

# Benefits of Public Financing for Minority Communities

## PUBLIC FINANCING OVERVIEW:

Public Financing of Elections is a voluntary system that seeks to remove the influence of money in politics. It is based on the idea that any qualified person should be able to run for political office and represent their community. Public financing reinforces the direct communication between voters and representatives by allowing candidates to concentrate on issues rather than fundraising.

Under the system, candidates who chose to participate collect a certain number of qualifying contributions. Qualified candidates receive state funds for running both primary and general election campaigns, and publicly financed candidates running against privately financed candidates receive additional funds for every dollar that their opponent raises above their initial allotment.

## BENEFITS FOR MINORITY CANDIDATES:

In a political system where money determines who can run for office and who wins, women and minorities are often at a disadvantage. Yet with public financing, women and minorities in Maine, Arizona, and other states have been able to run for office at significantly higher rates, and they have increased their representation within the political system.

Case Study: In Arizona, the number of Latinos running for office increased by 220% between 2000 and 2002 under the public financing system, with nearly 65% choosing to accept public funds.

By 2004, minority candidates were 14% of total candidates for legislative and state office in Arizona, more than double the 6% of total candidates in the 2000 election.



“I would recommend the [public funding] program to anyone. Without [public funding] I would not have had the financial means to run for office in my district. [Public funding] is great because it levels the playing field so that nearly anyone can run for office”

—Arizona Representative Manuel Alvarez

To learn more about us or to become part of the coalition, visit [www.FairElectionsRI.org](http://www.FairElectionsRI.org) or email [info@FairElectionsRI.org](mailto:info@FairElectionsRI.org)



“At the time that I ran for office under [public financing], my district was considered to be ‘low-income’ with a predominately minority-based constituency, and I had an easy time collecting the \$5 donations. [...] If you can’t get the required number of signatures for [public financing] then your problem is not with the [public financing] system.”

–Arizona Representative Martha Garcia

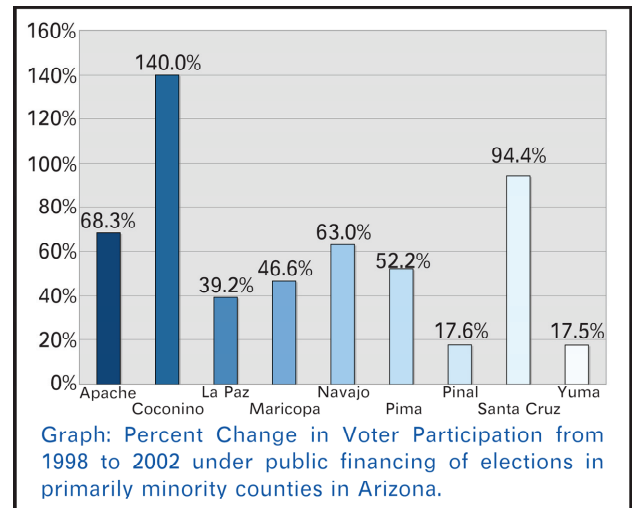
### BENEFITS FOR MINORITY COMMUNITIES:

In places where systems of public financing have been implemented, such as Arizona, voter turnout has increased across the board, especially among minority communities. Voters are better represented by the candidates in political contests and are able to choose from a wider selection of candidates.

Legislatures and officials who better represent the diversity of the state will make decisions that better reflect the opinions and needs of the state.

Case Study: In Arizona, voter turnout increased by 22% from 1998 to 2002 under public financing, and that number grew to a 67% increase by 2004. This growth was especially high in traditionally low-participation Native American, Latino and African American communities.

Case Study: Maricopa County, AZ, a primarily African American and Latino community, experienced a 44.7% increase in voter participation in 2004 from 2002 with 39,000 new or infrequent voters participating.



### SUPPORT IN RHODE ISLAND:

A number of environmental, religious, student, and citizens groups already support Fair Elections. These supporters include Common Cause, the League of Women Voters, Operation Clean Government, the National Organization of Women, the Rhode Island Council of Churches, United Service Allied Workers of Rhode Island,

the Green Party of Rhode Island, Rhode Island Public Interest Research Group, Clean Water Action, and Environmental Council of Rhode Island. Fair Elections also has the support of a number of city and town councils from across the state, including Providence, South Kingstown, Newport, and Barrington.

“[Public Financing] has allowed minorities to run for state legislature as well as statewide offices where in the past, minorities had not run for office”

– Arizona Representative Steve Gallardo

