

Kids Voting Arizona

Clean Elections Supplement (Grades 9-12)



Activity

Investing in Democracy

Objective

Students will:

- Analyze the federal campaign funding system.
- Evaluate the Clean Elections system.
- Write a persuasive argument in favor of or in opposition to Clean Elections.

Get Ready

- Obtain Clean Elections video from www.publiccampaign.org (202-293-0222)
- Copy Handout #1 – Big Money Homework
- Copy Handout #2 – Clean Elections: Investing in Democracy

Activities

1. UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUES: In advance of the lesson, students should complete Handout #1.

2. ANALYZING CLEAN ELECTIONS: In class, students will discuss what they learned from their research after completing Handout #1. Then watch the Clean Elections video and complete Handout #2. Students should evaluate the benefits and/ or drawbacks of clean elections.

3. TAKING ACTION: After the class discussion students can take action by completing one of the following activities:

- a. Write a persuasive letter to a politician living in another state as to why he/she should consider

advocating for or opposing clean elections in their state. Be sure to explain the system clearly as well as its benefits.

b. Conduct a survey of Arizona politicians. Contact at least 10 political candidates (or someone on their staff) in Arizona and ask them about Clean Elections: are they running as a publicly funded candidate? Why or why not? What do they think of Clean Elections and why? Then write a newspaper editorial arguing for or against Clean Elections and for students to get involved in politics.

c. Contact an opponent or a supporter of Clean Elections, find out their arguments regarding Clean Elections and write a persuasive letter to them that tries to refute their arguments and argues for the opposite side of their position.

d. Write a report on the states that are currently using Clean Elections. Compare and evaluate their election systems and speculate about the future of Clean Elections

Name _____

Handout #1: Campaign Financing in the United States

In preparation for class do the following:

1. Find two articles that discuss campaign financing. You may get these articles from newspapers, news magazines, and/or on-lines news sources. You may want to try to find articles that have the key terms in them. Staple the articles to this sheet and list the name and date of the newspaper, magazine or website..

2. For each article answer the following questions:

Who wrote the article? When was it written? Where was it published?

What are the main points the author makes about campaign financing?

What is the author's tone about campaign financing?

3. Define the following key terms and note if and how they are used in your article(s):

Soft money

PACs

Bundling

Issue advocacy

McCain-Feingold Campaign Reform Act

Discussion Questions:

Answer each of the following questions and be prepared to defend your answers during the class discussion.

1. How was campaign financing discussed in your articles?
2. Why do PACs and “soft money” exist?
3. What problems are inherent in a traditionally financed election? In a Clean Election?
4. How does the money going into elections affect you personally? Does it affect your motivation or influence?
5. What proposals have been made for changing the system of financing campaigns?

Name _____

Handout #2 Clean Elections: Investing in Democracy
Video: The Road to Clean Elections (13 minutes)

Video Questions:

1. How do Clean Elections work?

A Clean Election Candidate must do the following:

1. Collect a set number of small contributions in their districts
2. Agree to voluntary spending limits
3. No campaign money from private donors
4. No campaign money from own pockets

In return, what does he or she get?

2. Identify at least three positive changes from Clean Elections identified in the video:

3. What does the video identify as the basic unit of democracy in Arizona Clean Elections?

4. Does the history of Clean Elections in Maine reinforce the events in Arizona? How?

Discussion Questions:

What are the political advantages and disadvantages for candidates that choose to run under the Clean Elections law?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of Clean Elections for the public?

Is this video a persuasive piece? Why or Why not?

Why do you think a candidate might decide against running under the Clean Elections law?

Who might oppose Clean Elections?

What arguments could be made by opponents of Clean Elections?

What are the sources of funding for Clean Elections in Arizona?

Could Clean Elections work for federal elections (e.g. Congress, Senate, President)?

Teacher Notes for Handout #2 - Video Questions:

1. How do clean elections work?

A Clean Election Candidate must do the following:

1. Collect a set number of \$5 contributions in their districts
2. Agree to voluntary spending limits
3. Not accept campaign money from private donors
4. No personal campaign money may be used

In return, what does he or she get?

Full public funding for both the primary & general elections

2. Identify at least three positive changes from Clean Elections identified in the video:

- *more people ran for office*
- *more women & people of color ran*
- *voters had more choices*
- *candidates spent less time raising money and more time talking to voters*
- *no private, special interest money*

Candidates' Testimonials

"Time with voters instead of dialing for dollars"

"More of a pool of good candidates"

"Publicly financed process – grass-roots democracy at its best"

"Independent of any specific interest"

"Constituents feel a stronger tie to you – more constituency calls"

"Able to concentrate on the issues"

"Able to travel to communities that have been underrepresented in the past"

3. What does the video identify as the basic unit of democracy in Arizona elections?

The \$5 bill – why? Maximum individual contribution

STATISTICS: In the 2002 General Election in Arizona:

- 28 of the 32 major statewide candidates for office ran publicly financed campaigns.
- 7 of the 8 candidates for Governor ran under the Clean Elections law.
- Arizona elected a candidate who ran under the Clean Elections law for governor - Janet Napolitano.
- 45% of the representatives elected to the State House ran under the Clean Elections law.
- 17% of the State Senators ran under the Clean Elections law.
- In the Legislative races, 32 of the 90 seats are held by Clean Elections candidates.
 - 36% of Arizona's Legislature is comprised of Clean Elections elected officials.
 - The Arizona House of Representatives has 27 Clean Elections elected officials.
 - The Arizona Senate has 5 Clean Election elected officials.
- 7 of the 9 statewide offices are held by Clean Elections candidates. Governor, Secretary of State, Attorney General, Treasurer, Corporation Commission 2 year seat, Corporation Commission 4 year seat and Mine Inspector.
- 89 of the 170 candidates were Clean Elections candidates.
- Candidates running for governor were required to collect at least 4000 \$5 contributions and agree to abide by strict spending limits.

- Democrats and Republicans share the Clean Elections program.
 - 22 Republicans were elected with Clean Election funds.
 - 17 Democrats were elected with Clean Election funds

How is the history of Clean Elections in Maine similar to Arizona?

- 77% of the Maine Senate and over half of the Maine House ran under the Clean Elections law
- 60% of candidates ran under the Clean Elections law (2000 = 30%)
- 71% of Democrats and 54% of Republicans
- the number of contested primaries increased by 61%