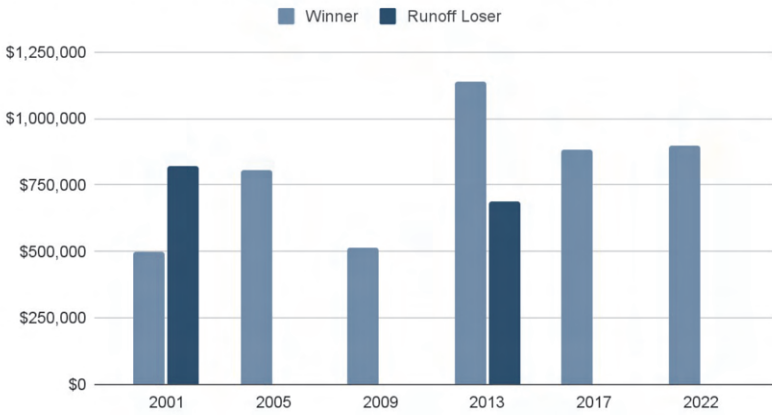


Council District 8 Election Spending (in 2022 dollars)

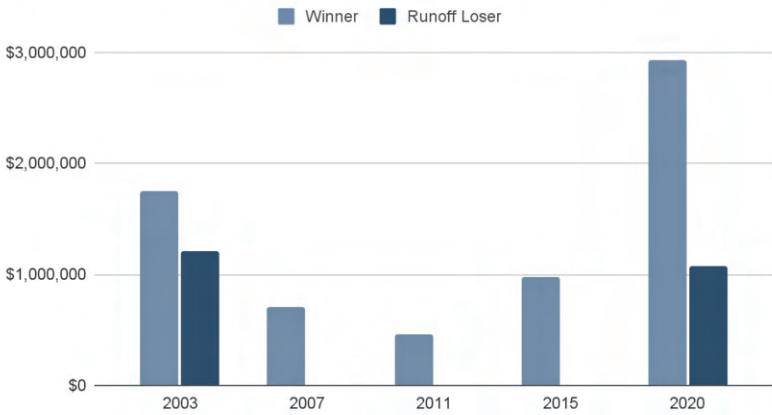


RESEARCH INTO MONEY IN LA POLITICS

Council District 9 Election Spending (in 2022 dollars)

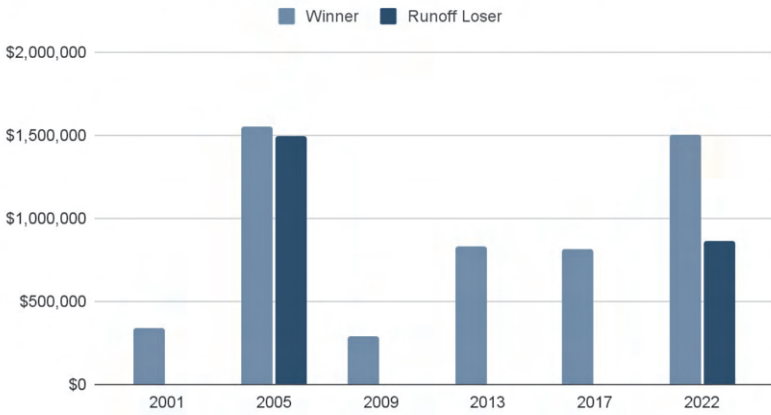


Council District 10 Election Spending (in 2022 dollars)

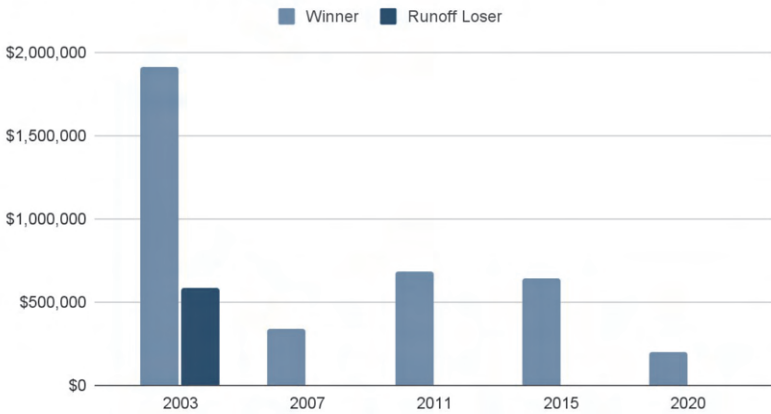


EXPLORING REFORM

Council District 11 Election Spending (in 2022 dollars)

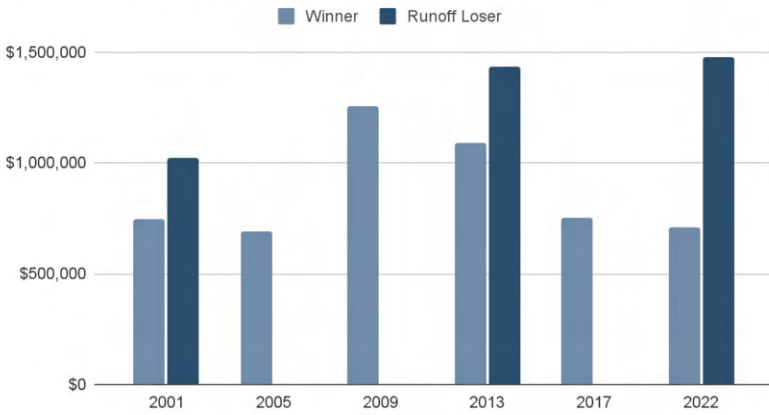


Council District 12 Election Spending (in 2022 dollars)

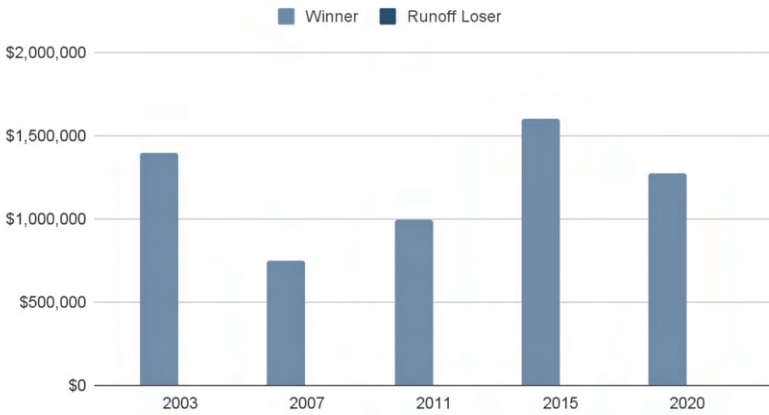


RESEARCH INTO MONEY IN LA POLITICS

Council District 13 Election Spending (in 2022 dollars)

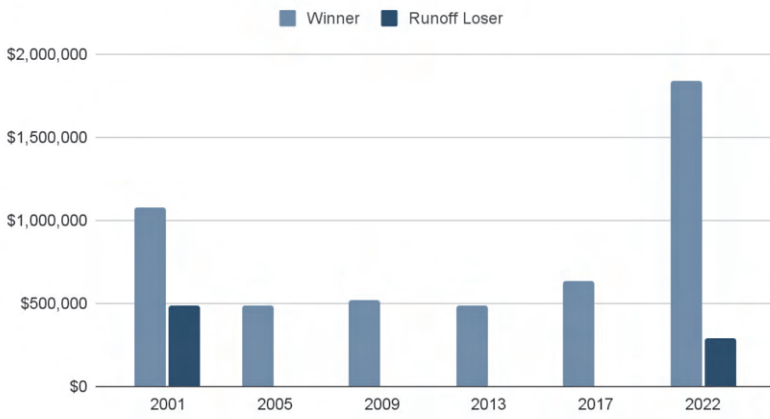


Council District 14 Election Spending (in 2022 dollars)



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Council District 15 Election Spending (in 2022 dollars)



Existing reports on democracy vouchers

What is a democracy voucher program?

“Democracy vouchers” is a type of campaign finance system in which all city residents are issued vouchers (also known as “democracy dollars,” “certificates,” or “credits”) that they can donate to political candidates who, in turn, redeem them for public campaign funds. Democracy vouchers are intended to help democratize campaign finance by both: empowering ordinary citizens to participate more in the financing of political campaigns; and empowering political candidates to run for office without relying on (or spending as much time courting) wealthy donors.

In 2015, Seattle approved Initiative 122, or “Honest Elections Seattle,” with 63% of the vote. Among other reforms, I-122 created a democracy vouchers program, to be managed by the existing Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission (SEEC). The program is funded by a property-tax levy of \$3 million per year, representing about 0.06% of the city’s budget.

The program was first administered for the 2017 election, in which two City Council races and the City Attorney’s race were eligible for vouchers. The 2017 mayoral race was ineligible for vouchers (vouchers were eligible for and used in the 2021 mayoral race, and will be eligible for future mayoral races). On January 3, 2017, the SEEC mailed democracy vouchers to all 540,000 registered voters in the city (other residents could apply for vouchers, but

did not receive them automatically). Overall, 80,000 vouchers were returned. Across three eligible races, 17 candidates pledged to participate, including five of six general election candidates and all general election winners.

In 2019, the program was again administered for seven city council races. On February 12, 2019, the SEEC mailed vouchers to 450,293 residents. 35 candidates qualified for the program, including six of seven general election winners. In total, 147,128 vouchers were returned, nearly doubling the 2017 rate.

In 2021, the program was administered for both at-large city council races and for the mayoral and city attorney race. All general election winners used vouchers, including both mayoral candidates in the general election.

The program's two official goals were to "increase the number of contributors... and increase the number of candidates."¹² Both goals have been achieved. The implementation of vouchers doubled the average number of contributors,¹³ and the program has succeeded at attracting new candidates.¹⁴ Additionally, voucher donors more closely match the demographics of registered voters in the city.¹⁵ Prior to vouchers, one of the best predictors of who would be a cash donor was whether or not someone lived in a house with a view of the water.¹⁶ Today, that is no longer true—donors are more diverse by race, income, age, and location within the city.¹⁷

¹² [http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/EthicsElections/DemocracyVoucher/Final%20-%20Biennial%20report%20-%202003_15_2018\(0\).pdf](http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/EthicsElections/DemocracyVoucher/Final%20-%20Biennial%20report%20-%202003_15_2018(0).pdf)

¹³ <http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/EthicsElections/DemocracyVoucher/DVP%20Evaluation%20Final%20Report%20April%2025%202018.pdf>

¹⁴ http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/EthicsElections/DemocracyVoucher/Final%20DVP%20Evaluation%20Report%20July23_2020.pdf

¹⁵ <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/10.1089/elj.2018.0534>

¹⁶ <https://www.sightline.org/2015/07/22/who-funds-seattles-political-candidates/>

¹⁷ <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/pdf/10.1089/elj.2018.0534>

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What's more, there is evidence that voucher users were more likely to vote than other registered voters (even after accounting for prior levels of engagement). One study of the 2017 election found that after using a voucher, low propensity voters became 7.4 times more likely to vote, while previous nonvoters became 10.2 times more likely to vote.¹⁸ These stunning numbers are the result of the increased interactions between candidates and low propensity voters that the program incentivizes. Previously, many Seattle residents reported that their door had never been knocked on by a candidate or campaign worker, leading to a vicious cycle of low turnout in which people don't vote because they aren't asked, and candidates don't show up in their neighborhood because they don't vote. With democracy vouchers, however, candidates are incentivized to knock on as many doors as possible in every neighborhood, because everyone they speak to is a potential \$100 for their campaign. Through this process, the cycle of disengagement can be broken.

Surveys show a "high level of public awareness," with only 37% of Seattle residents reporting that they had never heard of the program in March 2018 (after just one use of the program).¹⁹ Awareness is especially high among people of color, with only 25% of those surveyed having not heard of the program. Of those "very familiar" with democracy vouchers, 79% agreed that the program had accomplished its goals in the 2017 elections.

In addition to Seattle, democracy vouchers has passed or been proposed in several other jurisdictions, as detailed in the table below:

¹⁸ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mkMHu6rajpOLu2lkBxayv0H-Ucrpr-JC/view>

¹⁹ <http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/EthicsElections/DemocracyVoucher/DVP%20Evaluation%20Final%20Report%20April%2025%202018.pdf>

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| Jurisdiction | Year | Result |
|----------------------------------|------|--|
| Seattle, WA ²⁰ | 2015 | Ballot initiative passed, enacted |
| Washington (State) ²¹ | 2016 | Ballot initiative failed |
| South Dakota ²² | 2016 | Ballot initiative passed, repealed by legislature before enactment |
| Albuquerque, NM ²³ | 2019 | Ballot initiative failed |
| Austin, TX ²⁴ | 2021 | Ballot initiative failed |
| Oakland, CA ²⁵ | 2022 | Ballot initiative passed, expected to be enacted for 2024 cycle |

How does Seattle’s democracy voucher program work?

Basics

About nine months before Election Day, every eligible resident is sent four democracy vouchers via mail and e-mail, worth \$25 each in public campaign funds. Vouchers go to any adult who can legally donate to campaigns—not solely to registered voters. In Seattle, citizens and permanent residents get vouchers, as long as they are 18 by Election Day and reside in the city.

²⁰ [https://ballotpedia.org/City_of_Seattle_Restrictions_on_Campaign_Finance_and_Elections,_Initiative_Measure_No._122_\(November_2015\)](https://ballotpedia.org/City_of_Seattle_Restrictions_on_Campaign_Finance_and_Elections,_Initiative_Measure_No._122_(November_2015))

²¹ [https://ballotpedia.org/Washington_State-Provided_Campaign_Financing_Funded_by_a_Non-Resident_Sales_Tax,_Initiative_1464_\(2016\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Washington_State-Provided_Campaign_Financing_Funded_by_a_Non-Resident_Sales_Tax,_Initiative_1464_(2016))

²² [https://ballotpedia.org/South_Dakota_Revision_of_State_Campaign_Finance_and_Lobbying_Laws,_Initiated_Measure_22_\(2016\)](https://ballotpedia.org/South_Dakota_Revision_of_State_Campaign_Finance_and_Lobbying_Laws,_Initiated_Measure_22_(2016))

²³ [https://ballotpedia.org/Albuquerque,_New_Mexico,_Proposition_2,_Democracy_Dollars_Program_Initiative_\(November_2019\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Albuquerque,_New_Mexico,_Proposition_2,_Democracy_Dollars_Program_Initiative_(November_2019))

²⁴ [https://ballotpedia.org/Austin,_Texas,_Proposition_H,_Funding_for_Public_Campaign_Finance_Program_\(May_2021\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Austin,_Texas,_Proposition_H,_Funding_for_Public_Campaign_Finance_Program_(May_2021))

²⁵ [https://ballotpedia.org/Oakland,_California,_Measure_W,_Election_Campaign_Funding_Measure_\(November_2022\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Oakland,_California,_Measure_W,_Election_Campaign_Funding_Measure_(November_2022))

Residents can make use of their vouchers by:

- Assigning them to a candidate and returning them to the city through the mail (Seattle’s vouchers come with a prepaid return envelope);
- Assigning them to a candidate and submitting them to the city through an online portal; or
- Giving them to a candidate directly for that candidate to redeem. (Many candidates carry “voucher replacement forms” when canvassing, in case someone wants to contribute but doesn’t know where their physical vouchers are. The city crosschecks to make sure that no one uses more than four vouchers.)

To begin soliciting, receiving, and redeeming vouchers, candidates need to qualify for and register with the voucher program. First, candidates must demonstrate viability by receiving a certain number of donations of a certain size from a certain number of people, which varies by position (e.g. “at least \$10 from at least 0.1% of registered voters in the area they are running to represent”). Next, candidates must formally opt-in to the program, by signing a contract with the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission, binding them to program rules.²⁶ After qualifying, candidates can begin redeeming vouchers they collect for public money (candidates can start collecting vouchers once they’ve signed the contract to abide by program rules, but can’t redeem vouchers until they’ve completed the full qualification process). To reduce administrative costs, money can be given to candidates every two weeks.

In Seattle, candidates must collect the following numbers of \$10 contributions and signatures in order to qualify to receive democracy vouchers:²⁷

- Mayor: 600 qualifying contributions and signatures (roughly 0.1% of the adult population)

²⁶ <http://www.seattle.gov/ethics/>

²⁷ <https://www.seattle.gov/democracyvoucher/i-am-a-candidate>

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- City attorney: 400 qualifying contributions and signatures
- City council at-large: 400 qualifying contributions and signatures
- City council district: 150 qualifying contributions and signatures

Seattle has strong policies preventing fraud and abuse of democracy vouchers. In Seattle, it is a gross misdemeanor to “buy, sell, trade, forge, steal, or otherwise misuse vouchers.”²⁸ Campaigns found to have benefited from voucher fraud must return public money and may no longer be eligible for the program. Additionally, voucher assignments are transparent: Seattle provides an online portal where anyone can check who has assigned their vouchers, to which candidates, and when.

Seattle’s program has three built-in mechanisms to ensure a reasonable program cost. First, not every eligible resident will use their vouchers. In 2017 and 2019, participation rates in Seattle were 3.78%²⁹ and 6.76%³⁰ of eligible residents respectively, a substantial increase in donor participation from before vouchers, but not a significant burden on the city’s ability to pay. Second, candidates who use democracy vouchers face a cap on their total spending, meaning there is a limit to how many vouchers any one candidate can redeem. Third, as a final stop-gap, the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission announces a total limit on program spending for each election cycle—the maximum they will spend on redeemed vouchers.³¹ Seattle alerts candidates and the public if that limit is reached, though that has never happened.

Seattle’s program is funded by a 10-year property tax levy of \$3 million per year, which amounts to less than one-tenth of one percent of the city’s budget.

²⁸ <https://www.sightline.org/2015/04/30/democracy-vouchers-are-fraud-repellent/>

²⁹ [http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/EthicsElections/DemocracyVoucher/Financial%20-%20Biennial%20report%20-%202003_15_2018\(0\).pdf](http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/EthicsElections/DemocracyVoucher/Financial%20-%20Biennial%20report%20-%202003_15_2018(0).pdf)

³⁰ <https://georgetown.app.box.com/s/r2skgxfnc230ukkb3dfqgm4576phzabd>

³¹ <http://www.seattle.gov/democracyvoucher>

Opt-in requirements for candidates

Like other public financing programs, Seattle’s democracy vouchers program is “opt-in” for candidates, meaning those that choose to participate must abide by certain rules, such as contribution limits, spending limits, and debate participation. Note that courts have held that states and municipalities can impose these restrictions on participating candidates because the program is voluntary.³²

Contribution limits

Current voucher programs allow participating candidates to accept private contributions in addition to what they receive in vouchers to ensure they can raise enough money for competitive campaigns.³³

Most proponents believe that voucher programs should limit additional cash contributions to ensure the voucher system is not simply a marginal supplement to a private fundraising race that has the same dynamics the voucher system was created to disrupt. One possibility, for example, is to limit voucher candidates to half the normal contribution limits for the race (e.g. if a non-voucher candidate is capped at raising \$1,000 in private contributions from an individual, a voucher candidate would be capped at \$500).

This limitation can also apply to a candidate’s own money so that wealthy candidates using vouchers don’t have unfair advantages over non-wealthy candidates. A voucher program, for example, could require voucher can-

³² <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/court-cases/daggett-v-commission-government-al-ethics-election-practices>

³³ Another way to ensure that participating candidates have enough funds for competitive campaigns without raising private contributions after they qualify would be to implement a hybrid full-public funding system that gives them access to additional public grants, or a hybrid system involving both a democracy vouchers and matching funds program, as described below.

didates to treat themselves as any other contributor—i.e. candidates could give themselves their own vouchers and contribute additionally up to the individual contribution limit.

Spending limits

Voucher programs can put a cap on total spending by a voucher candidate during a campaign. While it is important to cap spending to ensure reasonable limits on the use of public money, it is also important to make the voucher program generous enough that candidates choose to participate (the program is optional, after all). States and municipalities should look to past campaigns to set spending limits, and be ready to update after each election.

Los Angeles current matching funds expenditure ceilings could be used as a starting place for what participating candidates expenditure ceilings should be.

Disclosure requirements

Voucher programs can place disclosure requirements on participating candidates that go beyond those required of all candidates. Voucher candidates, for example, should be subject to regular audits, to confirm they are following the rules of the program.

In the interest of transparency, Seattle makes every redeemed voucher public information, accessible via a website.³⁴ This includes the name of the person who used the voucher, the name of the candidate, and the date the voucher was used. Some voucher advocates in other cities and states disagree about whether this degree of transparency should be included in future programs. In general, cash donations to political candidates are public information, displaying the donor's name and the candidate's name, as well as other

³⁴ <http://www.seattle.gov/democracyvoucher/program-data>

information such as the donor's ZIP code and occupation. However, votes are not public information, in order to protect the privacy of political affiliation. Future voucher programs will have to decide whether to include an online portal like Seattle's, and if so what information to include.

Public debates

In the interest of promoting civil discourse, voucher candidates can be required to take part in public debates in both the primary and general election. Non-voucher candidates should be invited, but cannot be legally required to attend. If no opponent chooses to attend, voucher candidates could be required to hold a publicly accessible town-hall style event instead.

PAC money

Voucher candidates can be banned from accepting money from PACs and corporations. With such a requirement, the only legal sources of funding for voucher candidates would be vouchers (redeemed for public money) and contributions from individuals up to the voucher candidate contribution limit.

Rule exemption trigger mechanisms

Like every public financing system, democracy voucher programs are only constitutional if participation is optional for candidates. Thus, for the program to have any impact, candidates need to believe it is in their best interest to participate. In particular, voucher candidates must know they will not be disadvantaged if their opponent does not opt-in to the program.

If a candidate does not participate in the program, they will not face any of the additional restrictions placed on voucher candidates. To help voucher candidates remain competitive in this situation, cities can add "rule exemption trigger mechanisms" to their program. Trigger mechanisms release voucher

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candidates from some program rules if a non-participating opponent passes certain spending levels, in order to help the voucher candidate remain competitive. Trigger mechanisms should also account for independent expenditures (IEs) on behalf of one candidate or against another.

Fundamentally, the ideal is to have every candidate participate in the voucher program and voluntarily take on the more civically beneficial rules that come with participation. However, when one candidate does not participate, the program needs to be designed so as not to be a liability for candidates who do participate. Candidates need to see the voucher program as something that could help them win, rather than an unnecessary burden on their campaign.

Below is a table detailing three different ways that rule exemption trigger mechanisms can be implemented. More info on each method is in the text below.

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| | Los Angeles (Matching Funds) | Seattle (Democracy Vouchers) | San Francisco (Matching Funds) |
|--|--|--|---|
| What causes the trigger? | Either: (1) A candidate that isn't using matching funds spends more than the matching funds spending limit, or (2) IEs supporting or opposing any candidate go over a certain amount | Total opposition spending against a voucher candidate exceeds the spending limit for voucher candidates. Total opposition spending includes spending by an opponent, spending by IEs backing the opponent, or spending by IEs opposing the voucher candidate. | Total opposition spending against a matching funds candidate exceeds the spending limit for matching funds candidates. Total opposition spending includes spending by an opponent, spending by IEs backing the opponent, or spending by IEs opposing the matching funds candidate. |
| Whose spending limits are lifted? | All candidates in the race | The candidate negatively impacted by IEs | The candidate negatively impacted by IEs |
| Once spending limits are lifted for a candidate, they can: | Spend as much as they like | Spend as much as they like | Spend only up to the level of the spending against them |

Los Angeles Matching Funds Trigger Mechanism: Los Angeles’ matching funds system completely removes the expenditure ceilings for all candidates in a race if any non-participating candidate incurs campaign expenditures in excess of the expenditure ceiling or if there are independent expenditure communications in support of or in opposition to any candidate in the same race over a certain amount.³⁵

A Los Angeles voucher system could remove expenditure ceilings for voucher candidates in the same fashion. However, this approach can lead to perverse incentives and unfair results. While it’s certainly reasonable to raise the ceilings for candidates who are negatively impacted by IEs, removing the ceilings for all candidates can lead to situations in which candidates that have wealthy allies funding IEs that support them are able to raise even more

³⁵ Los Angeles Municipal Code Sec 49.7.25.

money to drown out their opponents because of those very IEs.

Seattle Voucher Trigger Mechanism: The trigger mechanism used by Seattle’s democracy voucher system is more reasonable because it only releases candidates who are negatively impacted by expenditures and IEs from their expenditure ceilings. For example, a qualified candidate’s expenditure ceiling is removed if “the sum of an opponent’s campaign valuation and independent expenditures either adverse to the candidate or in favor of at least one opponent” is higher than the ceiling.³⁶ Unlike in Los Angeles, the candidate who had IEs in their favor does not get their expenditure ceiling lifted.

San Francisco Trigger Mechanism: Though Seattle’s trigger mechanism is clearly better than Los Angeles’, it can still be improved. If Candidate A has \$100,000 in IEs supporting them, participating Candidate B should be able to raise additional funds to respond to that \$100,000 in spending, but they shouldn’t necessarily have their expenditure ceiling completely removed to allow them to raise and spend unlimited money from private interests.

San Francisco’s matching funds system raises participating candidates’ expenditure ceilings only as much as needed for them to compete:

“The Ethics Commission is required to raise the Individual Expenditure Ceiling of a publicly financed candidate for Board of Supervisors or Mayor when the Total Supportive Funds of one of the candidate’s opponents, together with the Total Opposition Spending against the candidate, exceeds the candidate’s own Individual Expenditure Ceiling. The ceiling is raised in increments of \$50,000 for a Board of Supervisors candidate, and \$350,000 for a Mayoral candidate.

Total Supportive Funds is the sum of all funds (including monetary

³⁶ Seattle Elections Code [Section 2.04.634](#).

contributions, loans, in-kind contributions and public funds) received by a candidate, plus the expenditures made or expenses incurred by any person who makes independent expenditures, electioneering communications or member communications to support that candidate.

Total Opposition Spending is the sum of all expenditures made or incurred by any person for independent expenditures, electioneering communications or member communications to oppose a specific candidate. Total opposition spending does not include spending by a candidate to support himself or herself or to oppose his or her opponents in the same election.”³⁷

This approach lifts the ceilings of individual participating candidates enough for them to raise funds to respond to the supportive spending of their competitors or the opposition spending against them, without allowing them to engage in unlimited fundraising.

Penalties for rule violations

Buying, selling, trading, forging, stealing, or otherwise misusing vouchers should be made a gross misdemeanor. Campaigns found to have deliberately benefited from voucher fraud should be required to return public money and should no longer be eligible for the program.

Campaigns should be subject to audits to ensure compliance with program rules. If a campaign violates program rules, they should be required to pay back the amount of the violation. For example, if a voucher campaign exceeded the spending limit by \$10,000, they would have to pay back \$10,000 to the program administrator (regardless of the number of vouchers the campaign had received thus far). If a campaign took \$50 past the contribution limit from 100 people, the campaign would have to pay the

³⁷ <https://sfethics.org/disclosures/campaign-finance-disclosure/expenditure-ceilings-and-third-party-spending>

program administrator \$5,000. Campaigns found to have repeatedly violated program rules should no longer be eligible to receive public money.

Additionally, “voucher bundling” should be made illegal. That is, individuals or organizations should be barred from collecting non-assigned vouchers (e.g., vouchers that haven’t been assigned to a particular campaign), and filling them out in bulk for an endorsed candidate.

Efforts to increase participation

Increasing citizen participation, particularly in traditionally underrepresented communities, is a key goal of Seattle’s democracy voucher program. Maximizing participation requires investments in public awareness.

Focus groups

At least a year prior to first use, the commission administering the voucher program should begin conducting focus groups with potential voucher users. Before the first use of vouchers in 2017, Seattle conducted focus groups in four different communities. 95% of focus group participants had not heard of the program and 65% “had never contributed to a candidate or campaign.”³⁸ These discussions helped voucher administrators determine baseline public awareness, opinions, and misconceptions about the program. This information was used to inform Seattle’s messaging strategies.

Communication and messaging

On first use, many residents and candidates will not have heard of the voucher program. It is essential that the city invest in messaging to candidates and to residents on what vouchers are and how to use them. Eighteen months before

³⁸ [http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/EthicsElections/DemocracyVoucher/Final%20-%20Biennial%20report%20-%2003_15_2018\(0\).pdf](http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/EthicsElections/DemocracyVoucher/Final%20-%20Biennial%20report%20-%2003_15_2018(0).pdf)

Seattle's first voucher election, the city began producing content on "how to run for office using Democracy Vouchers," and answering questions from potential candidates. As with any change to incentive structures, it can take some time for participants to adapt and understand how to operate within the new system. Cities can expedite this process by providing resources to help campaigns understand how to use vouchers to their advantage (e.g. "Canvassing is now more important, because every door you knock on is a potential \$100," or "Call time with wealthy donors is now less important, because your campaign has easier sources of fundraising").

Public messaging towards city residents about democracy vouchers is also essential. Twelve months before the first voucher election, Seattle sent an informational mailer to 340,000 Seattle residential addresses with basic information about vouchers.³⁹ Even once residents have some experience using the system, messaging remains important. Each election cycle, Seattle has spent ~\$1,000 on social media advertising (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Nextdoor ads), reaching over 100,000 people, and ~\$2,500 on printing and placing posters in business districts. Five months before each election, Seattle launches a "mid-year reminder campaign" to encourage residents to use their vouchers and remind them they can get replacements if lost. The city also produces short how-to videos on receiving, filling out, and returning vouchers.⁴⁰

Accessibility and community involvement

To simplify participation, voucher programs should have a website where users can learn about program rules and eligibility, apply for and submit vouchers, and learn about candidates. In 2017, Seattle's website received nearly two million unique page views. Seattle also implemented a hotline for

³⁹ [http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/EthicsElections/DemocracyVoucher/Final%20-%20Biennial%20report%20-%2003_15_2018\(0\).pdf](http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/EthicsElections/DemocracyVoucher/Final%20-%20Biennial%20report%20-%2003_15_2018(0).pdf)

⁴⁰ <https://youtu.be/R8VKGdDCNhY>

questions, which averaged 1500 calls per election cycle.⁴¹

Governments should prioritize engaging traditionally underrepresented groups by administering the program in multiple languages and working with community groups that can spread information about the program. In Seattle, the voucher program was administered in 15 languages, meaning key materials and advertising were translated and support was available in each language. Seattle worked with ten community-based organizations, conducting or attending 276 outreach events, including candidate forums, cultural events, and leadership group meetings, in order to access “hard-to-reach communities.” Seattle also worked with community groups to craft messaging to underrepresented communities, such as adopting edits from several groups to the non-citizen voucher application form.

How does Oakland’s democracy dollar program work?

In 2022, Oakland voters passed a “democracy dollars”⁴² program via a ballot initiative with 74% support. The program was part of the larger “Oakland Fair Elections Act,”⁴³ which was referred to the ballot by the City Council. Voters approved the system after a 2020 report from the city’s Public Ethics Commission found that the existing campaign finance system was deeply inequitable.⁴⁴

Like Seattle’s program, the measure instructed the city’s Public Ethics Commission to provide each city resident with four vouchers worth \$25 each to donate to local candidates. In Summer 2023, the City Council decided to

⁴¹ <https://www.seattle.gov/democracvoucher/program-data/internal-program-reports>

⁴² [https://ballotpedia.org/Oakland,_California,_Measure_W,_Election_Campaign_Funding_Measure_\(November_2022\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Oakland,_California,_Measure_W,_Election_Campaign_Funding_Measure_(November_2022))

⁴³ <https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/democracy-dollars>

⁴⁴ <https://cao-94612.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Report-Draft-Race-for-Power-9-2-20-FINAL.pdf>

delay implementation of the program until the 2026 election cycle, due to budget concerns.⁴⁵

Reports on democracy vouchers

Internal program reports from the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission

2017 SEEC Report⁴⁶

Administration:

- SEEC mailed 4 vouchers to 540,000 residents by the Jan 3, 2017 launch date.
- SEEC processed 80,000 vouchers and distributed \$1.04 million to candidates (some of the vouchers were not processed since they were returned too late, or would have caused a candidate to exceed their spending limit).
- The program was administered in 15 languages.
- Prior to launching the program, SEEC consulted with stakeholder groups on program design (e.g., the design of democracy vouchers themselves, the design of other forms, how to approach messaging).
- The report details the SEEC's process for rapidly standing up IT, printing, mailing, and staffing.
- The final page of the report gives the program's budget for 2016 and 2017. (Note: The 2021 SEEC report below contains the program's budget for 2016 through 2021.)

⁴⁵ <https://oaklandside.org/2023/07/26/oakland-democracy-dollars-delayed-until-2026-election-campaign-finance/>

⁴⁶ https://seattle.gov/documents/Departments/EthicsElections/DemocracyVoucher/Biennial%20Reports/Final%20-%20Biennial%20report%20-%202003_15_2018%280%29.pdf

Donors:

- In 2017, the number of donors increased 300%, versus previous election cycles.
- Vouchers were returned: 78% by mail; 20% to a campaign directly; 2% by e-mail or given in person to a city office.
- 98% of vouchers were accepted on the “first pass.” Most of the remaining 2% were accepted after additional signature verification.

Candidates:

- Three races were eligible for democracy vouchers: two at-large city council races, and the city attorney race.
- Across these races, five out of six general election candidates used democracy vouchers.
- The report details the qualification process for candidates to accept vouchers, as well as the rules they needed to follow once they joined the program.

2019 SEEC Report⁴⁷

Administration:

- Vouchers were mailed to 450,293 residents on February 12, 2019.
- SEEC distributed \$2.5 million in voucher funds to campaigns.
- SEEC launched the online voucher portal as a new way for residents to use their vouchers. The portal made up 17% of all vouchers that were used in 2019.
- SEEC once again invested in outreach, spending \$150,000 on outreach contracts with 10 community-based organizations, and attending 276

⁴⁷ https://seattle.gov/documents/Departments/EthicsElections/DemocracyVoucher/Outreach%20Fund/2019_Biennial_Report.pdf

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outreach events to spread awareness.

- The report includes more details on outreach, including on outreach from the city to candidates.

Donors:

- 147,128 democracy vouchers were returned by 38,092 residents, almost doubling the 2017 participation rate.
- Vouchers were returned: 64% directly to the SEEC by mail; 19% given directly to candidates; 17% through the online portal; <1% through other means (usually via email, or in person to the city).

Candidates:

- Seven city council races were eligible to use democracy vouchers in 2019.
- Out of 72 candidates who filed to run for office, 53 pledged to participate in the program, and 35 qualified to participate in the program.
- To qualify for the program, city council candidates needed to collect at least 150 cash donations of \$10 or more and at least 150 signatures (at least 75 of each needed to come from the candidate's home district).

2021 SEEC Report⁴⁸

Administration:

- As in previous cycles, the SEEC invested in outreach, spending \$225,000 to contract with eight community-based organizations.
- SEEC administered the program in 18 languages, up from the initial 15.
- The final page of the report contains a budget breakdown for the first six years of the program (2016-2021).

⁴⁸ https://seattle.gov/documents/Departments/EthicsElections/DemocracyVoucher/Biennial%20Reports/2021_Biennial_Report_FINAL.pdf

Donors:

- 184,747 democracy vouchers were returned from 48,071 residents, breaking the record from both previous cycles.
- Voucher were returned: 50% paper; 28% campaign form; 21% online; 1% other.

Candidates:

- Four races were eligible for the program: mayor, city attorney, and two at-large city council seats. Overall, 11 candidates qualified to participate.
- Given the difficulties of collecting democracy vouchers during the pandemic, SEEC launched a digital “Democracy Voucher - Campaign Replacement Form” that candidates could house on their websites. Whereas before, it was common for candidates to bring physical replacement forms when canvassing, this change made the program more accessible for those staying home.
- Overall, candidates received \$3,397,050 in voucher payments from the city.

Georgetown University and Stony Brook University

2019 Georgetown/Stony Brook Study⁴⁹

- In 2019, the voucher participation rate was nearly 7% of all eligible residents, almost double that of 2017.
- Participation increased across all demographic groups, though gains were “concentrated among white, higher-income, and older residents.”
- While the demographics of voucher users did not exactly match the electorate, they were more representative than the demographics of cash donors. City-wide, voucher users were more likely to be young and

⁴⁹ <https://georgetown.app.box.com/s/r2skgxfnc230ukkb3dfqgm4576phzabd>

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lower-income than cash donors.

- The study contains voucher participation rates for 2017 and 2019 by age, race, income, and voter participation rate.

2021 Georgetown/Stony Brook Study⁵⁰

- In 2021, voucher participation reached a new high of 7.59% of the voting age population. An apt comparison is to the 2013 cycle (before democracy vouchers), where cash donor participation rate was 1.49%.
- In 2021, “voucher users were similar to voters... in terms of age, income, and race.”
- Most participants in the program were first-time users—people who did not use a voucher in the 2017 or 2019 races.
- The study contains voucher participation rates by race, income, age, gender, and frequency of past voting for 2017, 2019, and 2021.

BERK Consulting Reports on Seattle

2018 BERK Consulting Report⁵¹

- In 2017, democracy vouchers “played a role in encouraging more candidates to run,” though some candidates struggled to qualify for the program.
- Independent expenditures (spending not affiliated with any campaign) increased 55% in 2017 compared to 2015 (though importantly, there was not a mayoral election in 2015 and there was in 2017).
- Public support for the program was high, despite it being new. This included support among “candidates, campaign workers, and other

⁵⁰ <https://seattle.gov/documents/Departments/EthicsElections/DemocracyVoucher/Program%20Data/Reports/2021%20Seattle%20Democracy%20Voucher%20Report.pdf>

⁵¹ <https://seattle.gov/documents/Departments/EthicsElections/DemocracyVoucher/Biennial%20Reports/DVP%20Evaluation%20Final%20Report%20April%2025%202018.pdf>

stakeholders.”

- BERK recommended several changes to the program: Streamline the qualification process; Provide an online dashboard for tracking voucher returns and verifications; Clarify requirements regarding release from spending limits; Postpone the voucher mailing date (the 2017 mailing date was in January); Increase awareness of voucher mailing day; Create a system to use and replace vouchers online.

2020 BERK Consulting Report⁵²

- In 2019, there were again high rates of candidate participation
- Some candidates (especially those from marginalized communities) struggled to raise enough in qualifying donations to be eligible for democracy vouchers
- Compared to 2017, there was an 83% increase in the rate of voucher utilization
- Familiarity with the program grew from 2017 to 2019. In 2019, the majority of respondents to a poll said they were “very familiar” or “somewhat familiar” with the program.

Other Reports

Common Cause Report on Matching Funds and Democracy Vouchers⁵³

- The report envisions what a statewide public financing program could look like in California.
- Money in California politics comes disproportionately from special interest groups; Top three special interests in 2020 races: “Oil and Gas

⁵² https://seattle.gov/documents/Departments/EthicsElections/DemocracyVoucher/Biennial%20Reports/Final%20DVP%20Evaluation%20Report%20July23_2020.pdf

⁵³ <https://www.commoncause.org/california/wp-content/uploads/sites/29/2023/04/The-California-Dreamv05-2.pdf>

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- (\$7.2 million), Prison Guards (\$3.7 million), Health Care (\$2.8 million)”.
- 2018 and 2020: State Assembly races cost ~\$1 million, while State Senate races cost ~\$1.7 million. The high cost of running contributes to the lack of diversity in the legislature.
 - The donor pool (disproportionately white and rich) doesn’t match the voter pool
 - Matching Funds or Democracy Vouchers could serve as solutions to these problems. The study details design considerations for each type of program, including cost, funding source, and requirements on participating candidates.

2021 Journal of Public Economics⁵⁴

- The study compares Seattle to other large cities in Washington state and California, which also use a top-two primary system.
- The authors found that democracy vouchers led to increases in both the total amount of donations and the total number of donors.
- The authors also found a “large and highly significant increase in the number of candidates per race” as well as some evidence (though weaker) “of a decrease in measures of ‘incumbency advantage.’”

2017 University of Washington Report⁵⁵

- The study contains data on Seattle’s 2017 races regarding voucher usage by age, race, income, and political participation.
- The study finds that “nearly 90 percent of Seattle residents who used their vouchers voted in the 2017 election, but only 43 percent of those who did not use their vouchers voted.”

⁵⁴ <https://onedrive.live.com/?authkey=%21AKyFaZ3aiNpWx3o&id=13544D3B968DB42D%2171156&cid=13544D3B968DB42D&parId=root&parQt=sharedby&o=OneUp>

⁵⁵ https://seattle.gov/documents/Departments/EthicsElections/DemocracyVoucher/Biennial%20Reports/UW_Seattle_Voucher_Final.pdf

2017 WinWin/Every Voice Report⁵⁶

- The study finds that “Seattle’s Democracy Voucher Program is achieving its intended goals by generating historic numbers of new and small donors, diversifying the makeup of campaign supporters to better reflect the people of Seattle, and limiting the reliance on big money in local elections.”
- 84% of democracy voucher donors in 2017 were new donors (about 20,900 individuals).
- In 2017, democracy voucher donors were more reflective of the city’s demographics than cash donors.
- Representation rose for lower income communities and communities of color. The study finds that “neighborhoods where people of color are the majority saw a 46 percent improvement in their share of giving among voucher donors, compared to their share of mayoral cash.”

2021 WinWin Network Report⁵⁷

The study breaks down Seattle residents by their previous voting propensity, and looks at how using a voucher impacted their voting behavior, with the following findings:

- “First-Time Eligible Voters who used at least one voucher in 2017 were 11.75 times more likely to vote in 2017.”
- “First-Time Eligible Voters who used at least one voucher in 2019 were 6.02 times more likely to vote in 2019.”
- “Non-Voters who used at least one voucher in 2017 were 10.2 times more likely to vote in 2017.”
- “Non-Voters who used at least one voucher in 2019 were 6.4 times more

⁵⁶ <https://onedrive.live.com/?authkey=%21ANZWIEK0pNcFwbo&id=13544D3B968DB42D%2169443&cid=13544D3B968DB42D&parId=root&parQt=sharedby&o=OneUp>

⁵⁷ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mkMHu6rajpOLu2lkBxayv0H-Ucrpr-JC/view>

likely to vote in 2019.”

- “Low Propensity Voters who used at least one voucher in 2017 were 7.4 times more likely to vote in 2017.”
- “Low Propensity Voters who used at least one voucher in 2019 were 4.5 times more likely to vote in 2019.”

Other Resources

- Google Drive with previous proposals for democracy vouchers legislation⁵⁸
- Democracy Policy Network policy kit⁵⁹
- Democracy vouchers book⁶⁰

⁵⁸ https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1eLz_d8jEll7itzqExMkMrGC16JYr9Shu

⁵⁹ <https://democracypolicy.network/agenda/open-country/open-government/democracy-vouchers>

⁶⁰ <https://www.democracyvouchers.org/>

Modeling

Description of program types

Democracy vouchers

Under a democracy vouchers system, each city resident receives four vouchers, worth \$25 a piece. This amount could be more or less, depending on what the community decides, but for the purposes of this report will be \$25.

Hybrid: Democracy vouchers and matching funds

Under this type of hybrid system, each city resident would receive some number of vouchers to donate to local candidates, and would additionally have the option of making a small cash donation, which would be matched by the city similarly to the current matching funds system.

Hybrid: Full Public Funding via Democracy vouchers and lump sum grants

Under this type of hybrid system, each city resident would receive some number of vouchers to donate to local candidates. After collecting a certain number of vouchers (dependent on the office they're running for), candidates would receive a lump sum grant from the city in exchange for refusing all private cash contributions, except perhaps for limited seed money contributions. Depending on the design of the system, candidates could qualify for one or multiple rounds of lump sum grants by collecting additional democracy vouchers.

Though this compendium doesn't make any recommendations regarding the exact form of such a hybrid system, the attached Appendix includes "Suggestions and Recommendations for Los Angeles Hybrid Full Public Financing Feasibility Study" from the California Clean Money Campaign, which provided recommendations that City Council accepted for strengthening its current matching funds system in 2013, 2018, and 2019. It includes a detailed analysis of key potential parts of such a system to achieve full public financing similar to the gubernatorial races in Arizona and Maine, along with suggestions for possible qualifying requirements and funding levels and an analysis of the costs of such a system.

General public financing recommendations

Opt-in system

Courts have held that public campaign financing programs (such as the three program types described above) are constitutional so long as candidates have the option to opt-in or opt-out. If candidates opt-out, they can run for office under the old system, using private fundraising. If candidates opt-in, Los Angeles can place additional requirements on their campaigns, as outlined below. Some of the descriptions here are taken from the "reports" section

above.

Private contribution limits

Candidates who run using democracy vouchers should still be allowed to accept private money, but should face lower contribution limits than other candidates. In Seattle, contribution limits for candidates are as follows:

| Seattle Candidate Private Contribution Limits (2023) | | |
|---|--|------------------|
| | Democracy Voucher Candidates | Other Candidates |
| City Council | \$300 cash + \$100 in democracy vouchers | \$600 |
| City Attorney | \$300 cash + \$100 in democracy vouchers | \$600 |
| Mayor | \$450 cash + \$100 in democracy vouchers | \$600 |

Currently, Los Angeles has a higher contribution limit than Seattle, set at \$900 for City Council campaigns in 2024. To accompany one of the system types described in this report, the city could decrease this limit for publicly financed candidates. The city could also require that publicly financed candidates refuse all money from PACs or other non-person sources, and abstain from self-financing their campaigns (at least beyond giving themselves their own democracy vouchers and contributing up to the cash contribution limit for their race).

Spending limits

In 2022, the Los Angeles City matching funds program limited spending for participating candidates, as shown in the table below.⁶¹ We believe that if adjusted each cycle for inflation, these spending limits are reasonable for the three system types described in this compendium.

⁶¹ <https://ethics.lacity.org/publications/matching-funds-faq/>

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| Los Angeles Matching Funds Candidate Spending Limits (2022) | | |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| | Primary Election | General Election |
| City Council | \$571,000 | \$476,000 |
| Controller | \$1,332,000 | \$1,000,000 |
| City Attorney | \$1,498,000 | \$1,165,000 |
| Mayor | \$3,329,000 | \$2,662,000 |

Disclosure requirements

As described in the reports section above, voucher programs can place disclosure requirements on participating candidates that go beyond those required of all candidates. Voucher candidates, for example, should be subject to regular audits, to confirm they are following the rules of the program.

Additionally, Los Angeles has the option of making lists of redeemed vouchers public information, accessible via a website.⁶² This would include the name of the person who used the voucher, the name of the candidate, and the date the voucher was used. Some voucher advocates in other cities and states disagree about whether this degree of transparency should be included in future programs. In general, cash donations to political candidates are public information, displaying the donor's name and the candidate's name, as well as other information such as the donor's ZIP code and occupation. However, votes are not public information, in order to protect the privacy of political affiliation. Those designing the system in Los Angeles will ultimately have to come to a consensus on this question.

⁶² <http://www.seattle.gov/democracylvoucher/program-data>

Public debate requirements

Voucher candidates should be required to take part in public debates during both the primary and general election. Non-voucher candidates should be invited, but cannot be legally required to attend. If no opponent chooses to attend, voucher candidates could be required to hold a publicly accessible town-hall style event instead.

Trigger mechanisms for release

If a candidate does not participate in the program, they will not face any of the additional restrictions placed on voucher candidates. To help voucher candidates remain competitive in this situation, “trigger mechanisms” can release voucher candidates from some program rules if a non-participating opponent passes certain spending levels. Trigger mechanisms should also account for independent spending on behalf of a candidate’s opponent or against the candidate (though trigger mechanisms should not count spending *for* the candidate attempting to get released from program rules or *against* their opponent).

For example, if spending by a voucher candidate’s opponent plus independent expenditures backing the opponent or opposing the voucher candidate exceeds a certain threshold, and the voucher candidate raises enough money to reach their spending limit, then the voucher candidate would face substantial constraints on their campaign because of their participation in the program. In this case, the voucher candidate should be released from all program rules and allowed to fundraise like a non voucher candidate. Until they hit their original expenditure ceiling, they should still be allowed to collect and redeem vouchers. Once they hit their original expenditure ceiling, they should not be allowed to collect or redeem additional vouchers, but should still be allowed to raise contributions up to the legal non-voucher limit, take corporate or PAC money up to legal amounts for non-voucher candidates, and would no longer face a spending limit. Conversely, if

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a voucher candidate's opponent does not exceed the spending limit, the voucher candidate must follow the program rules for the entire election cycle. Similarly, if two voucher candidates face one another, they must both follow program rules throughout the entire cycle.

Fundamentally, the ideal is to have every candidate participate in the voucher program and voluntarily take on the more civically beneficial rules that come with participation. However, when one candidate does not participate, the program needs to be designed so as not to be a liability for their opponents who do participate. Put another way, candidates need to see the voucher program as something that could help them win, rather than an unnecessary burden on their campaign.

More information on trigger mechanisms can be found in the reports section above.

Safeguards against fraud and abuse

Buying, selling, trading, forging, stealing, or otherwise misusing vouchers should be made a gross misdemeanor, as is the case in Seattle. Campaigns found to have deliberately benefited from voucher fraud should be required to return public money and should no longer be eligible for the program.

Campaigns should be subject to audits to ensure compliance with program rules. If a campaign violates program rules, they should be required to pay back the amount of the violation. For example, if a voucher campaign exceeded the program's spending limit by \$10,000, they would have to pay back \$10,000 to the program administrator (regardless of the number of vouchers the campaign had received). If a campaign took \$50 past the contribution limit from 100 people, the campaign would have to pay the program administrator \$5,000. Campaigns found to have repeatedly violated program rules should no longer be eligible to receive public money.

Additionally, “voucher bundling” should be made illegal. That is, individuals or organizations should be barred from collecting non-assigned vouchers (e.g., vouchers that haven’t been assigned to a particular campaign), and filling them out in bulk for an endorsed candidate.

Accessibility and community involvement

Any public financing system should prioritize accessibility and community involvement. With this goal in mind, Seattle created a website where residents can learn about program rules and eligibility, apply for and submit vouchers, and learn about candidates. In 2017, Seattle’s website received nearly two million unique page views. Seattle also implemented a hotline for questions, which averaged 1500 calls per election cycle.⁶³

Los Angeles should prioritize engaging traditionally underrepresented groups by administering the program in multiple languages and working with community groups that can spread information about the program. In Seattle, the voucher program was administered in 15 languages, meaning key materials and advertising were translated and support was available in each language. Seattle worked with ten community-based organizations, conducting or attending 276 outreach events, including candidate forums, cultural events, and leadership group meetings, in order to access “hard-to-reach communities.” Seattle also worked with community groups to craft messaging to underrepresented communities, such as adopting edits from several groups to the non-citizen voucher application form. In Los Angeles, this outreach could also make use of the neighborhood council system.

Program sunset

In Seattle, the democracy vouchers program included an automatic 10-year sunset provision, upon which time voters will have the option to renew the

⁶³ <https://www.seattle.gov/democracypoucher/program-data/internal-program-reports>

program. We recommend against including such a provision in Los Angeles. Certainly, the City Council and voters may need to make changes to the program as local needs change over time. An automatic sunset is the wrong approach, however. Instead, we recommend that the City Council refer any desired changes to the ballot, or enact an independent, periodic charter review commission every five to ten years to give residents an automatic opportunity to review the democracy voucher program and other city functions.

Special elections

Public financing programs should be available in the event of a special election as well. In the event of a special election, the city body administering the program should make a determination regarding spending limits, dates of voucher mailing, and other program details.

Qualification

Getting on the ballot

The City Clerk manages the ballot qualification process for LA City candidates.⁶⁴ In addition to residency requirements, mandatory training requirements, and various paperwork requirements, candidates for city office must either submit:

- A nominating petition with 1,000 valid signatures
- A nominating petition with 500 valid signatures and a \$300 filing fee

Future reformers could consider altering this process to make it easier for new candidates to qualify for the ballot.

⁶⁴ https://clerk.lacity.gov/sites/g/files/wph1491/files/2021-09/Candidate_Filing_Guide.pdf

Qualifying for public financing programs

Currently, the Ethics Commission lists the following requirements for candidates to qualify to participate in the matching funds program:⁶⁵

1. “Limit the amount you contribute or lend to your own campaign to \$40,000.
2. Receive qualified contributions of \$5 or more from 100 individuals living in your City Council district.
3. Receive a minimum cumulative threshold of \$12,857 in qualified contributions from individuals residing in the City. The maximum amount per contributor that may be applied to that threshold is \$129.
4. Limit your campaign spending... to \$618,000 in the primary election and \$515,000 in the general election.
5. Be certified to appear on the ballot.
6. Be opposed by a candidate who is also certified to appear on the ballot.
7. Participate in a debate with one or more opponents who have qualified to appear on the ballot.
8. Attend an Ethics Commission candidate training. Your treasurer must also attend a training.
9. File all required campaign statements.”

As a baseline for a democracy vouchers program, Los Angeles could mirror the qualification process for the existing matching funds program, though there are many opportunities for improvements that Angelenos could consider, for example by allowing candidates to qualify for and start redeeming vouchers much earlier than they are currently allowed to receive matching funds. Additionally, candidates in Seattle can begin collecting democracy vouchers as soon as they have signed a pledge to participate in program rules, though they cannot redeem vouchers for money until they’ve completed the full

⁶⁵ <https://ethics.lacity.org/wp-content/uploads/2024-City-Candidate-Guide.pdf>

qualification process.⁶⁶ Los Angeles could set a similar policy.

Modeling of voters and donors

For this section, we modeled each of the three program types, using data from Seattle as a baseline. While it is certainly true that Los Angeles and Seattle have many differences including population, land area, community culture, and other factors, we felt it most appropriate to base our modeling on real world data (scaling numbers up from the population of Seattle to the population of Los Angeles where appropriate). Links to our modeling and data sources are included throughout.

How many people will use their democracy vouchers?

In Seattle, the percentage of eligible residents using a voucher in each election cycle is as follows:

- 2017 (first cycle, mayoral race ineligible): 3.78%⁶⁷
- 2019 (no mayoral race): 6.76%⁶⁸
- 2021 (mayoral race eligible): 7.59%⁶⁹

We expect similar participating rates in Los Angeles, depending on the number of candidates running for office and the level of public knowledge

⁶⁶ https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/EthicsElections/DemocracyVoucher/Candidate%20Toolkit/2023%20DVP%20Candidate%20Toolkit%20FINAL-a_136240.pdf#page=3

⁶⁷ <https://georgetown.app.box.com/s/r2skgxfnc230ukkb3dfqgm4576phzabd>

⁶⁸ <https://georgetown.app.box.com/s/r2skgxfnc230ukkb3dfqgm4576phzabd>

⁶⁹ <https://seattle.gov/documents/Departments/EthicsElections/DemocracyVoucher/Program%20Data/Reports/2021%20Seattle%20Democracy%20Voucher%20Report.pdf>. Note: This is a percentage of the voting age population, while the 2017 and 2019 numbers are a percentage of the population eligible to use vouchers, a slightly different metric. In 2021, 9.38% of people who received a voucher used a voucher—a third possible metric.

about the system.

How will the share of money coming from different sources change?

Two major issues in Los Angeles campaign finance are the large percentages of money that come from outside the city and from non-individual donors (e.g., special interest groups). Democracy vouchers or hybrid public financing programs can be expected to reduce each of these issues.

We analyzed the four cycles prior to democracy vouchers and the four cycles since the implementation of democracy vouchers in Seattle.⁷⁰ With the implementation of democracy vouchers, Seattle saw a 36% reduction in the share of campaign money coming from outside the city, and a 43% reduction in the share of campaign money coming from non-individuals.

| Seattle Contribution Sources | | |
|--|---|---|
| | Average % of money from outside Seattle | Average % of money from non-individuals |
| Before vouchers (2009, 2011, 2013, 2015) | 20.88% | 25.45% |
| With vouchers (2017, 2019, 2021, 2023) | 13.30% | 14.50% |
| % Reduction | 36% reduction | 43% reduction |

Los Angeles can expect similar reductions in the share of money from outside the city and from non-individuals, and thus corresponding increases in the share of money from inside the city and from individual donors.

⁷⁰ Our analysis is available here: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1KxZkaEevRdubxiiINOXVDO7HZUS9xT9l6ueGTs2mf7l/>

How will the share of money coming from majority people of color ZIP codes change?

Another key issue in Los Angeles campaign finance is the racial donation gap—the fact that donors from majority white ZIP codes give disproportionately, compared to donors from ZIP codes that are majority people of color. Historically, Seattle has faced similar issues, though on a smaller scale due to its less diverse population. However, by 2021, Seattle’s third cycle with democracy vouchers, one study found that “voucher users were similar to voters in the 2021 general elections in terms of age, income and race,”⁷¹ meaning there was effectively no longer any racial donation gap among voucher users. We expect similar improvements in Los Angeles, with the implementation of democracy vouchers or a hybrid public financing program.

How will the program affect other forms of political engagement?

In Seattle, usage of democracy vouchers made nonvoters and low propensity voters substantially more likely to vote. A 2021 report analyzed the 2017 and 2019 cycles in Seattle, finding the following effects:⁷²

- “First-Time Eligible Voters who used at least one voucher in 2017 were 11.75 times more likely to vote in 2017.
- First-Time Eligible Voters who used at least one voucher in 2019 were 6.02 times more likely to vote in 2019.
- Non-Voters who used at least one voucher in 2017 were 10.2 times more likely to vote in 2017.
- Non-Voters who used at least one voucher in 2019 were 6.4 times more likely to vote in 2019.

⁷¹ https://mccourt.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Broadening-Donor-Participation-in-Local-Elections_Report_2022.pdf

⁷² <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mkMHu6rajpOLu2lkBxayv0H-Ucrpr-JC/view>

- Low Propensity Voters who used at least one voucher in 2017 were 7.4 times more likely to vote in 2017.
- Low Propensity Voters who used at least one voucher in 2019 were 4.5 times more likely to vote in 2019.

We expect similar boosts to political participation among voucher users in Los Angeles.

Modeling of candidates

Will candidates use democracy vouchers?

Since Seattle implemented its democracy voucher program for the 2017 cycle, 75% of primary election candidates and 88% of general election candidates have opted-in to the program.⁷³ In the same time period, 90% of incumbent candidates and 74% of challengers in primary elections opted-in to the program, demonstrating the program's success at attracting participation among candidates of all types. We expect similarly high participation levels among candidates in Los Angeles, regardless of whether they are well established candidates or political newcomers.

How many candidates will run for office?

In Seattle, the number of candidates running for office increased by 49% from 2015 (the final cycle before democracy vouchers) to 2019 (the first comparable cycle with democracy vouchers).⁷⁴ Similarly, the average number of primary candidates for City Council seats increased from 3.95 in the four cycles prior to democracy vouchers to 7.39 in the four cycles since democracy

⁷³ <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1IGTVMpEATIEoPEpn-TQWhWJPO9yfrxAXjHBwPrQ1S88/>

⁷⁴ <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1IGTVMpEATIEoPEpn-TQWhWJPO9yfrxAXjHBwPrQ1S88/>

vouchers were implemented—an increase of 87%. If Los Angeles implements a democracy vouchers system, we expect a similar increase in the number of candidates for city office.

Diversity among Seattle’s field of candidates also increased, with the Seattle Times noting that some argued that democracy vouchers were “bringing equity” to the 2021 mayoral race.⁷⁵ We expect a similar effect in Los Angeles.

Program funding

In Seattle, the democracy vouchers program costs an average of \$3 million per year, or roughly 0.06% of the city’s total budget. Scaling this up to the population of Los Angeles, the city could potentially expect to spend \$15.7 million per year, as a first approximation, as well as an additional one-time investment of around \$2 million to get the program up and running.

Based on data from Seattle’s program, we modeled the overall cost of a democracy vouchers program in Los Angeles in more depth, using more conservative assumptions than the above number.⁷⁶ We modeled the cost for programs that only included City Council candidates, as well as programs for all city candidates. The results are below (all numbers include administrative costs):

⁷⁵ <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/democracy-vouchers-bringing-some-equity-to-mayoral-race-but-more-needs-to-be-done/>

⁷⁶ Our model, which takes into account the different program types as well as annual and one-time administrative costs, can be found here: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ykcMLU4zzBCqnr5pWoBQiGvVN4LiBYBi_G9YM6lQq0/

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| Annual Program Funding by System Type | | | |
|--|--------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| | Democracy Vouchers | Democracy Vouchers + Matching Funds | Full Public Financing via Democracy Vouchers + Grants |
| Annual Cost (City Council only) | \$7-10 million | \$11-15 million | \$10-14 million |
| Annual Cost (all candidates) | \$10-14 million | \$13-19 million | \$14-20 million |

California Clean Money Campaign Cost Estimates

The California Clean Money Campaign (CCMC) estimated costs in a different, but complementary model (see appendix). Their approach calculated how much it would have cost to provide all candidates who actually received matching funds from 2015-2023, including special elections, with maximum allowed funding from vouchers and grants.

As shown below, the actual costs of providing full public funding to all candidates who received matching funds in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars is a little lower than our calculations based on Seattle’s program, but in the same general ballpark. This includes allowing candidates to turn in additional vouchers (up to a limit) as proposed by CCMC in the appendix when triggered by independent expenditures or high-spending privately funded candidates.

MODELING

| California Clean Money Campaign Annual Program Funding Estimates based on max funding to all Candidates who received matching funds from 2015-2023 | | | |
|---|--------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| | Democracy Vouchers | Democracy Vouchers + Matching Funds | Full Public Financing via Democracy Vouchers + Grants + Triggered Vouchers |
| Annual Cost (City Council only) | \$6-7 million | \$6-7 million | \$8-9 million |
| Annual Cost (all candidates) | \$10-12 million | \$10-12 million | \$12-15 million |

Democracy Vouchers and other reform ideas

This compendium is intended to highlight the various ways that democracy vouchers can create a more inclusive and accountable campaign finance system. We also recognize the need for additional reforms to complement, reinforce, and even pave the way for the successful implementation of a democracy vouchers program. We're encouraged to see policies like independent redistricting, ethics commission reform, council expansion, ranked-choice voting, and charter reform, among others, gain traction among Los Angeles' municipal and community leaders. It's clear that taken together, these reforms would move our city's democracy in a more equitable and participatory direction.

Conclusion

Democracy vouchers, potentially combined with other public financing programs like matching funds or lump sum grants, is a promising program with potential to significantly improve the campaign finance landscape in Los Angeles. Under democracy vouchers, more candidates can run for office, because they don't have to compete for money under the old system. Democracy vouchers diversify the pool of donors, meaning more low income people, young people, and people of color can contribute, and candidates with support from those communities can run competitive campaigns. For donors in those communities, the chance to use a democracy voucher boosts their political participation in other ways, such as by increasing the likelihood that they vote.

When implementing such a program, Los Angeles could consider a “ramp up period.” In Seattle, though democracy vouchers were first implemented in 2017, the 2017 mayoral election was ineligible for the program, in order to limit cost and complexity during the program's first use. Los Angeles could consider a similar approach, for example by excluding citywide races from the first use of the program.

Future reports should attempt to come to more detailed estimates of cost and participation, taking into consideration differences between Los Angeles' City Council districts, as well as other differences between Seattle's democracy vouchers program and potential programs in Los Angeles. Future reports could also consider the potential for democracy voucher style programs

CONCLUSION

to be implemented in other settings, potentially including ballot initiatives, neighborhood council elections, or LAUSD elections. Democracy vouchers could also be implemented statewide in California, though this would likely need to happen through a statewide ballot initiative, given the need to overturn a previous ballot initiative that restricted public financing at the state level.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ [https://ballotpedia.org/California_Proposition_73,_Funds_for_Election_Campaigns_Initiative_\(June_1988\)](https://ballotpedia.org/California_Proposition_73,_Funds_for_Election_Campaigns_Initiative_(June_1988))

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Appendix: CCMC Suggestions and Recommendations for Los Angeles Hybrid Full Public Financing Feasibility Study

Prepared by the California Clean Money Campaign

We'd like to make the following suggestions for the portion of the City Legislative Analyst's feasibility study on the possibility of creating a hybrid public financing program based on Democracy Vouchers and public grants to achieve full public financing similar to the gubernatorial races in Arizona and Maine.⁷⁸

The California Clean Money Campaign has been involved in improving Los Angeles' public financing system since 2006 when we worked with then-councilmembers Eric Garcetti, Wendy Greuel, and Bill Rosendahl on an initial proposal to explore full public financing. In 2011, we co-chaired the successful campaign for Measure H in 2011 to remove the cap on the matching funds trust fund. We then proposed changes to strengthen the system and make it more responsive to city voters and co-led the campaign that passed them in 2013 by working with Councilmembers Eric Garcetti and Paul Krekorian. In 2018 and 2019 we co-led the campaign working with then-Councilmembers Mike Bonin and David Ryu to strengthen the system again by raising the match to 6-1 and making it easier for grassroots

⁷⁸ The City Council motion included Massachusetts, but Massachusetts' Clean Elections system was repealed by the legislature in 2003.

candidates to qualify.

The value of achieving full public financing in a hybrid voucher system is twofold: (1) To ensure that qualified participating candidates receive enough public funding to run competitive campaigns without having to spend time chasing campaign contributions instead of talking to voters and (2) to ensure that participating candidates raise minimal amounts from private interests, giving voters greater confidence they are running “clean” and therefore lessening the potential for corruption or the appearance of corruption.

First, we recommend that candidates could choose to participate in either in (1) a normal voucher option in which they can also raise private contributions with certain restrictions similar to Seattle’s system, or (2) a hybrid voucher-grant option for full public financing in which they receive full public funding grants as long as they redeem a set number of vouchers and voluntarily agree not to raise any private contributions other than limited seed funding. And of course candidates don’t have to participate in either option.

The key parts of Arizona and Maine’s full public financing “Clean Elections” systems that are important for a Los Angeles system to include are:

Seed Money

Both Maine and Arizona allow full public funding candidates to raise a limited amount of seed money from individuals (called “early contributions” in Arizona) to use as initial resources to initiate their campaigns and gather enough \$5 contributions to qualify. Similarly, in a hybrid voucher-grant system, this seed money would give candidates the initial resources they need to gather enough vouchers to qualify. In Maine and Arizona seed money for full public financing candidates is limited to maximum contributions from individuals of \$100 and \$210, respectively.

Seed Money Contribution Limits: Having such low maximum contribution limits for seed money ensures full public funding candidates haven't raised large contributions from any one person, giving the public more confidence that they haven't been influenced by big donors.

Suggestion: Set the seed money contribution limit to equal the maximum contribution allowed to reach the minimum cumulative threshold to qualify for Los Angeles matching funds, i.e., \$114 for city council and \$214 for citywide races in 2022. Also, restrict seed money contributions to be from individuals only so voters are ensured that full public funding candidates aren't influenced by corporations or other non-individuals.

Other options could be to set the maximum seed money contribution for all candidates (1) at \$100 like in Maine, which would have the advantage of ensuring that even citywide full public funding candidates only ever received relatively small donations but the disadvantage of making it harder for citywide candidates to raise enough seed money, or (2) at \$200 or at \$210 like Arizona, with advantage being that would make it easier for council candidates to raise their seed money if they have enough somewhat larger donors.

We recommend against setting the maximum seed money contribution significantly higher than any of the above, because the primary purpose of providing full public funding is to give voters confidence that those candidates never accepted significant private contributions.

Maximum Total Seed Money: In Maine, participating State Senate candidates are limited to raising a total of \$3,000 in seed money; Gubernatorial candidates are limited to \$200,000.⁷⁹ In Arizona it's currently \$5,293 for

⁷⁹ <https://www.maine.gov/ethics/candidates/maine-clean-election-act/seed-money-contributions>

legislative candidates and \$72,300 for Gubernatorial candidates.⁸⁰

Suggestion: Set similarly low seed money caps for full public funding candidates, but make the cap higher due to larger districts in Los Angeles. One way to do this would be to set the maximum at, say, 3x the current minimum for qualifying for council, i.e., \$34,200 in 2022, and 2x the minimum for citywide offices, i.e., \$128,400 for Mayor and \$64,200 for City Attorney and Controller.

Other options would be to set the maximum total seed money at round numbers in similar ballpark that are fractions of the total spending caps for publicly funded candidates, e.g. \$30,000 for candidates running for City Council, \$60,000 for City Attorney and Controller, and \$120,000 for Mayor.

We recommend against setting the maximum total seed money much higher than the above levels, because the primary purpose of providing full public funding is to give voters confidence that those candidates never accepted significant private contributions. Arizona's maximum in seed money contributions for gubernatorial candidates is \$200,000, but its population is nearly twice that of Los Angeles.

Allow use of voucher funds before qualifying for full public funding grants: In addition to limited seed money, we would recommend that candidates who intend to participate in the full public funding option be allowed to redeem any vouchers they gather after they've qualified to gather vouchers, even if they haven't yet reached the threshold of vouchers needed for receiving full public funding grant(s). This should help provide them enough funding along with their seed money to gather enough vouchers to qualify for full public funding.

⁸⁰ <https://www.azcleelections.gov/run-for-office/how-clean-funding-works>

Limits on Self-Funding

In Arizona and Maine participating candidates are prohibited from making loans to their campaign and from giving themselves more seed money contributions than anyone else can, i.e., \$100 in Maine and \$210 in Arizona. This ensures that wealthy candidates don't have an unfair advantage over other candidates in accessing and using full public funding.

Recommendation: As in Arizona and Maine, don't allow full public funding candidates to make personal loans and require the same limits for contributions for them as for any other person. I.e. They would be limited to making whatever the seed money contribution limit is, e.g. \$114 for city council and \$214 for citywide races if using our above suggestion.

No Private Contributions other than Seed Money

In Arizona and Maine, the only private contributions candidates are allowed to accept, including from themselves, are the limited seed money and the \$5 contributions needed to qualify.

Recommendation: For full public funding candidates, ban private contributions other than their allowed seed money because they won't need \$5 contributions to qualify for grants, only vouchers, as described below.

Qualifying for Vouchers

In Seattle, candidates can only begin soliciting, receiving, and redeeming vouchers after receiving set numbers of contributions of a minimum amount of \$10 qualified contributions and signatures. Qualified contributions must be from adult residents that live in the city.

For City Council candidates the requirement is 150 \$10 qualified contributions and signatures (minimum half from the district), for City Attorney it's

400, and for Mayor it's 600.

Suggestion: Set the requirements to qualify for vouchers to be the same as currently required to qualify for matching funds, with the caveat that participants in the full public funding grants must also abide by the seed money limits. I.e.:

| Race | Minimum cumulative threshold | Max amount per contributor that counts |
|---------------|------------------------------|--|
| City Council | \$11,400 | \$114 |
| Controller | \$32,100 | \$214 |
| City Attorney | \$32,100 | \$214 |
| Mayor | \$64,200 | \$214 |

Another option would be to make the requirements for qualifying similar to Seattle's requirements that candidates gather a set number of \$5 or \$10 qualifying contributions, but scaled up based on population. Rounding, that could mean 350 for City Council⁸¹, 2,000 for City Attorney and Controller, and 3,000 for Mayor.⁸²

Qualifying for Grants

In Maine and Arizona, candidates qualify for public funding grants by gathering a set number of \$5 contributions. The required number of \$5

⁸¹ The average Seattle council district based on 2021 population had 104,846 residents while the average Los Angeles district had 256,600. $150 * 256600 / 104,846 = 367.1$.

⁸² In 2021 Seattle had a population of 733,919 and Los Angeles had a population of 3.849 million. $400 * 3,849,000 / 733,919 = 2,097.8$, and $600 * 3,849,000 / 733,919 = 3,146.7$.

contributions is set high enough to demonstrate a candidate has enough support to be competitive.

| Clean Elections Requirements: | Qualifying \$5 Contributions | | Clean Elections Requirements: | Qualifying \$5 Contributions |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Maine House | 60 | | AZ Legislature | 200 |
| Maine Senate | 175 | | AZ Governor | 4000 |
| Maine Governor | 3200 | | AZ SoS/AG | 2500 |

Suggestion: Have hybrid full public funding candidates qualify for full public funding by redeeming a set number of vouchers instead of a set number of \$5 contributions, allowing even the poorest residents to help qualify their favored candidates.

Seattle’s voucher system provides a rough guide for how many vouchers serious candidates are able to gather and redeem in different size jurisdictions.

City Council Candidates: As shown in the Appendix, all the Seattle city council candidates in 2019 who garnered 10% or more in the election redeemed at least 1,800 vouchers. That would translate to 4,405 vouchers for the average Los Angeles council district on a per resident basis.⁸³ So requiring 4,000 vouchers (\$100,000 worth) to achieve full public funding might be reasonable for Los Angeles city council candidates.

Mayoral Candidates: As shown in the Appendix, the mayoral candidate who finished fourth in the primary in Seattle redeemed 11,764 vouchers. That

⁸³ The average Seattle council district based on 2021 population had 104,846 residents while the average Los Angeles district had 256,600. $1,800 * 256600 / 104,846 = 4,405$.

would translate to 61,696 vouchers in Los Angeles on a per resident basis.⁸⁴ Since the number of vouchers likely won't scale up exactly on a per-resident basis due to mayoral candidates not being able to be everywhere at once, a reasonable number might be to require Los Angeles mayoral candidates to redeem 40,000 vouchers (\$1 million worth) to qualify for full public funding.

City Attorney and City Controller Candidates: In the 2022 election, the five City Attorney candidates that qualified for matching funds only raised an average of \$495,660 in private contributions in the primary. The four City Controller candidates that qualified only raised an average of \$271,620.⁸⁵ Given the relative difficulties they have raising money compared to the three candidates for Mayor who qualified for matching funds who raised an average of \$2,334,986 in private contributions in the primary, a reasonable number might be to require City Attorney candidates to redeem 8,000 vouchers (\$200,000 worth) and City Controllers 6,000 (\$150,000 worth) to qualify for full public funding.

Size of Public Grants

In Arizona and Maine, candidates that turn in enough \$5 contributions receive public grants that are large enough to run their entire campaigns without accepting any other private contributions.

Suggestion: Have the public grant(s) for the full public funding option combined with the money from the vouchers they redeem to qualify add up to the same amounts as the current spending limits for matching funds candidates for City Council and Mayoral candidates.

For candidates for City Attorney and Controller, we suggest saving public

⁸⁴ In 2021 Seattle had a population of 733,919 and Los Angeles had a population of 3.849 million. $11,765 * 3,849,000 / 733,919 = 61,696$.

⁸⁵ <https://ethics.lacity.org/elections/>

funds by setting the total voucher + full public funding grant to a lower level than the current matching funds spending limit because candidates for those offices so rarely reach those limits. Here we suggest \$1,000,000 combined voucher + full public funding grant for City Attorney⁸⁶ and \$700,000 for Controller⁸⁷ for each the primary and general election, though other amounts could certainly be used.

Another option would be to also set the vouchers plus grants add up to the same amounts as the current spending limits for matching funds candidates for City Attorney and Controller candidates, also, though that would add to the cost of the system while providing City Attorney and Controller candidates significantly more than they have been able to spend under the current system.

⁸⁶ In the 2022 primary, the highest spending matching funds City Attorney candidate, Teddy Kapur, had expenditures of \$1,034,951.31. The rest spent \$893,289.59 or less. The one matching funds City Attorney candidate in the general election, Hydee Feldstein Soto, spent \$1,151,731.65. Providing them \$1,000,000 (in each the primary and general election) in vouchers plus full public funding grants and allowing them to raise additional funds from vouchers when triggered as described below would provide them in the ballpark of funds they were able to raise under the current system and potentially more if they are allowed to raise additional funds from vouchers when triggered as described below, without having as much in fundraising costs.

⁸⁷ In the 2022 primary, the two highest spending Controller candidates both accepted matching funds, with the highest spender Paul Koretz spending \$958,626.64 and the second highest spender Kenneth Mejia spending \$642,084.13. The rest spent \$443,919.87 or less. The largest spending Controller candidate in the general election, Paul Koretz, spent \$669,629.87, with Kenneth Mejia spending \$491,642.09. Providing them \$700,000 (in each the primary and general election) in total base funding combined from vouchers plus full public funding grants and allowing them to raise additional funds from vouchers when triggered as described below would provide all full public funding candidates other than Koretz in the primary with more total funds than they were able to raise under the current system.

Triggers for Extra Funds From Vouchers

In Los Angeles and San Francisco participating matching funds candidates have their voluntary spending limits raised if another candidate in the same race outspends them or if independent expenditures affect them. The same is true for participating voucher candidates in Seattle. In all three cases, candidates are allowed to raise additional private contributions when such triggers are reached to allow them to respond.

However, one of the most important points of full public funding is to give voters confidence that participating candidates don't raise significant private contributions, so it would violate that confidence if full public funding candidates were allowed to raise private contributions if their spending limits are triggered.

We therefore recommend that full public funding candidates be allowed to redeem additional vouchers if their initial spending limits are triggered to raise by the spending of other candidates or independent expenditures, but still not be able to raise any additional private contributions.

Under this proposal, candidates and residents would be welcome to submit as many legally-signed vouchers as they can during the course of the campaign. If a candidate had more vouchers submitted than required to achieve the full public funding grant(s), the extras wouldn't be redeemed unless an increase in their allowed voucher funds is triggered, in which case the money from those extra vouchers would become immediately available.

There is a slight constitutional question on whether this would run afoul of the Supreme Court's

McCommish vs. Bennet decision that ruled that Arizona's then system of triggering additional public funds to Clean Elections candidates when they were outspent was unconstitutional. However, Bob Stern and our counsel believe that because this trigger would only allow extra funds to come from

vouchers that should be okay, because it is effectively money coming from residents who were turning in their vouchers to the candidate of their choice, and not from a government grant.

We also recommend that a version of San Francisco’s trigger mechanism be adopted so that only those candidates whose public funds have been exceeded by the “Total Supportive Funds” of another candidate and/or been attacked by outside spending have their limits raised, and only raised by the amount their public funds have been exceeded. This would ensure that only those candidates who have been negatively impacted by other expenditures be allowed to raise more from vouchers, rather than perversely letting the very candidates who benefited from outside spending raise more money because of it. It would also save the system money.

Suggestion: To ensure a cap on overall public funding, Los Angeles could put a limit on the maximum additional funds from vouchers full public funding candidates who have been triggered could redeem. We’d initially suggest a maximum of \$200,000 additional voucher funds for City Council, City Attorney, and City Controller candidates, and \$1 million for Mayoral candidates, but other amounts could be set.

Suggestions for Single Grant Full Public Funding

The option for a hybrid vouchers/grant full public funding system that would be most similar to Arizona and Maine would be to provide one large grant after the candidates redeemed enough vouchers to achieve full public funding.

Using the suggestions described above based on Los Angeles’ 2022 spending limits and qualification requirements gives the following thresholds and maximum funding amounts in primaries:

EXPLORING REFORM

| Race | Max Seed Money | \$ Needed to Qualify for Vouchers | Vouchers Need to Qualify for Grant | Max Based Funds From Vouchers | Full Public Funding Grant | Base Full Public Funding (Vouchers + Grants) | Max Triggered Vouchers + Grants |
|---------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| City Council | \$34,200 | \$11,400 | 4,000 | \$100,000 | \$471,000 | \$571,000 | \$771,000 |
| Controller | \$64,200 | \$32,100 | 6,000 | \$150,000 | \$550,000 | \$700,000 | \$900,000 |
| City Attorney | \$64,200 | \$32,100 | 8,000 | \$200,000 | \$850,000 | \$1,000,000 | \$1,200,000 |
| Mayor | \$128,400 | \$64,200 | 40,000 | \$1,000,000 | \$2,329,000 | \$3,329,000 | \$4,329,000 |

Here are the suggestions for general elections based on Los Angeles’ 2022 spending limits for City Council and Mayor:

| Race | Max Based Funds From Vouchers | Full Public Funding Grant | Base Full Public Funding (Vouchers + Grants) | Max Triggered Vouchers + Grants |
|---------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| City Council | \$100,000 | \$348,000 | \$448,000 | \$771,000 |
| Controller | \$150,000 | \$550,000 | \$700,000 | \$900,000 |
| City Attorney | \$200,000 | \$850,000 | \$1,000,000 | \$1,200,000 |
| Mayor | \$1,000,000 | \$2,662,000 | \$2,662,000 | \$4,329,000 |

These are of course just suggestions, and would need to be updated to take into account inflation since 2022, but should give a ballpark of suggested requirements and funding for a hybrid voucher/full-public funding system.

Suggestions for Multiple-Grant Full Public Funding

There are several ways to do multiple-grant full public funding systems. The simplest would be to divide the grants into four or five separate chunks. E.g.

With five separate grants, a participating full public funding City Council candidate using our suggestions above would receive a first grant of \$94,200 ($\$471,000/5$) after redeeming their first 800 vouchers ($4,000/5$). Under this option, they turn in 800 vouchers a total of five times, adding up to the same max full public funding grant as a single-grant system.

Such a multi-grant system would have the advantage of providing participating candidates with additional needed funding grants as they go along without being limited to only using voucher funds until they've reached the full number of vouchers needed to qualify for their maximum full public funding grants, which could take a while.

Doing it this way would also allow candidates who can't reach the number of vouchers needed for the maximum full public funding grant significant resources to run serious campaigns, while still ensuring voters that they haven't accepted any private contributions beyond limited seed money.

Estimated Costs for Full Public Funding Versions

To estimate the costs of a hybrid full public program with the recommendations above, we modeled the cost of providing full public funding to all the Los Angeles candidates who qualified for matching funds from 2015-2023, using our above assumptions for funding levels.

First, as reference, here are the total matching funds provided to all city candidates from 2015-2023, including the 2019 and 2023 special elections⁸⁸, and how much that works out to in cost per year (divided by 8 instead of 9 because it represents four election cycles). The right two columns show the amounts given in 2022 dollars based on the increases in maximum matching fund provided to candidates each election.

⁸⁸ From information on <https://ethics.lacity.org/elections/>

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| Actual Matching Funds Given Between 2015-2023, Including Special Elections: \$2.6 Million/Year | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---|--|
| Races | Primary Matching | General Matching | Total Matching | Total Matching in 2022 \$⁸⁹ | Cost Per Year in 2022 \$⁹⁰ |
| Council | \$8,364,713 | \$3,545,740 | \$11,910,454 | \$12,363,460 | \$1,545,432 |
| Controller | \$1,328,750 | \$805,421 | \$2,134,171 | \$2,134,171 | \$266,771 |
| City Attorney | \$1,501,964 | \$517,148 | \$2,019,112 | \$2,019,112 | \$252,389 |
| Mayor | \$2,866,347 | \$1,284,000 | \$4,150,347 | \$4,169,207 | \$521,151 |
| Total | \$14,061,774 | \$6,152,309 | \$20,214,083 | \$20,685,949 | \$2,585,744 |

Estimated Hybrid Base Full Public Funding Costs (Without Triggered Voucher Funds) Based on Previous Candidates, Including Special Elections: \$10-\$12 Million/Year

Below is a table showing how much it would have cost to provide all the candidates who received matching funds from 2015-2023 with the base max full public funding amounts suggested above, without triggering to allow them to raise additional money from vouchers if they are outspent by other candidates or subject or independent expenditures.

⁹⁰ Adjusting for CPI to 2022 levels by multiplying matching funds provided by the 2022 spending limits / the spending limits for the year for council candidates. Primary spending limits in 2022 were \$571,000 and in 2019 and 2020 were \$537,000, so 2019 and 2020 costs were multiplied by 571,000/537,000. The primary spending limit in 2017 was \$498,000, so multiplied 2017 costs by 571,000/498,000. The primary spending limit in 2015 was \$408,000, so multiplied 2015 costs by 571,000/408,000.

⁹⁰ Dividing total costs by 8 years instead of 9 because 2015-2023 included only four regular elections of 2015, 2017, 2020, and 2022, plus special council elections in 2019 and 2023. If divided by 9 years, the cost per year would be less.

APPENDIX: CCMC SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOS...

| Estimated Hybrid Base Full Public Funding Costs 2015-2023 | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Races | Primary Base Full Funding in 2022 \$ | General Base Full Funding in 2022 \$ | Total Base Full Funding in 2022 \$ | Cost Per Year in 2022 \$ |
| Council | \$39,970,000 | \$9,996,000 | \$49,966,000 | \$6,245,750 |
| Controller | \$2,800,000 | \$1,400,000 | \$4,200,000 | \$525,000 |
| City Attorney | \$5,000,000 | \$1,000,000 | \$6,000,000 | \$750,000 |
| Mayor | \$13,316,000 | \$2,662,000 | \$15,978,000 | \$1,997,250 |
| Total | \$61,086,000 | \$15,058,000 | \$76,144,000 | \$9,518,000 |

Because the 2015-2017 city elections had an unusually high number of races with incumbents that didn't have well-funded challengers, here's the same analysis just for the elections in 2020-2023, i.e. including the 2013 special election in CD 6:

| Estimated Hybrid Base Full Public Funding Costs 2020-2023 Only | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Races | Primary Base Full Funding in 2022 \$ | General Base Full Funding in 2022 \$ | Total Base Full Funding in 2022 \$ | Cost Per Year in 2022 \$ |
| Council | \$18,843,000 | \$5,236,000 | \$24,079,000 | \$6,019,750 |
| Controller | \$2,800,000 | \$1,400,000 | \$4,200,000 | \$1,050,000 |
| City Attorney | \$5,000,000 | \$1,000,000 | \$6,000,000 | \$1,500,000 |
| Mayor | \$9,987,000 | \$2,662,000 | \$12,649,000 | \$3,162,250 |
| Total | \$36,630,000 | \$10,298,000 | \$46,928,000 | \$11,732,000 |

Both analyses are likely an overestimate of the full public funding Los Angeles candidates who received matching funds actually would have received, because it assumes that every candidate who received any matching funds would have gathered enough vouchers to qualify for the full public funding grants suggested in "Suggestions for Single Grant Full Public Funding" above.

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In these calculations, that means e.g. total funding from vouchers and public grants of \$571,000 for City Council candidates who received matching funds in the primary, and \$448,000 for City Council candidates who received matching funds in the general.

In reality, it would be harder to reach the required number of vouchers to qualify for full public funding than it is to qualify for matching funds under the current system, so the likely cost to fund those candidates would have been lower than in the above analysis. Of course, it's also possible that the existence of hybrid full public funding grants would encourage more qualified candidates to run and qualify.

This analysis is also useful to show for a pure voucher system what the maximum costs would have been for all candidates that received matching funds if candidates were allowed to redeem vouchers up to the spending limit assumptions above and all of them successfully did so.

Estimated Hybrid Full Public Funding Costs Including Triggered Voucher Funds: \$12-\$15 Million/Year

Below is a table showing how much it would have cost to provide all the candidates who received matching funds from 2015-2023 with the same suggested base max full public funding amounts, while also allowing them to turn in additional vouchers as described above if they were triggered by privately funded candidates that outspent them or by independent expenditures.

Because we are recommending a version of the San Francisco trigger mechanism in which candidates' max spending is only raised by the amounts that they themselves are negatively impacted, different full public funding candidates would be allowed to raise different maximum amounts of additional vouchers when triggered.

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For example, in the 2020 general election for Council District 4, Nithya Raman would have been allowed to turn in the maximum dollar amount of additional vouchers if she gathered them, i.e. \$200,000 under the above suggestions, because her opponent David Ryu received \$522,630 in supportive IEs. But Ryu would have only been allowed to turn in additional vouchers worth \$12,263, because that was all that Raman received in supportive IEs.

Here are the estimated total costs in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars based on this analysis of providing all the candidates who received matching funds from 2015-2023 (including special elections) with the max full public funding amounts and redemption of triggered vouchers suggested above:

| Estimated Hybrid Full Public Funding Costs Including Triggered Vouchers 2015-2023 | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--------------------------|
| Races | Primary Full Funding W/Triggered Vouchers in 2022 \$ | General Full Funding W/Triggered Vouchers in 2022 \$ | Total Full Funding W/Triggered Vouchers in 2022 \$ | Cost Per Year in 2022 \$ |
| Council | \$52,639,119 | \$13,358,209 | \$65,997,328 | \$8,249,666 |
| Controller | \$3,034,197 | \$1,600,000 | \$4,634,197 | \$579,275 |
| City Attorney | \$6,000,000 | \$1,200,000 | \$7,200,000 | \$900,000 |
| Mayor | \$17,316,000 | \$3,662,000 | \$20,978,000 | \$2,622,250 |
| Total | \$78,989,316 | \$19,820,209 | \$98,809,525 | \$12,351,191 |

Because the 2015-2017 city elections had an unusually high number of races with incumbents that didn't have well-funded challengers, here's the same analysis just for the elections in 2020-2023, i.e. including the 2013 special election in CD 6:

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| Estimated Hybrid Full Public Funding Costs Including Triggered Vouchers 2020-2023 | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--------------------------|
| Races | Primary Full Funding W/Triggered Vouchers in 2022 \$ | General Full Funding W/Triggered Vouchers in 2022 \$ | Total Full Funding W/Triggered Vouchers in 2022 \$ | Cost Per Year in 2022 \$ |
| Council | \$24,112,119 | \$6,881,929 | \$30,994,049 | \$7,748,512 |
| Controller | \$3,034,197 | \$1,600,000 | \$4,634,197 | \$1,158,549 |
| City Attorney | \$6,000,000 | \$1,200,000 | \$7,200,000 | \$1,800,000 |
| Mayor | \$12,987,000 | \$3,662,000 | \$16,649,000 | \$4,162,250 |
| Total | \$46,133,316 | \$13,343,929 | \$59,477,246 | \$14,869,311 |

This means that the total worst-case cost for our suggested hybrid full public funding system levels assuming all candidates who received matching funds from 2020-2023 would have maxed out on vouchers and grants would have been \$59,477,246, or \$14,869,311 per year.

In reality, the cost likely would have been less, because not all candidates who received matching funds would necessarily have been able to reach the required number of vouchers needed to qualify for the full public funding grant(s), much less turn in enough extra vouchers to reach the maximum vouchers if their spending limits were triggered. And as shown above, when including all elections from 2015-2023 to include the years having more incumbents, the cost per year of providing full public funding to all candidates who actually received matching funds drops to \$12,351,191 per year in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars.

Of course, it is also possible that more candidates would have attempted to participate in the system if they were given the opportunity to get full public funding as opposed to the limited matching funds that were available between 2015-2023, partially balancing the fact that not all matching funds candidates would necessarily be able to max out on full public funding grants and extra triggered vouchers.

For details of how we calculated these costs estimates, the spreadsheet we used can be downloaded from our website at: http://www.yesfairelections.org/content/research/ccmc_lafullpublicfundingestimates.xlsx

Contact California Clean Money Executive Director Trent Lange for any questions on these suggestions and recommendations, or on these cost calculations or how to modify them for different assumptions: tlange@caclean.org, 310-428-1556

Appendix: Vouchers Redeemed in Seattle Races

| 2019 Seattle City Council Races | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------|----------|----------|--------------|-------------|
| Candidate | Position | Redeemed | Total | Result | Primary Pct |
| Sergio Garcia | District #6 | 2606 | \$65,150 | Lost Primary | 14.26% |
| Emily Myers | District #4 | 2461 | \$61,525 | Lost Primary | 12.85% |
| Brendan Kolding | District #1 | 2453 | \$61,325 | Lost Primary | 16.75% |
| Cathy Tuttle | District #4 | 2435 | \$60,875 | Lost Primary | 12.83% |
| Ami Nguyen | District #3 | 2284 | \$57,100 | Lost Primary | 9.20% |
| Zachary DeWolf | District #3 | 2199 | \$54,975 | Lost Primary | 12.59% |
| Pat Murakami | District #3 | 2190 | \$54,750 | Lost Primary | 12.99% |
| Jason Williams | District #7 | 2104 | \$52,600 | Lost Primary | 5.08% |
| Jon Lisbin | District #6 | 2017 | \$50,425 | Lost Primary | 3.20% |
| John Lombard | District #5 | 1983 | \$49,575 | Lost Primary | 13.02% |
| Melissa Hall | District #6 | 1881 | \$47,025 | Lost Primary | 2.47% |
| Michael George | District #7 | 1853 | \$46,325 | Lost Primary | 9.28% |
| Kate Martin | District #6 | 1850 | \$46,250 | Lost Primary | 3.43% |
| Christopher Peguero | District #1 | 1844 | \$46,100 | Lost Primary | 4.71% |
| Logan Bowers | District #3 | 1832 | \$45,800 | Lost Primary | 6.83% |
| Jay Fathi | District #6 | 1815 | \$45,375 | Lost Primary | 13.16% |
| Daniela Lipscomb-Eng | District #7 | 1770 | \$44,250 | Lost Primary | 9.77% |
| Phyllis Porter | District #2 | 1662 | \$41,550 | Lost Primary | 5.91% |
| Sasha Anderson | District #4 | 1492 | \$37,300 | Lost Primary | 1.27% |
| Heidi Stuber | District #4 | 1191 | \$29,775 | Lost Primary | 3.79% |
| Terry Rice | District #6 | 1124 | \$28,100 | Lost Primary | 0.87% |
| Ed Pottharst | District #6 | 913 | \$22,825 | Lost Primary | 1.81% |
| Joshua Newman | District #4 | 697 | \$17,425 | Lost Primary | 1.22% |

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| Candidates in General | Position | Redeemed in Primary & General | Total | Result | Primary Pct |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Mark Solomon | District #2 | 5621 | \$140,525 | Lost General | 39.08% |
| Egan Orion | District #3 | 5171 | \$129,275 | Lost General | 47.70% |
| Shaun Scott | District #4 | 4801 | \$120,025 | Lost General | 47.69% |
| Phil Tavel | District #1 | 4360 | \$109,000 | Lost General | 43.90% |
| Heidi Wills | District #6 | 4284 | \$107,100 | Lost General | 43.83% |
| Jim Pugel | District #7 | 3600 | \$90,000 | Lost General | 46.58% |
| Lisa Herbold | District #1 | 5469 | \$136,725 | Won General | 50.62% |
| Tammy Morales | District #2 | 5049 | \$126,225 | Won General | 50.07% |
| Dan Strauss | District #6 | 5029 | \$125,727 | Won General | 34.15% |
| Andrew Lewis | District #7 | 4770 | \$119,250 | Won General | 31.71% |
| Alex Pedersen | District #4 | 4189 | \$104,725 | Won General | 40.36% |
| Debora Juarez | District #7 | 3180 | \$79,500 | Won General | 45.10% |
| Total | - | 98,179 | \$2,454,475 | | |

2021 Seattle Races. City Council Position #8 & 9 are at large citywide seats, not district seats.

| Candidate | Position | Redeemed | Total | Result | Primary Pct |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Nicole Thomas-Kennedy | City Attorney | 13,501 | \$337,525 | Lost General | 36.39% |
| Ann Davison | City Attorney | 7,877 | \$196,925 | Won General | 32.72% |
| Pete Holmes | City Attorney | 4,211 | \$105,275 | Lost Primary | 30.64% |
| Teresa Mosqueda | City Council Position #8 | 10,729 | \$268,225 | Won General | 59.37% |
| Nikkita Oliver | City Council Position #9 | 11,536 | \$288,400 | Lost General | 40.18% |
| Brianna Thomas | City Council Position #9 | 3,168 | \$79,200 | Lost Primary | 13.42% |
| Lorena Gonzalez | Mayor | 25,700 | \$642,500 | Lost General | 32.11% |
| Bruce Harrell | Mayor | 21,038 | \$525,950 | Won General | 34.00% |
| Andrew Grant Houston | Mayor | 13,853 | \$346,325 | Lost Primary | 2.68% |
| Colleen Echohawk | Mayor | 12,505 | \$312,625 | Lost Primary | 10.28% |
| Jessyn Farrell | Mayor | 11,764 | \$194,100 | Lost Primary | 7.29% |
| TOTAL | - | 135,882 | \$3,397,050 | | |