



## Fundraising Reforms

February 11, 2008

Like many office holders on both sides of the aisle, I recognize that the demands of campaign fundraising ultimately have corrosive effects on the policy process. And like state legislators in [Maine and Arizona](#), who have created a comprehensive system for public financing of campaigns, I want to do more than just tinker around the edges.

That's why I filed [SB 1071](#) ([See the article from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#)), which was heard today by the Senate Financial and Governmental Organizations and Elections Committee. The bill creates a method for voluntary public financing of campaigns for legislative and gubernatorial candidates. Under the bill, candidates certified as "clean election" candidates must agree to abide by campaign spending limits and must raise qualifying contributions of \$5 to \$100 per voter from a specified number of voters in their electorate; these contributions would be supplemented by an allowance from a Clean Election Fund.

After just a few election cycles in operation, over half of all legislative candidates in Arizona and nearly 90% of candidates in Maine are participating in the voluntary clean elections process. They say that it has changed their lives by allowing them to focus all of their energies on listening to constituents and crafting legislation to help their districts.

Opponents of this bill (and there will be many,) will say that my approach is exactly wrong. They prefer a diametrically opposed approach; indeed, immediately before I presented my bill, Senate Majority Leader Charlie Shields (R-Buchanan) offered his own bill, which would remove all

contribution limits for state elections. Although Senator Shields and I agree on some of the problems of the system, I think we can best address them by decreasing the amount of money in politics, and he appears to believe that the answer is to increase it. (To be fair, his bill would also increase transparency by eliminating the legislative district committees that are a hallmark of the current system through which much larger contributions are often made. Still, it would allow direct contributions of any amount - even, say, a million dollars.)

Public financing of campaigns, say some opponents of my bill, is just "welfare for politicians." I see it differently. I see it as an opportunity to make a small investment in our democracy that will reap huge fiscal benefits in the long run. Let me explain.

[Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano](#), a clean money candidate whose first act as governor was the issuance of an executive order directing state government to negotiate with drug companies based on the bulk purchasing power of Arizona consumers, helped consumers receive discounts of up to 55 percent on medications and has saved Arizonans more than \$15 million. She issued the order over the objections of the pharmaceutical industry, and said that she was able to do so because, as a clean elections candidate, she came to office totally uncompromised.

If [SB 1071](#) passes, it would cost every Missouri taxpayer a few bucks a year to finance Missouri campaigns (Maine's system, used by almost every legislative candidate, cost \$2.34 per taxpayer last year). [Wouldn't that be a small price to pay to feel like you've got your democracy back?](#)

[Reply here and let me know which approach you like best: mine, Charlie Shields's, or the current system](#) (limits of \$325 for state House races, \$675 for state Senate races, and \$1350 for statewide races) I'll let you know the results in my next missive.

Best,  
Jeff

## Contact Information

### Capitol Office

State Capitol Building  
Room 425  
Jefferson City, MO 65101

### Phone Number:

573.751.3599

### Fax:

573.751.0266

### Website:

<http://www.senate.mo.gov/smith>

### District Office:

4515 Olive Blvd  
Suite 210  
St. Louis, MO 63108

### Phone Number:

314.361.4333