



# rhode islanders for Fair Elections

## FAIR ELECTIONS ACT Legislative Summary

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### Bill Numbers:

'09: SB 0327

'09: HB 5806

### Primary Sponsors:

Senator Rhoda Perry

Representative Edith Ajello

### Co-Sponsors:

'09 Senator Louis DiPalma

'09 Senator Joshua Miller

'09 Senator Susan Sosnowski

'09 Senator Michael Lenihan

'08 Senator Charles Levesque

'08 Senator Daniel Connors

'08 Senator Susan Sosnowski

'08 Senator Joshua Miller

'07 Senator Harold Metts

'06 Senator June Gibbs

'06 Senator Elizabeth Roberts

'09 Representative Christopher Fierro

'09 Representative Edwin Pacheco

'09 Representative Elizabeth Dennigan

'09 Representative Arthur Handy

'07 Representative Joseph Scott

'07 Representative Joanne Giannini

'07 Representative Elizabeth Dennigan

'07 Representative Donna Walsh

'06 Representative Thomas Slater

'06 Representative James Davey

'06 Representative Donald Lally

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### Members of the RIFE Coalition:

- Common Cause RI
- Council of Churches RI
- The League of Women Voters of RI
- Clean Water Action
- Democracy Matters
- Environmental Council of RI
- United Service Allied Workers of RI
- RI Public Interest Research Group
- RI Green Party
- Operation Clean Government
- RI National Organization for Women
- RI Progressive Democrats of America
- American Association of University Women
- The Buckeye Brook Coalition
- The George Wiley Center
- Hmong United Association
- Providence Students for Fair Elections

### RI City Councils Supporting Fair Elections:

- Barrington
- Charlestown
- Newport
- Portsmouth
- Providence
- South Kingstown
- Warren
- Westerly

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### Other States

- **Maine** enacted the Clean Elections Act by initiative in 1996.
- **Arizona** enacted the Clean Elections Act by initiative in 1998.
- **Connecticut** passed Clean Election bill in 2005, and in 2008 was implemented for the first election cycle.
- **Vermont** passed a Clean Elections Act in 1997, which applies only to gubernatorial races.
- **New Jersey** implemented Fair Elections legislation for a legislative pilot project in 2004.

## How Fair Elections Work

**Qualification** -- To qualify into the system, candidates must demonstrate that they are credible candidates with grassroots support. This is done by collecting a prescribed number of signatures and \$5 qualifying contributions from registered voters in their district.

**Exploratory Period** -- The period of time beginning the day after the previous General Election when a candidate is allowed to collect private donations of seed money, to an established limit, in order to determine his/her viability to run a successful campaign under the public funding system.

**Non-participating candidates and independent expenditures** -- Publicly financed candidates who are outspent by privately financed opponents, or targeted by independent expenditures, are entitled to additional funds to match his/her opponent's spending up to four times the amount of the initial grant.

**Uncontested Races** -- When a participating candidate runs in a race with no balloted opponent that candidate receives only a portion of the initial grant. This portion is 25% for primary elections and 10% for general elections.

**Third-party Candidates** -- Third-party and independent candidates that qualify for the system are given 25% of the initial grant for the primary election cycle and the full grant for the general election cycle.

**Seed Money** -- To cover minor costs during the qualifying period, candidates are permitted to raise a limited amount of seed money, or contributions of no more than \$100 made by an individual to a potential candidate. All seed money must be collected during the Exploratory Period and reported to the Board of Elections.

### *Limits on Seed Money*

Representative:	\$500
Senator:	\$1,000
Governor:	\$90,000
Other Statewide Office:	\$56,000

**Qualifying Period** -- The 90-day period of time when a candidate must collect a certain number of \$5 Qualifying Contributions from constituents in order to prove that the candidate holds public interest. Once this money is collected, it is placed into the Public Financing of Elections Fund to be distributed amongst the participating candidates each Election Cycle.

### *Required Qualifying Contributions:*

Representative:	50
Senator:	100
Governor:	2,500
Other Statewide Office:	1,000

**Primary funding** -- Candidates who successfully qualify for public funds and agree not to raise or spend private money during the primary and general election campaign periods receive a set amount of money from a dedicated fund.

### *Initial Grant Amount, Primary:*

Representative:	\$6,000
Senator:	\$12,000
Governor:	\$1,125,000
Other Statewide Office:	\$450,000

**General election funding** -- Candidates who win their party primaries and qualifying independent candidates who agree to the voluntary restrictions receive a set amount of general election funding from the dedicated fund.

### *Initial Grant Amount, General:*

Representative:	\$9,000
Senator:	\$18,000
Governor:	\$1,875,000
Other Statewide Office:	\$675,000