

## High School Clean Election Teacher Notes

You can find information on the campaign spending and financing in the 2004 presidential campaign on websites like the Washington Post – [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com) or at [www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org). Open Secrets even suggests research projects that can be done on campaign financing using its website. This website also includes a list of tax-exempt organizations that engage in political activities.

You may want to ask some students to find articles that compare campaign spending in the United States to campaign spending in other countries such as Great Britain, France, Germany and Russia

### Definitions of Key Terms:

**527s:** Tax-exempt organizations that engage in political activities, often through unlimited soft money contributions. Most 527s are advocacy groups trying to influence federal elections through voter mobilization efforts and issue ads that tout or criticize a candidate's record. 527s must report their contributors and expenditures to the IRS, unless they already file identical information at the state or local level. Their ads must not use the words “vote for” or “vote against” a candidate.

**Bundling:** A PAC strategy whereby contributions are collected from like-minded individuals (each limited to \$2000) and presented to a candidate or party as a “bundle,” thus increasing their influence.

**Issue advocacy:** Unlimited and undisclosed spending by an individual or group on communications or advertisements that do not use words like “vote for” or “vote against”.

**McCain-Feingold:** Under this federal campaign reform law, an individual can give a maximum of \$2000 to an individual political candidate and \$5000 to a PAC.

**Soft money:** Money contributed for party-building purposes that do not have to be disclosed under federal law.

**PAC:** Political Action Committee organized to influence elections and legislation on a particular topic.

**Soft money:** Money contributed for party-building purposes that do not have to be disclosed under federal law.

***Teacher Notes***  
***Clean Elections Video Guide and Questions***

You may obtain the Clean Elections video from  
[www.publiccampaign.org](http://www.publiccampaign.org) (202-293-0222)

What are the political benefits for candidates that choose to run under Arizona's Clean Election law? Disadvantages?

What are the benefits of Clean Elections for the public? Disadvantages?

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

Why do you think a candidate might decide against running under Arizona's Clean Election law?

Who might oppose Clean Elections?

What arguments could be made by opponents of Clean Elections?

*Violates the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment by banning individual contributions over \$5.*

*Unconstitutional limit to free speech by banning individual contributions over \$5.  
Violates the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment.*

*How can we tell independently wealthy individuals that they cannot finance their own campaigns?*

*Actually reduces my ability to be involved in the democratic process by restricting my ability to give money.*

*With the \$2000 individual contribution limit in place, we have already limited the influence of special interests enough.*

*My tax money is going to support the candidates I oppose.*

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

- *10% Surcharge on all civil penalties and criminal fines*
- *Voluntary \$5 check-off box on state income tax return forms (you pay an extra \$5)*
- *Voluntary Dollar-for-dollar tax credit donations of up to \$550 or 20% of state income tax amount, whichever is greater*
- *Civil Penalties imposed on Candidates for violation of Commission rules & policies.*

Could Clean Elections work for federal elections (e.g. Congress, Senate, President)? Why or why not?

## Resources

Burns, James MacGregor, et al. *Government by the People* (and accompanying work book). New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002.

*Investing in Democracy* – Center for Governmental Studies – pamphlet that comes with video. *State of the Union* poster available from Public Campaign.

[www.publiccampaign.org](http://www.publiccampaign.org)

State of Arizona Citizens Clean Elections Commission: [www.ccec.state.az.us](http://www.ccec.state.az.us)