FILED
SUPREME COURT
STATE OF WASHINGTON
3/22/2019 1:28 PM
BY SUSAN L. CARLSON
CLERK

FILED
SUPREME COURT
STATE OF WASHINGTON
4/1/2019
BY SUSAN L. CARLSON
CLERK

No. 96660-5

SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

MARK ELSTER and SARAH PYNCHON,

Plaintiffs/Appellants,

vs.

THE CITY OF SEATTLE, a Washington municipal corporation,

Defendant/Respondent,

AMICUS CURIAE BRIEF OF WASHINGTON CAN!, ASIAN COUNSELING AND REFERRAL SERVICE, EVERY VOICE, FUSE, LGBTQ ALLYSHIP, ONEAMERICA, WASHINGTON DEMOCRACY HUB, WASHPIRG, AND WIN WIN NETWORK

Harry Williams IV*
WSBA #41020
Law Office of Harry Williams
707 East Harrison Street
Seattle, WA 98102-5410

**Counsel of Record*

Adam Lioz
Dēmos
740 6th St. NW, Second Floor
Washington, DC 20001

Ronald Fein
Free Speech For People
1340 Centre St #209
Newton, MA 02459

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES ii

I STATEMENT OF INTEREST 1

II INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT 1

A. Seattle's Democracy Voucher Program Reduces Corruption and a Valid Perception of Corruption. 2

B. The Democracy Voucher Program Increases Access to Political Expression and Expands the Public Debate. 6

1. The program reduces wealth-based barriers to participating in electoral campaigns as a contributor. 7

2. The program reduces wealth-based barriers to running for office and increases the pool of Seattle candidates. 10

C. The Democracy Voucher Program Advances the Compelling First Amendment Interest of Democratic Self-Government. 14

IV CONCLUSION 20

APPENDIX 21

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

Cases

Bluman v. Fed. Election Comm'n, 800 F. Supp. 2d 281 (D.D.C. 2011) *aff'd mem.,* 565 U.S. 1104 (2012).....15

Buckley v. Valeo, 424 U.S. 1 (1976).....passim

Bullock v. Carter, 405 U.S. 134 (1972).....11, 13

Citizens United v. Fed'l Election Comm'n, 558 U.S. 310 (2010).....15

Green Party of Conn. v. Garfield, 616 F.3d 213 (2d Cir. 2010).....19

Gregory v. Ashcroft, 501 U.S. 452 (1991).....16

Harper v. Va. State Bd. of Elections, 383 U.S. 663 (1966).....6

Knox v. Serv. Emps. Int'l Union, Local 1000, 132 S. Ct. 2277 (2012).....14

Lubin v. Panish, 415 U.S. 709 (1974).....11, 14

New York Times v. Sullivan, 376 U.S. 254 (1964).....14

Snyder v. Phelps, 562 U.S. 443 (2011).....14

Texas v. Johnson, 491 U.S. 397 (1989).....6, 19

United States v. Carolene Products Co., 304 U.S. 144 (1938).....18

United States v. Lopez, 514 U.S. 549 (1995).....16

Whitney v. California, 274 U.S. 357 (1927).....6

Williams v. Rhodes, 393 U.S. 23 (1968).....15

Statutes

Honest Elections Seattle Initiative I-122.....1, 4

SMC 2.04.600.....10

SMC 2.04.620.....5

SMC 2.04.630.....19

Other Authorities

Adam Lioz & Karen Shanton, *The Money Chase*: *Moving from Big Money Dominance in the 2014 Midterms to a Small Donor Democracy*, Dēmos (2014).....11

Adam Lioz, *Stacked Deck: How the Racial Bias in our Big Money Political System Undermines Our Democracy and Our Economy*, Dēmos, (2014) 7, 12, 16

Alan Durning, *Who Funds Seattle Campaigns?*, Sightline Institute (July 2015) 7

Americans' Views on Money in Politics, The New York Times & CBS News Poll (June 2, 2015) 4

Ari Berman, *How the Money Primary is Undermining Voting Rights*, The Nation (May 19, 2015).....14

Benjamin I. Page, Larry Bartels & Jason Seawright, *Democracy and the Policy Preferences of Wealthy Americans* , Perspectives on Politics (2013).....3

Brian McCabe & Jennifer Heerwig, *Diversifying the Donor Pool: Did Seattle's Democracy Vouchers Program Reshape Participation in Municipal Campaign Finance?*, SocArXiv (May 16, 2018) 10

Bruce Speight, *The Outsized Influence of Big Money in Seattle Elections How Honest Elections Seattle Can Empower Regular Voters,* Wash. PIRG (2015).....4

Burt Neuborne, *Madison's Music: On Reading The First Amendment* (2015).....19

ChrisTiana ObeySumner, *Democracy Vouchers Inspired This Seattle Resident to Consider Running for Office*, WashingtonCAN! (March 16, 2018) 13

David Callahan & J. Mijin Cha, *Stacked Deck: How the Dominance of Politics by the Affluent and Business Undermines Economic Mobility in America*, Dēmos (2013).....3

David Fontana, *The Geography of Campaign Finance Law*, 90 S. Cal. L. Rev. 1247 (2017) 16, 17

DeNora Getachew & Ava Mehta, *Breaking Down Barriers: The Faces of Small Donor Public Financing*, The Brennan Center For Justice (2016) 12

Donor Demographics, Center for Responsive Politics (last visited May. 23, 2018). 3

First Look: Seattle's Democracy Voucher Program: Reducing the Power of Big Money and Expanding Political Participation, EVERY VOICE & WIN WIN (Nov. 15, 2017) 5, 9, 10

Gina Owens, *Democracy Vouchers Fight Corruption in Elections*, Seattle Patch (Sept. 8, 2017) 8

Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research *Honest Elections Seattle: Frequency Questionnaire* (Aug. 27-Sept. 1, 2015) 3

Guy-Uriel E. Charles, *Constitutional Pluralism and Democratic Politics: Reflections on the Interpretive Approach of* Baker v. Carr, 80 N.C. L. Rev. (2002) 18

Heather C. McGhee, *Foreword: New Approaches for Regulating Money in Politics,* 16 Election Law Journal (2017) 12

Josh Cohen, *'Democracy vouchers' aim to amplify low-income voices, to conservative ire*, The Guardian (July 7, 2017) 9

Martin Gilens, *Affluence and Influence: Economic Inequality and Political Power in America* (2012) 3

Paul Blumenthal, *Seattle Could Create an Entirely New Way to Fund Elections*, Huffington Post (Oct. 1, 2015). 4

Public Financing in California: A Model Law for the 21st Century, Center for Government Studies (2011) 12

Quick Facts: Seattle, Washington, U.S. Census Bureau (last visited Sept. 16, 2017) 7

Rakesh Kochhar & Richard Fry, *Wealth Inequality Has Widened Along Racial, Ethnic Lines Since End of Great Recession*, Pew Research Center (Dec. 12, 2014) 12

Roi-Martin Brown, *Democracy Vouchers Are Crucial for Communities of Color*, Seattle Patch (Sept. 15, 2017) 5, 7

Ron Fein, *The Impact of Seattle's Democracy Voucher Program on Candidates' Ability to Rely on Constituents for Fundraising*, Free Speech For People (2017) 16

Sean McElwee, *Whose Voice, Whose Choice?, The Distorting Influence Of The Political Donor Class In Our Big-Money Elections*, Demos (2016) 3

Seattle Democracy Voucher Program Evaluation, CITY OF SEATTLE ETHICS AND ELECTIONS COMMISSION (April 25, 2018) 10, 13

Susan Russell, *Democracy Vouchers Gave This Seattle Resident a Voice*, Washington CAN! (March 12, 2018) 8

The Federalist No. 10 (James Madison), 1787 WL 338 15

The Federalist No. 39 (James Madison), 1788 WL 453 ..... 6, 18

I STATEMENT OF INTEREST

This brief is filed on behalf of *amici curiae* Washington CAN!, Asian Counseling and Referral Service, Every Voice, Fuse, LGBTQ Allyship, OneAmerica, the Washington Democracy Hub, the Washington Public Interest Research Group ("WashPIRG"), and Win Win Network. *Amici* collectively represent more than 20,000 Seattleites, and were among the community-based coalition and national advocacy organizations that developed and helped pass the Honest Elections Seattle Initiative I-122 ("Initiative" or "I-122"), including the challenged Democracy Voucher program. *Amici* are groups committed to strengthening democracy and representation and/or groups whose members are served by the Democracy Voucher program.

II INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

The Democracy Voucher program ("the program") serves important First Amendment interests in strengthening local democracy in Seattle by combating both actual and perceived corruption in Seattle politics; increasing access to public expression and expanding public debate; and advancing the compelling interest in promoting democratic self-government. The Democracy Voucher program is a homerun for both democracy and the First Amendment: it gives more people a political voice

and encourages more people to run for office while silencing no one. For all these reasons, the decision below must be affirmed.

III ARGUMENT

A. Seattle's Democracy Voucher Program Reduces Corruption and a Valid Perception of Corruption.

The Supreme Court has long held that a "primary interest" served by campaign finance rules is "the prevention of corruption and the appearance of corruption." *Buckley v. Valeo*, 424 U.S. 1, 25 (1976). In *Buckley*, the Court upheld a presidential public financing program, determining that it served an interest in eliminating improper influence itself. *See id.* at 96. At the same time, the *Buckley* Court explained that "[o]f almost equal concern as the danger of actual *quid pro quo* arrangements is the impact of the appearance of corruption stemming from public awareness of the opportunities for abuse inherent in a regime of large individual financial contributions." *Id.* at 27.

In the period leading up to enactment of the Democracy Voucher program, Seattleites perceived corruption in their local government, which undermined their confidence in the local system of representation. Polling from 2015 showed that more than one-third of Seattleites believed that "corruption is a problem in Seattle politics" and nearly two-thirds felt that "lobbyists and big money interests in Seattle have a stronger voice in local

government than ordinary people." *See* Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, *Honest Elections Seattle: Frequency Questionnaire* (Aug. 27-Sept. 1, 2015), App. at 73-74.

Hard data fuels the rational perception that dollars donated to candidates are translated into policy outcomes. At the national level, affluent individuals are as much as 100 times more likely to donate to political campaigns than the public at large.[1] These donors have substantially different policy preferences than Americans as a whole – and their preferences are vastly more likely to be reflected in actual policy outcomes.[2] In fact, when the policy preferences of the wealthiest 10 percent of Americans conflict with those of the rest, the 10 percent regularly trumps the 90 percent.[3]

In light of these realities, the public overwhelmingly believes that candidates who win public office sometimes "promote policies that directly

---

[1] A 2013 survey of wealthy Americans revealed that 68 percent of wealthy respondents had made political contributions in the previous 12 months. Benjamin I. Page et al., *Democracy and the Policy Preferences of Wealthy Americans*, 11 Perspectives. on Politics 51, 53-54 and table 2 (2013). This contrasts with just *0.52 percent* of the adult population that made a disclosable contribution in the 2016 election cycle. *See Donor Demographics*, Center for Responsive Politics (last visited May. 23, 2018).

[2] *See generally* David Callahan & J. Mijin Cha, *Stacked Deck: How the Dominance of Politics by the Affluent and Business Undermines Economic Mobility in America*, Dēmos (2013); Sean McElwee, *Whose Voice, Whose Choice?, The Distorting Influence Of The Political Donor Class In Our Big-Money Elections*, Demos (2016).

[3] *See* Martin Gilens, *Affluence and Influence: Economic Inequality and Political Power in America,* 101 (2012); *id.* at 234 (concluding that "patterns of responsiveness…often correspond more closely to a plutocracy than to a democracy.").

help the people and groups who donated money to their campaigns," and more than half (55%) of people across the country think this happens "most of the time." *Americans' Views on Money in Politics*, The New York Times & CBS News Poll (June 2, 2015), https://nyti.ms/2J1iH1q.

The dominance of Seattle's own elite donor class similarly has fueled a local perception of corruption. Before I-122's enactment, individuals could give up to $700 to each City candidate, an amount well beyond the means of the many Seattleites whose disposable income could never allow for such political donations. *See* I-122 Section 5. In the August 2015 primary, more than half of the $2.5 million received by all local candidates came from a small group of donors who gave an aggregate of $500 or more. *See* Bruce Speight, *The Outsized Influence of Big Money in Seattle Elections How Honest Elections Seattle Can Empower Regular Voters*, Wash. PIRG (2015), App. at 57-58. These large political donations shape Seattle candidate priorities. City Council candidate Laura Gonzalez, who spent approximately 14 hours per week dialing for dollars, explained in 2015: "If I didn't have to spend a significant amount of time fundraising I would be able to spend much more time in the field having that direct voter contact, which ultimately makes you a better policy maker." *See* Paul Blumenthal, *Seattle Could Create an Entirely New Way to Fund Elections*, Huffington Post (Oct. 1, 2015),

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/honest-elections-seattle_us_560d4018e4b0af3706dfaf02.

Against this backdrop, the Democracy Voucher program combats actual corruption, SMC 2.04.620, subd. a, by substantially broadening the base of contributors City candidates can depend upon to fund their campaigns, thereby reducing their reliance on large donors and the associated likelihood of *quid pro quo* arrangements.[4] The program combats Seattleites' reasonable perception that dollars from an elite donor class are being traded for policy outcomes "in a regime of large individual financial contributions," *Buckley* at 27. As Seattle resident, Washington CAN! member, and long-time activist Roi-Martin Brown explained, the Vouchers' "monetary amount may be small by today's political standards, but I believe the Vouchers allow more voters to participate and counter other professional lobbying efforts to some degree." Roi-Martin Brown, *Democracy Vouchers Are Crucial for Communities of Color*, Washington CAN! (Sept. 18, 2017), https://www.washingtoncan.org/civic-engagement-stories/2017/democracy-vouchers-are-crucial-for-communities-of-color.

[4] As explained more fully below, the Voucher program helped generate a record number of contributors to eligible Seattle candidates in its first cycle in use. *First Look: Seattle's Democracy Voucher Program: Reducing the Power of Big Money and Expanding Political Participation*, Every Voice & Win Win (Nov. 15, 2017), App. at 63.

B. The Democracy Voucher Program Increases Access to Political Expression and Expands the Public Debate.

Governments such as Seattle plainly have an important interest in expanding access to participation in the political marketplace through voluntary public financing programs that lead to *more* political participation, *without restricting* the voice of others. *See Buckley*, 424 U.S. at 92-93 (explaining the at-issue public financing program was an "effort, not to abridge, restrict, or censor speech, but rather to use public money to facilitate and enlarge public discussion and participation in the electoral process, goals vital to a self-governing people"); *Texas v. Johnson*, 491 U.S. 397, 420 (1989) (citing *Whitney v. California,* 274 U.S. 357, 377 (1927) (Brandeis, J., concurring)). This interest is supported by the legal principle that the political views of individuals who lack economic resources are no less meritorious or important than those of wealthy individuals. *See Harper v. Va. State Bd. of Elections*, 383 U.S. 663, 668 (1966) (explaining, in striking down poll tax, "[w]ealth, like race, creed, or color is not germane to one's ability to participate intelligently in the electoral process."); The Federalist No. 39 (James Madison), 1788 WL 453 at *1 (Westlaw ed. 2017). First Amendment and democratic interests are served when individuals, regardless of wealth, are able to fully engage in

the political marketplace of ideas through measures that address existing wealth-based barriers to participation.

1. The program reduces wealth-based barriers to participating in electoral campaigns as a contributor.

Democracy Vouchers allow individuals who are otherwise excluded from privately-financed campaign finance systems to participate as campaign donors. Many Seattleites, including members of Washington CAN! and other *amici* organizations, do not experience actual freedom to participate in the political marketplace of ideas as contributors because they lack disposable private funds—even though their comparative lack of wealth clearly does not reflect a comparative lack of political worth.[5] Financial barriers hinder participation by these Seattleites and people of color, homeless people, incarcerated people and people recently released from incarceration. *See* Brown, *supra*.

National and local research demonstrates that private political donors are both wealthier and whiter than the population as a whole; but small donor empowerment programs counter such trends and advance racial equity. *See* Adam Lioz, *Stacked Deck: How the Racial Bias in our Big Money Political System Undermines Our Democracy and Our Economy*,

[5] As of July 2016, an estimated 13 percent of Seattle residents lived in poverty. *See Quick Facts: Seattle, Washington*, U.S. Census Bureau (last visited May 29, 2018), https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/seattlecitywashington,US/PST045216 .

Dēmos, 20-23 (2014). *See also, generally,* Alan Durning, *Who Funds Seattle Campaigns?*, Sightline Institute (July 2015), App. at 1 (finding the neighborhoods that gave the most money to Seattle candidates in 2013 were disproportionately wealthy and white, with high percentages of waterfront and view homes).

By providing vouchers for campaign contributions to all eligible residents, Seattle's program goes further than programs that match small, private contributions with public money—thus requiring individuals to utilize disposable income in order to take advantage of the program—to truly provide people of *all* economic backgrounds and races the opportunity to participate in the political marketplace. As first-time contributor, affordable housing advocate, and Washington CAN! member Susan Russell explained:

> Being homeless feels like getting erased. The Democracy Voucher program made me feel like becoming visible in our local democracy. . . I got to donate to a candidate who made clear my voice mattered. It was huge. When you have nothing, the vouchers made me feel like I had value within a community. It gave me the opportunity to make a decision and contribution . . .

Susan Russell, *Democracy Vouchers Gave This Seattle Resident a Voice*, Washington CAN! (March 12, 2018), https://www.washingtoncan.org/civic-engagement-stories/2018/3/12/democracy-vouchers-gave-this-seattle-resident-a-voice. *See also* Gina Owens, *Democracy Vouchers Fight*

Corruption in Elections, Seattle Patch (Sept. 8, 2017) (detailing another low-income, first-time contributor's experience), https://patch.com/washington/seattle/democracy-vouchers-fight-corruption-elections; Josh Cohen, *'Democracy vouchers' aim to amplify low-income voices, to conservative ire*, The Guardian (July 7, 2017) (detailing how homeless individuals amplified their collective political voice by aggregating their Democracy Vouchers).

Since implementation, the Democracy Voucher program has already brought a substantial number of new small donors into Seattle's political process. A November 2017 report by Every Voice Center & Win Win Network found that in the first election in which the program was operational (2017) at least 25,000 Seattleites made candidate contributions—about three times as many residents as contributed to candidates in 2013. *First Look: Seattle's Democracy Voucher Program: Reducing the Power of Big Money and Expanding Political Participation,* Every Voice & Win Win (Nov. 15, 2017), App. at 63. An estimated 84% of all Seattle donors in 2017 were first-time donors. *Id.* And the people brought into the process through Democracy Vouchers were more reflective of Seattle's population as a whole in terms of age, race, gender, wealth, and neighborhood than individuals who donated to mayoral candidates (who were not eligible to receive voucher contributions in 2017). *Id.* at 3-5. An

additional study identified "a modest increase in the percentage of people of color in the voucher pool compared to donors in the 2017 cycle" and concluded that "voucher users are substantially more representative of the population than citizens who made cash contributions" by wealth and geography. Brian McCabe & Jennifer Heerwig, *Diversifying the Donor Pool: Did Seattle's Democracy Vouchers Program Reshape Participation in Municipal Campaign Finance?*, SocArXiv 15, 19 (May 16, 2018), App. at 42, 46.[6]

2. The program reduces wealth-based barriers to running for office and increases the pool of Seattle candidates.

In addition to expanding and diversifying the people contributing to Seattle campaigns, the Democracy Voucher program also expands the political debate by increasing the pool of candidates adding their expression to the political marketplace. Seattle Municipal Code ("SMC") 2.04.600, subd. a (describing program's purpose of "expand[ing] the pool of

[6] The Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission's own commissioned report did not identify similar diversity benefits in examining neighborhood characteristics of voucher users. *Seattle Democracy Voucher Program Evaluation*, City of Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission 28 (April 25, 2018). This report, however, used data from two dissimilar election cycles (2015 and 2017) rather than comparing cash donors and vouchers users in the same cycle as did the two reports cited above. In addition, the *First Look* report examined racial and income group representation based upon relative contribution share as opposed to donor counts and found that the Democracy Voucher Program increased the share of contributions coming from low income residents and people of color—arguably the most important measure of relative influence over local election finance.

candidates for city offices"). Our Constitution's democratic values are undermined when candidates are shut out of the political marketplace based on their lack of economic resources. *See Bullock v. Carter*, 405 U.S. 134, 142-44, 145-46 (1972); *Lubin v. Panish*, 415 U.S. 709, 716-718 (1974) (noting, in Equal Protection analysis, the value of "continued availability of political opportunity" for candidates, and a "tradition . . . of hospitality toward all candidates without regard to their economic status."). As such, the public's interest in opening electoral debates to candidates who might otherwise be excluded from the political marketplace because of their lack of economic resources is significant, and remains as important today as when *Buckley* was decided. To this day, privately-funded, big-money-driven campaign finance systems filter out candidates who are not wealthy and lack access to wealthy donor networks. *See generally* Adam Lioz & Karen Shanton, *The Money Chase*: *Moving from Big Money Dominance in the 2014 Midterms to a Small Donor Democracy*, Dēmos (2014).

Further, the candidates filtered out in this way are disproportionately candidates of color. State-created barriers to participation in our democracy and economy—from slavery to Jim Crow and beyond—have "carrie[d] over into staggering wealth gaps between white people and people of color today, making it more difficult for people of color to make their voices heard in a system that runs on private wealth. Candidates of color are thus

less likely to run for office in the first place, and raise less money when they do." Heather C. McGhee, *Foreword: New Approaches for Regulating Money in Politics,* 16 Election Law Journal 1, 5 (2017), (footnotes omitted).[7] In a 2014 survey, 66 percent of people of color "agreed that lack of access to donors is an important reason preventing people of color from being represented in elected office." Lioz, *Stacked Deck, supra*, at 27.

Public financing programs such as Seattle's expand the electoral debate by facilitating more diverse candidates' campaigns for office. *See, Public Financing in California: A Model Law for the 21st Century*, Center for Government Studies 11-12 (2011) ; *see generally* DeNora Getachew & Ava Mehta, *Breaking Down Barriers: The Faces of Small Donor Public Financing*, The Brennan Center For Justice 2-3 (2016). The Democracy Voucher program is already expanding the public debate around Seattle elections by breaking down wealth-based barriers to running for office. ChrisTiana ObeySumner ran for City Council Position 8 in 2017, and

[7] *See also* Rakesh Kochhar & Richard Fry, *Wealth Inequality Has Widened Along Racial, Ethnic Lines Since End of Great Recession*, Pew Research Center (Dec. 12, 2014) (finding thirteen-fold and ten-fold gaps between median white household wealth and black and Latino median household wealth, respectively); Lioz, *Stacked Deck*, *supra*, at 28 (citation omitted) (explaining that a study of more than 3,000 candidates for state legislative races in 2006, the most recently available data, showed that candidates of color raised 47 percent less money than white candidates, after adjusting for factors such as incumbency, partisanship, and district income).

explained how integral the Democracy Voucher program was in their decision to run for office:

> If we didn't have Democracy Vouchers in place, it would be unaffordable for me to run. But Democracy Vouchers present an opportunity for someone like me to run. I come from intersectionality of identities not typically represented as fiscal supporters of politicians: working poor, Caribbean black, latino, with Western-prescribed mental health eccentricities. . . I have so much I can contribute to the [political] process. I have supporters, experience working on a city commission, unique ideas to bring to the table. . . What I don't have is affluence or affluent friends. But, just because I'm not affluent and don't hang out with affluent people, doesn't mean I shouldn't be part of this process.

See ChrisTiana ObeySumner, *Democracy Vouchers Inspired This Seattle Resident to Consider Running for Office*, Washington CAN! (March 16, 2018), https://www.washingtoncan.org/civic-engagement-stories/2018/3/16/democracy-vouchers-inspired-this-seattle-resident-to-consider-running-for-office . ObeySumner was in fact one of four women or non-binary individuals and four people of color who ran in Position 8 in 2017, a sharp increase in candidate diversity from prior election cycles—providing some anecdotal evidence that the Voucher program can help diversify the candidate pool. *Seattle Democracy Voucher Program Evaluation*, *supra*, n.5 at 17-18.

Making elections more inclusive of candidates like ObeySumner, in turn, creates opportunities for political expression by new candidates'

supporters, including supporters from historically marginalized communities. *See Bullock*, 405 U.S. at 143-44 (finding the exclusionary ballot access fee's effect on voters "neither incidental or remote."); *Lubin*, 415 U.S. at 716 (explaining that hindrance of candidates' political opportunity is "intertwined with the rights of voters," for "voters can assert their preferences only through candidates or parties or both"). This idea was crystallized by Gwendolyn Patton, a Civil Rights-era activist who observed, "People here were murdered trying to get the right to vote, but what good is it if there's no one to vote for?" Ari Berman, *How the Money Primary is Undermining Voting Rights*, The Nation (May 19, 2015).

C. The Democracy Voucher Program Advances the Compelling First Amendment Interest of Democratic Self-Government.

"The First Amendment reflects 'a profound national commitment to the principle that debate on public issues should be uninhibited, robust, and wide-open.'" *Snyder v. Phelps*, 562 U.S. 443, 452 (2011) (citing *New York Times v. Sullivan*, 376 U.S. 254, 270 (1964)). Supreme Court precedent spanning decades and ideologies consistently explains that the public marketplace of ideas protected by the First Amendment does not exist in a vacuum, but rather is in service of our system of democratic self-government. *See, e.g., id.* (citation omitted) ("[S]peech concerning public affairs is more than self-expression; it is the essence of self-government.");

Knox v. Serv. Emps. Int'l Union, Local 1000, 132 S. Ct. 2277, 2288 (2012) ("[O]ur cases have often noted the close connection between our Nation's commitment to self-government and the rights protected by the First Amendment."); *Buckley*, 424 U.S. at 14 (citation omitted) (noting that a "major purpose. . . was to protect the free discussion of governmental affairs"). Speech in a competitive political marketplace of ideas serves and protects our capacity to govern ourselves and hold elected officials accountable. *See Williams v. Rhodes,* 393 U.S. 23, 32 (1968); *Citizens United v. Fed'l Election Comm'n*, 558 U.S. 310, 339 (2010) ("Speech is an essential mechanism of democracy, for it is the means to hold officials accountable to the people. . . The right of citizens to inquire, to hear, to speak, and to use information to reach consensus is a precondition to enlightened self-government and a necessary means to protect it.").

In campaign finance, promoting democratic self-government is a compelling interest. *See Bluman v. Fed. Election Comm'n,* 800 F. Supp. 2d 281, 288 (D.D.C. 2011) (3-judge court)*, aff'd mem.,* 565 U.S. 1104 (2012). The Voucher program advances this interest in two critical ways—by enabling candidates to run for office without relying on non-constituents, and by helping translate majority preferences into public policy.

The Constitution is built on the assumption that "local situation[s]" shape people's ideological priorities and perspectives. *See* The Federalist

No. 10 (James Madison), 1787 WL 338 at *4. Just as state governments are "more sensitive to the diverse needs" of their populations than the federal government, *Gregory v. Ashcroft*, 501 U.S. 452, 458 (1991), city officials are meant to be even more locally attuned. And just as effective state government benefits from "distinct and discernable lines of political accountability . . . . between the citizens and the States," *United States v. Lopez*, 514 U.S. 549, 576 (1995) (Kennedy, J., concurring), so too municipal government benefits from distinct lines of political accountability to the people of that city.

Historically, Seattle candidates have relied on donors in affluent suburbs (often with less diverse populations than Seattle), such as Bellevue, and other states, such as California, for 20-35% of campaign funds.[8] Just as individuals' policies and preferences are often shaped by economic status, *see supra* note 2, and race, *see* Lioz, *Stacked Deck*, *supra*, at 15-18, they are often shaped by where people live. *See* David Fontana, *The Geography of Campaign Finance Law*, 90 S. Cal. L. Rev. 1247 (2017). People who do not live in the City, but engage with it primarily as commuting workers, amenity visitors, or absentee property owners, will naturally have different priorities

[8] For explanation of the data, methodology, and analysis in this section, including a comparison to non-Voucher races, *see* Ron Fein, *The Impact of Seattle's Democracy Voucher Program on Candidates' Ability to Rely on Constituents for Fundraising*, Free Speech For People (2017), App. at 86.

than people who live in the City. Consequently, candidate reliance on non-constituent funders can undermine democratic self-government. *See* Fontana, *supra*. Conversely, promoting increased reliance on constituents helps strengthen democratic self-government.

Seattle's 2017 general election city council candidates, all of whom participated in the Voucher program, raised much more of their funds from constituents than candidates for those seats (in some cases the same person) had raised just two years earlier:

Table 1: Percent of funds raised from Seattle residents in positions 8 and 9[9]

	2015		2017	
Position 8	Burgess, Timothy (i)	83%	Mosqueda, Teresa (p)	88%
	Grant, Jonathan	65%	Grant, Jonathan (p)	96%
Position 9	González, M. Lorena	65%	González, M. Lorena (i) (p)	95%
	Bradburd, William	82%	Murakami, Pat (p)	98%

In total, the percentage of funds raised from Seattle residents in these races went from 76% in 2015 to 93% in 2017. In contrast, candidates who did not use vouchers—because they chose not to participate in the program,

[9] Positions 8 and 9 are elected at-large, i.e., citywide. The first listed candidate in each cell is the victor. (i) indicates the incumbent, if any. (p) indicates that the candidate participated in the Voucher program.

or ran in the non-voucher-eligible mayoral race—relied more on non-constituent donors, at rates similar to past elections. By facilitating candidates' reliance on actual constituents, the Democracy Voucher program promotes democratic self-government.

The compelling interest of democratic self-government can only be realized, however, when ideas with the greatest public support are translated into government action—most often through effective representation and occasionally by the people directly through ballot initiatives or referenda; this is what it means to be governed by majority rule.[10] Indeed some correlation between the exercise of state power and popular support is integral to the very nature of our Republic. *See, e.g.,* The Federalist No. 39, *supra* at *1 (James Madison) (defining a Republican form of government as one "which derives all its powers directly or indirectly from the great body of the people. . . It is ESSENTIAL to such a government that it be derived from the great body of the society, not from an inconsiderable proportion, or a favored class of it. . ."); Guy-Uriel E. Charles, *Constitutional Pluralism and Democratic Politics: Reflections on the Interpretive Approach of* Baker v. Carr, 80 N.C. L. Rev. 1103, 1146 (2002) (footnotes omitted) (explaining, "[b]y almost all conceptions of democracy,

[10] Majority rule is not an absolute in a democracy—protection for minority rights is essential. *See United States v. Carolene Products Co.*, 304 U.S. 144, 152 at n. 4 (1938). It is nonetheless a default condition to be pursued absent a compelling countervailing value.

any polity that fancies itself democratic must at least be responsive to majoritarian interests, commonly referred to as majority rule. . . [Madison] understood that a democratic polity's legitimacy depended upon some form of majoritarian influence."). While it is true that the First Amendment is counter-majoritarian to the extent it protects individual rights to express unpopular opinions, *e.g., Johnson*, 491 U.S. at 414, the Amendment cannot be read to uproot our entire system of majoritarian republicanism so integral to its very purpose. The First Amendment's democracy-strengthening objective is embodied not just in its Free Speech protections, but throughout the entire Amendment, which contains six guarantees that reflect a "rigorous chronological narrative of free citizens governing themselves in an ideal democracy." *See* Burt Neuborne, *Madison's Music: On Reading The First Amendment* 11-12 (2015).

Hence, the fact that Voucher holders direct how public funds are distributed to participating candidates *serves* – not contravenes – the First Amendment and its self-government purpose.[11] Appellants' allegation that

[11] This also serves the City's important interest in directing public funds to candidates with popular support. The *Buckley* Court upheld the presidential public financing program's qualifying threshold for minor parties, noting that "Congress' interest in not funding hopeless candidacies with large sums of public money . . . necessarily justifies the withholding of public assistance from candidates without significant public support." *Buckley*, 424 U.S. at 96. This same interest underlies qualifying thresholds in grant-based public financing systems. *See, e.g., Green Party of Conn. v. Garfield*, 616 F.3d 213, 233-34 (2d Cir. 2010) (citing *Buckley*, 424 U.S. at 96, 103-04). The Voucher program serves this same purpose in a more targeted manner. The qualifying thresholds establish a floor of public support below which a candidacy cannot access public funds. SMC 2.04.630,

the funding mechanism unconstitutionally discriminates against minority viewpoints because participating candidates receive "unequal distribution of voucher funds based on voter preferences," Compl. ¶¶ 51, 34, turns the First Amendment's essential democracy-enhancing purpose on its head. In reality, helping ideas with widespread public support compete effectively with ideas that happen to have the backing of (a relatively few) wealthy donors serves the First Amendment itself by advancing democratic self-government. That candidates with more popular support will generally receive more public funds serves to align public policy outcomes with public support.

IV CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, the decision below must be AFFIRMED. Respectfully submitted March 22nd, 2019.

---

subd. c. But the funding distribution mechanism also serves to direct more public funds to candidates who are backed by more Seattleites, thereby spending less public resources on candidates with less popular support and therefore less chance of being elected.

By: /s/ *Harry Williams**
WSBA No.: 41020
Harry Williams Law
707 E. Harrison Street
Seattle, WA 98102
E-mail: harry@harrywilliamslaw.com
206.451.7195

*Counsel of Record

By: /s/ *Adam Lioz***
Dēmos
740 6th St. NW, Second Floor
Washington, DC, 20001
E-mail: alioz@demos.org

**Co-Counsel for Amici Curiae

By: /s/ *Ronald A. Fein***
Free Speech For People
1340 Centre St #209
Newton, MA 02459
Email: rfein@freespeechforpeople.org

FILED
SUPREME COURT
STATE OF WASHINGTON
4/12/2019 2:48 PM
BY SUSAN L. CARLSON
CLERK

No. 96660-5

SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

MARK ELSTER and SARAH PYNCHON,

Plaintiffs/Appellants,

vs.

THE CITY OF SEATTLE, a Washington municipal corporation,

Defendant/Respondent,

APPENDIX TO AMICUS BRIEF OF WASHINGTON CAN! ET AL.,
FILED MARCH 22, 2019

Harry Williams IV,
WSBA #41020
Law Office of Harry Williams
707 East Harrison Street
Seattle, WA 98102-5410

Counsel of Record

Adam Lioz
Dēmos
740 6th St. NW, Second Floor
Washington, DC, 20001

Ronald Fein
Free Speech For People
1340 Centre St #209
Newton, MA 02459

APPENDIX: OTHER AUTHORITIES

Alan Durning, *Who Funds Seattle Campaigns?*, Sightline Institute (July 2015) 1

Brian McCabe & Jennifer Heerwig, *Diversifying the Donor Pool: Did Seattle's Democracy Vouchers Program Reshape Participation in Municipal Campaign Finance?*, SocArXiv (May 16, 2018) 28

Bruce Speight, *The Outsized Influence of Big Money in Seattle Elections How Honest Elections Seattle Can Empower Regular Voters,* Wash. PIRG (2015) 55

First Look: Seattle's Democracy Voucher Program: Reducing the Power of Big Money and Expanding Political Participation, EVERY VOICE & WIN WIN (Nov. 15, 2017) 63

Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research *Honest Elections Seattle: Frequency Questionnaire* (Aug. 27-Sept. 1, 2015) 70

Ron Fein, *The Impact of Seattle's Democracy Voucher Program on Candidates' Ability to Rely on Constituents for Fundraising*, Free Speech For People (2017) 86

Sightline INSTITUTE

Who Funds Seattle's Political Candidates?

Rich, white people with view homes.

Alan Durning
July 2015

Executive Summary

Overwhelmingly, rich, white people who live in Seattle's waterfront and view homes fund Seattle's political campaigns. If enacted, Honest Elections Seattle could spread the funding of campaigns from elite neighborhoods to the whole city.

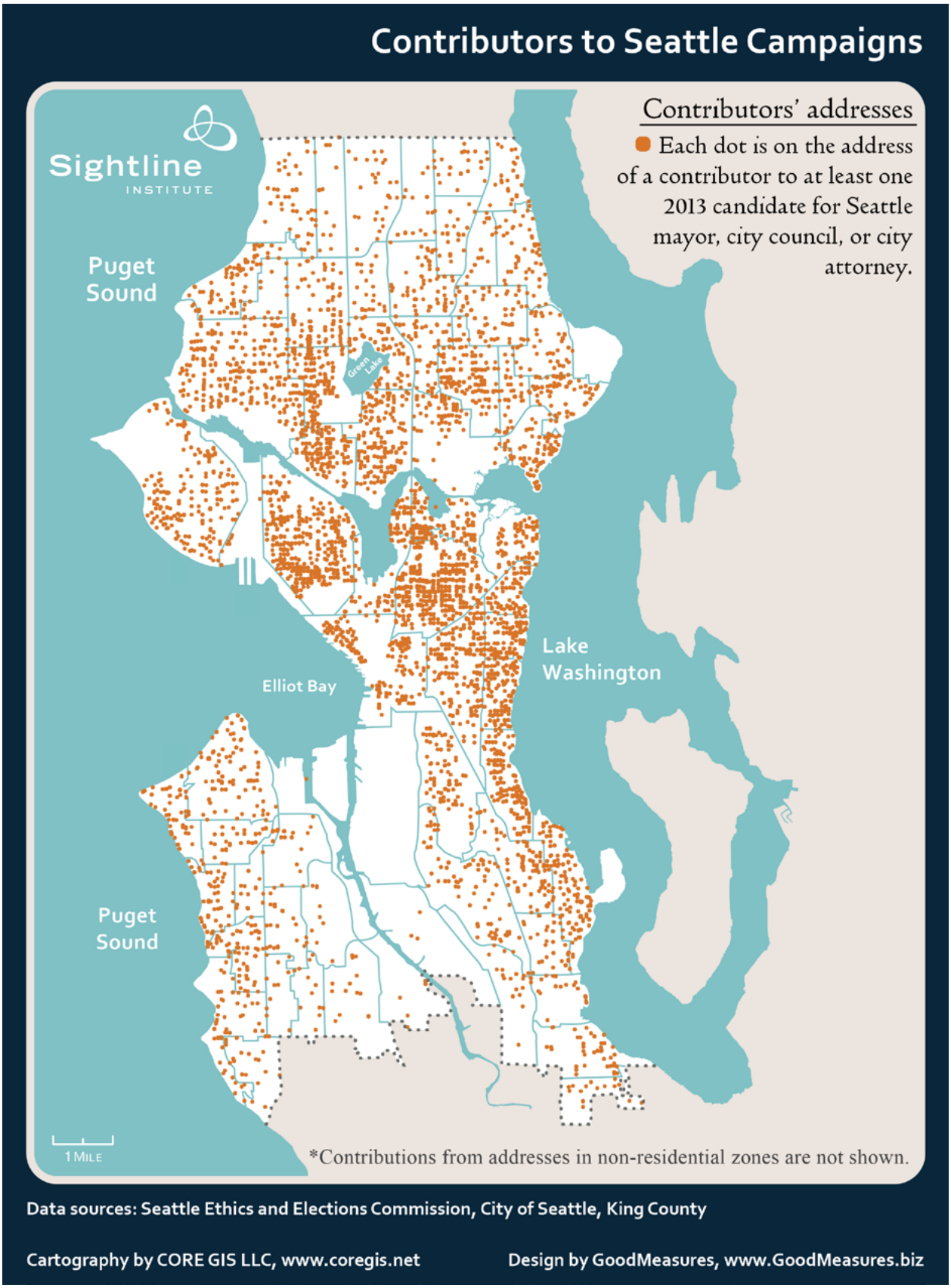
The Honest Elections Seattle Initiative would, among other things, distribute $100 of Democracy Vouchers to each registered voter in the city. Registered voters may donate their vouchers to candidates who agree to limit their spending and forgo large contributions. Democracy Vouchers would likely redraw the patterns of political giving in Seattle, just as small-donor matching grants redrew the map of political giving in New York City. This report analyzes the pattern of political contributions in the 2013 city elections to explore how Honest Elections Seattle might affect giving.

Money given by residents of the city of Seattle to 2013 candidates for mayor, city council, and city attorney came from a tiny share of the city's residents, and those residents lived disproportionately in a few neighborhoods. These neighborhoods cross the city in a narrow belt from Magnolia to Madison Park, line Lake Washington from Laurelhurst to Seward Park, and extend along its other bodies of water. These places are parts of the city where houses are expensive and have views of mountains or water. They are places disproportionately populated by people who are rich and white.

Just 1.5 percent of adults in Seattle gave money to 2013 candidates, and most of those contributors made small donations. Two-thirds of the money came from just 1,683 contributors (0.3 percent of Seattle adults), and more than a quarter came from 0.07 percent of adults: the 391 contributors who gave $1,000 or more.

The city's most-giving neighborhoods (dubbed "Big Money Zones" in this report) hold just 4 percent of the population, but they gave as much political money as the least-giving neighborhoods (dubbed "Micro Money Zones") that house 64 percent of the city. Per person, the Big Money Zones gave more than 18 times as much as the Micro Money Zones.

Furthermore, the Big Money Zones are the city's most privileged. Compared with Micro Money Zones, Big Money Zones are 31 percent whiter and 85 percent richer. Homes in Big Money Zones are two-and-a-half times pricier and four-and-a-half times more likely to have a mountain or water view.


Contributors to Seattle Campaigns
Contributors' addresses
Each dot is on the address of a contributor to at least one 2013 candidate for Seattle mayor, city council, or city attorney.
Sightline INSTITUTE
Puget Sound
Green Lake
Elliot Bay
Lake Washington
Puget Sound
1 MILE
*Contributions from addresses in non-residential zones are not shown.
Data sources: Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission, City of Seattle, King County
Cartography by CORE GIS LLC, www.coregis.net
Design by GoodMeasures, www.GoodMeasures.biz

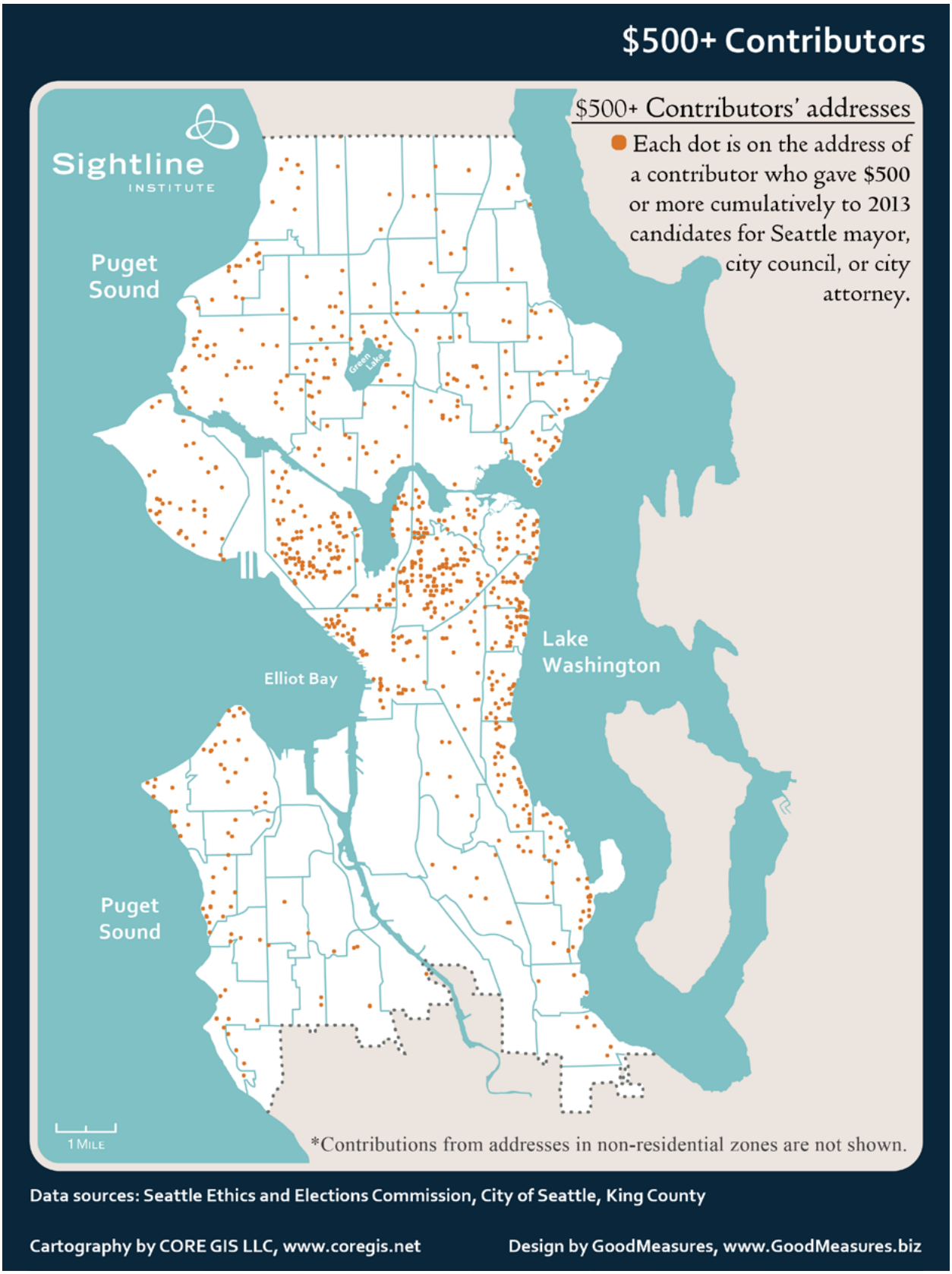
1. Contributors to Seattle Campaigns

To understand the patterns of money in Seattle political campaigns, Sightline analyzed and mapped data from the 2013 election cycle. The data, provided by the Washington State Public Disclosure Commission and the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission, covered all political contributions to candidate races for mayor, four at-large city council seats, and city attorney. Eleven maps, presented in this report, reveal much about political money in Seattle.

During the 2013 election cycle, about 8,450 Seattle residents and Seattle-based organizations gave money to people running for mayor, city attorney, or city council. Some 96.5 percent of contributors were people; the remainder were for-profit corporations, unions, trade associations, political action committees, and other organizations. This map (which we will call Map 1) shows the addresses of contributors as one dot per contributor. Some 1.5 percent of adult residents of the city gave at least one political contribution in 2013 races. The contributor who gave the most spent $5,000; the contributor who gave the least spent 2 cents.

The wide dispersal of dots reflects Seattle's comparatively high level of political participation.

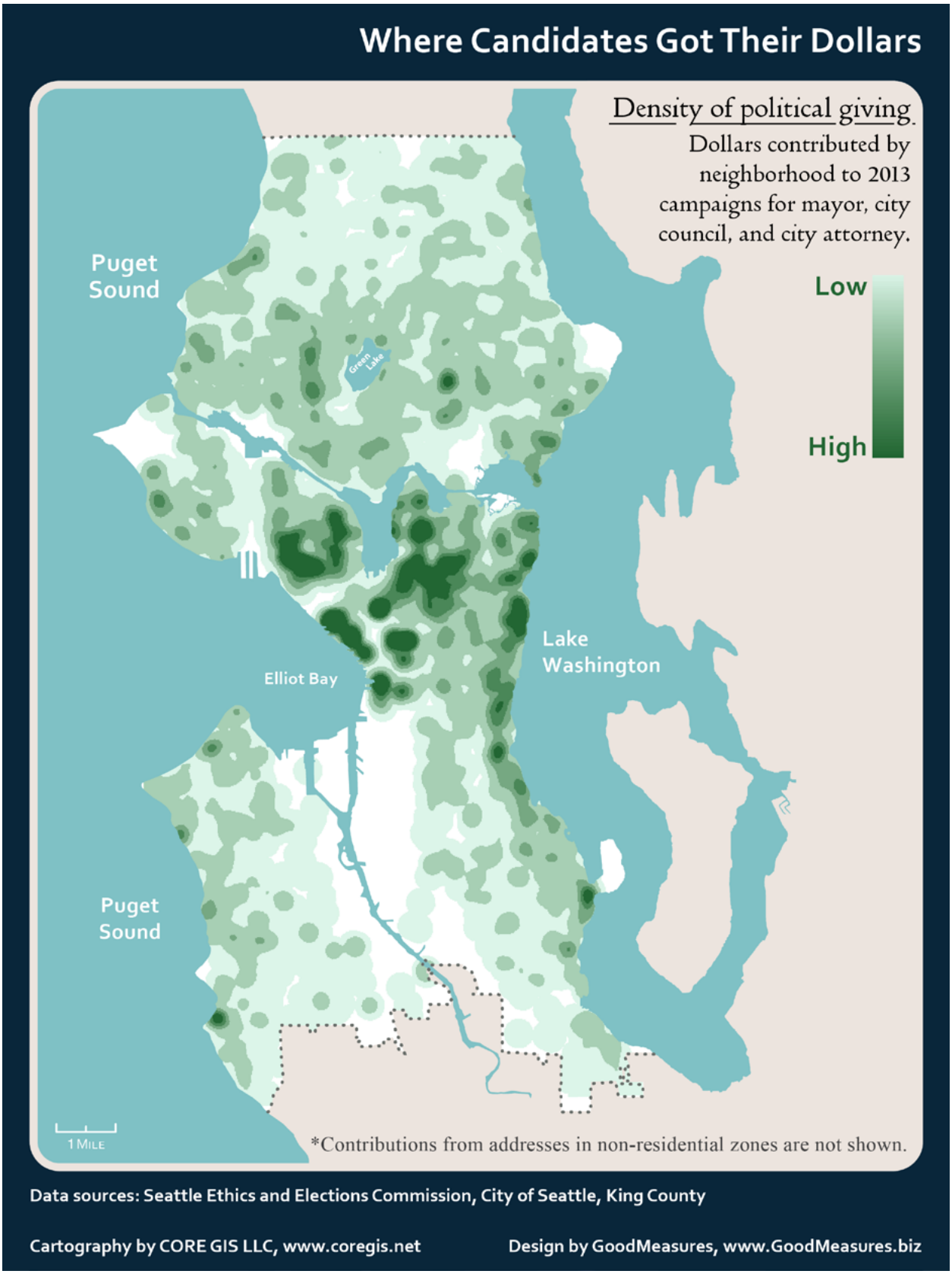
Please see the notes on methods at the end of the report for important caveats and explanations.


$500+ Contributors
Sightline
INSTITUTE
$500+ Contributors' addresses
Each dot is on the address of a contributor who gave $500 or more cumulatively to 2013 candidates for Seattle mayor, city council, or city attorney.
Puget Sound
Green Lake
Lake Washington
Elliot Bay
Puget Sound
1 MILE
*Contributions from addresses in non-residential zones are not shown.
Data sources: Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission, City of Seattle, King County
Cartography by CORE GIS LLC, www.coregis.net
Design by GoodMeasures, www.GoodMeasures.biz

2. $500+ Contributors

Of the 8,450 Seattle contributors to 2013 election campaigns, more than half gave $100 or less apiece, cumulatively, to all candidates. In combination, these small-dollar donors provided only 10 percent of all political money from Seattle residents. Meanwhile, 1,683 donors gave big money, spending at least $500 apiece on political giving in city races that election cycle. City law capped giving at $700 per candidate, but big-money donors often gave large gifts to several candidates.

These 1,683 big-money contributors accounted for two-thirds of all the political money: $1.5 million of the $2.3 million Seattleites gave. This map shows the addresses of these contributors. Like the previous one, it shows a scatter of contributors across the city, although certain neighborhoods stand out more.

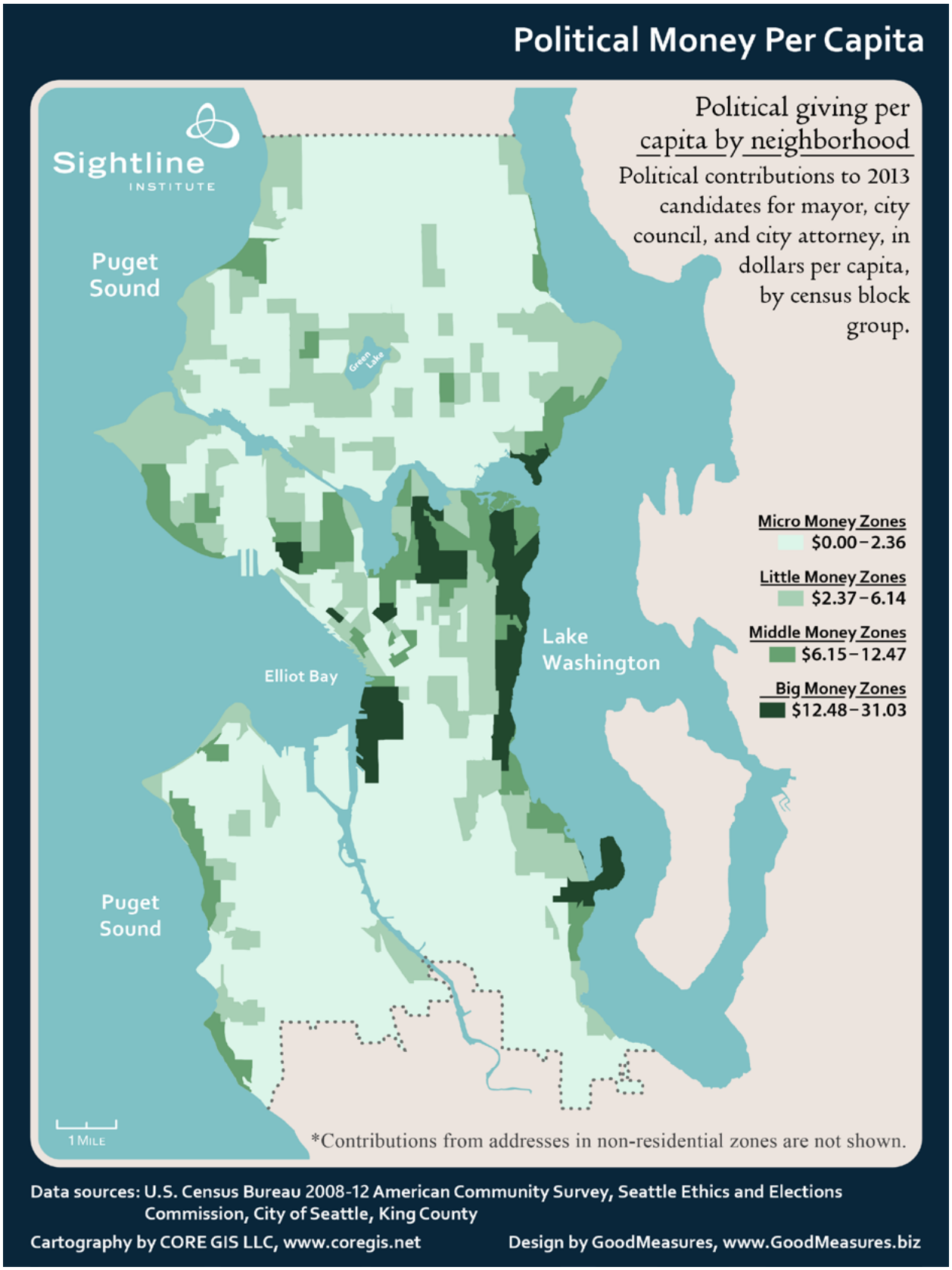

Where Candidates Got Their Dollars
Density of political giving
Dollars contributed by neighborhood to 2013 campaigns for mayor, city council, and city attorney.
Low
High
Puget Sound
Green Lake
Lake Washington
Elliot Bay
Puget Sound
1 Mile
*Contributions from addresses in non-residential zones are not shown.
Data sources: Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission, City of Seattle, King County
Cartography by CORE GIS LLC, www.coregis.net
Design by GoodMeasures, www.GoodMeasures.biz

3. Where Candidates Got Their Dollars

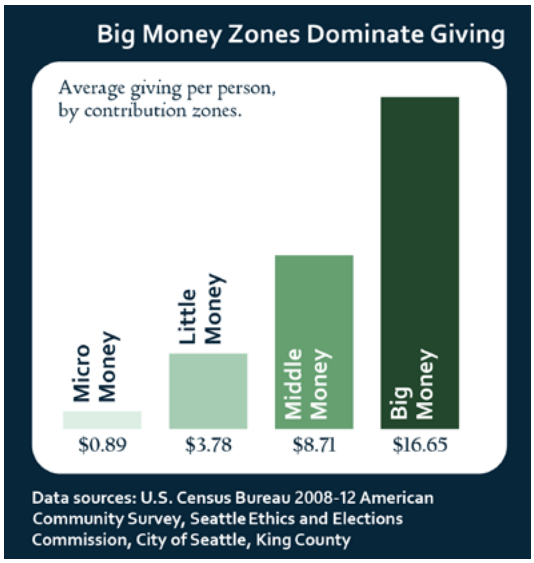
This map plots the density of money contributed: not the number of contributors or contributions, but the number of dollars given in each neighborhood. The darker the shade, the more money candidates raised in that neighborhood. As the map shows, the greatest concentration of money comes from a belt of neighborhoods crossing Seattle at the mid-section from Queen Anne to Madison Park, plus scattered other areas, mainly on waterfronts.

A small number of donors dominate this map. 1,683 donors gave $500 or more. Just 391 contributors—a paltry 0.07 percent of adults—gave $1,000 or more, yet they accounted for fully 28 percent of all the money raised. With each step up the contribution ladder, the number of contributors diminished and their importance to candidates' fundraising soared.

Some of the darkest patches in this map are also the most densely populated parts of the city: the close-in neighborhoods around downtown. Is the money pattern simply a reflection of population density?


Political Money Per Capita
Sightline
INSTITUTE
Political giving per capita by neighborhood
Political contributions to 2013 candidates for mayor, city council, and city attorney, in dollars per capita, by census block group.
Puget Sound
Green Lake
Elliot Bay
Lake Washington
Puget Sound
Micro Money Zones
$0.00–2.36
Little Money Zones
$2.37–6.14
Middle Money Zones
$6.15–12.47
Big Money Zones
$12.48–31.03
1 Mile
*Contributions from addresses in non-residential zones are not shown.
Data sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2008-12 American Community Survey, Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission, City of Seattle, King County
Cartography by CORE GIS LLC, www.coregis.net
Design by GoodMeasures, www.GoodMeasures.biz

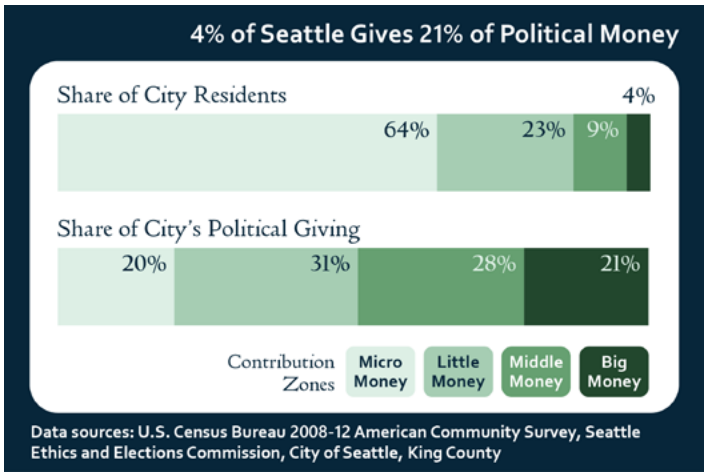
4. Political Money Per Capita



Map 4 reveals the parts of the city with the highest per capita political contributions. It shows dollars of contributions per capita in each of Seattle's 479 census block groups—neighborhood divisions drawn by the US Bureau of the Census that typically hold 1,000 to 1,500 residents each.

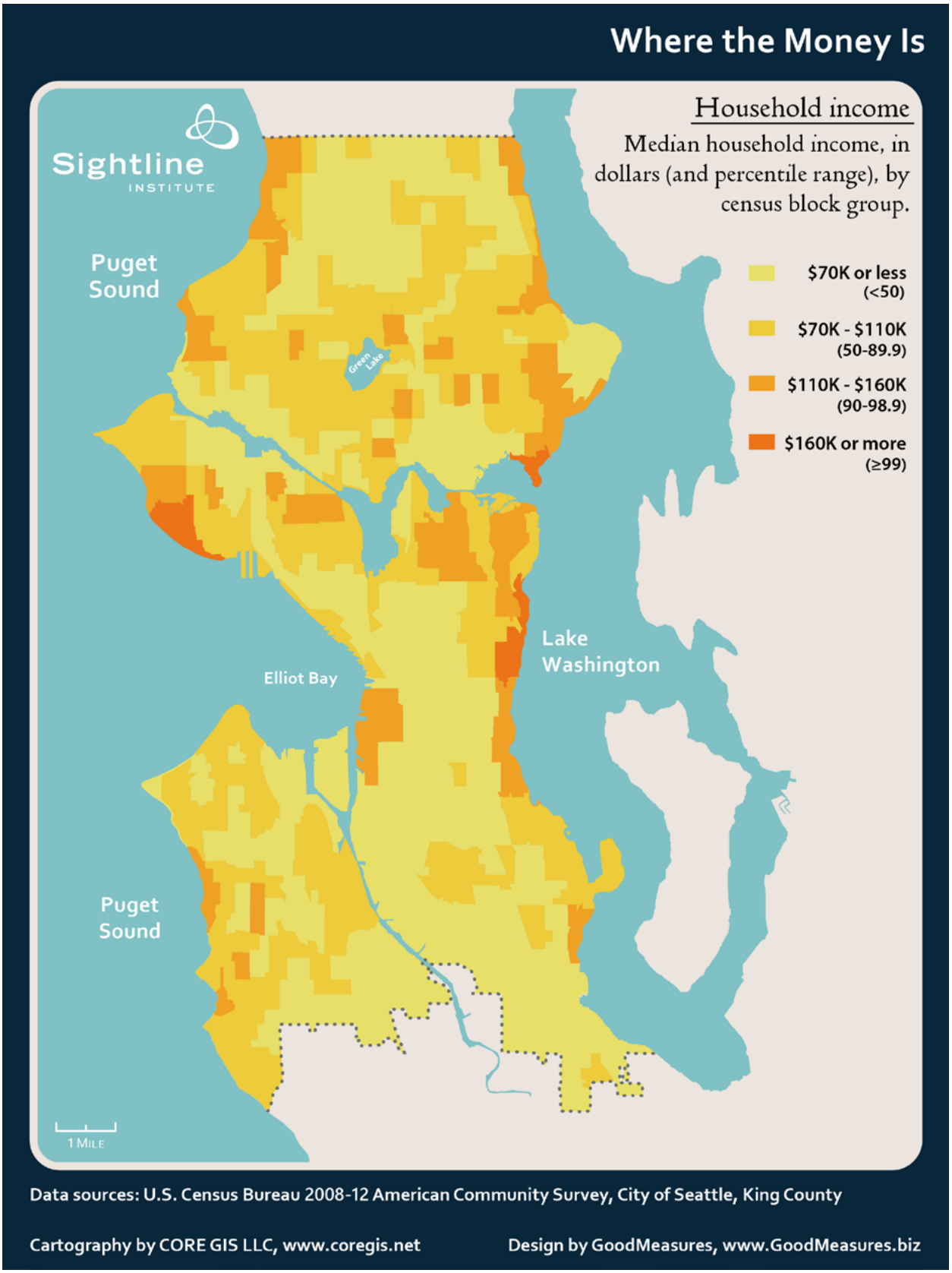
The map illustrates starkly that giving per person is highest in a narrow belt that crosses the city from Magnolia to Madison Park by way of Queen Anne and north Capitol Hill. In Madison Park, the east-west belt meets a north-south belt of political giving that follows the shores of Lake Washington from Laurelhurst south through Denny Blaine, Madrona, Leschi, and Mount Baker, to Seward Park. (A map of Seattle neighborhoods is at the end of this report for reference.) To a lesser extent, political giving follows other city waterfronts, not only on the East along Lake Washington, but also on Puget Sound, Lake Union, and Green Lake. Proximity to water is associated with political giving. Proximity to downtown also seems to predict political giving, with close-in waterfronts providing more political money per person than more-distant waterfront neighborhoods.

This map divides the city's census block groups into four categories, which we call the Micro Money Zones, Little Money Zones, Middle Money Zones, and Big Money Zones. They are not of equal size. The Micro Money Zones (the lightest shade on the map) covered most of the north and south ends of the city and held fully 64 percent of Seattle residents. These areas provided candidates with only 20 percent of Seattle's political dollars, 89 cents per resident. (See figures.)



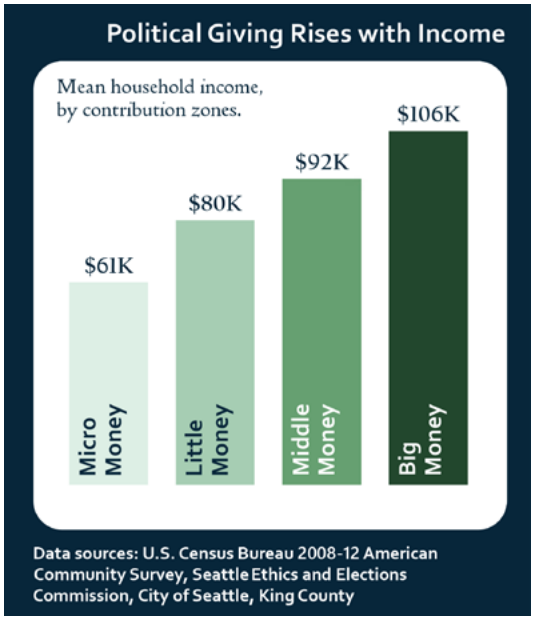
The Little Money Zones (the second lightest shade) covered the homes of 23 percent of Seattleites and contributed 31 percent of the political money collected in the city. Residents of these neighborhoods gave $3.78 per person, on average, during the 2013 election campaigns.

The Middle Money Zones (the second darkest shade) included the neighborhoods of 9 percent of Seattleites. These areas accounted for 28 percent of all giving and contributed $8.71 per person. The Big Money Zones (the darkest shade) were home to just 4 percent of Seattleites, but they provided fully 21 percent of the city's political money—$16.65 per capita. Half of the money, in other words, came from 13 percent of the people: the Middle and Big Money Zones.


Where the Money Is
Sightline
INSTITUTE
Household income
Median household income, in dollars (and percentile range), by census block group.
$70K or less (<50)
$70K - $110K (50-89.9)
$110K - $160K (90-98.9)
$160K or more (≥99)
Puget Sound
Green Lake
Lake Washington
Elliot Bay
Puget Sound
1 Mile
Data sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2008-12 American Community Survey, City of Seattle, King County
Cartography by CORE GIS LLC, www.coregis.net
Design by GoodMeasures, www.GoodMeasures.biz

5. Where the Money Is

This map looks at first glance much like the previous: the same crosswise belt from Magnolia to Madison Park, the same Lake Washington stripe from Laurelhurst to Seward Park, the same shadings along other waterfronts across the city, the same voids in the middles of the south and north ends of the city. But it shows completely different data. It's a map of household incomes, not political giving.

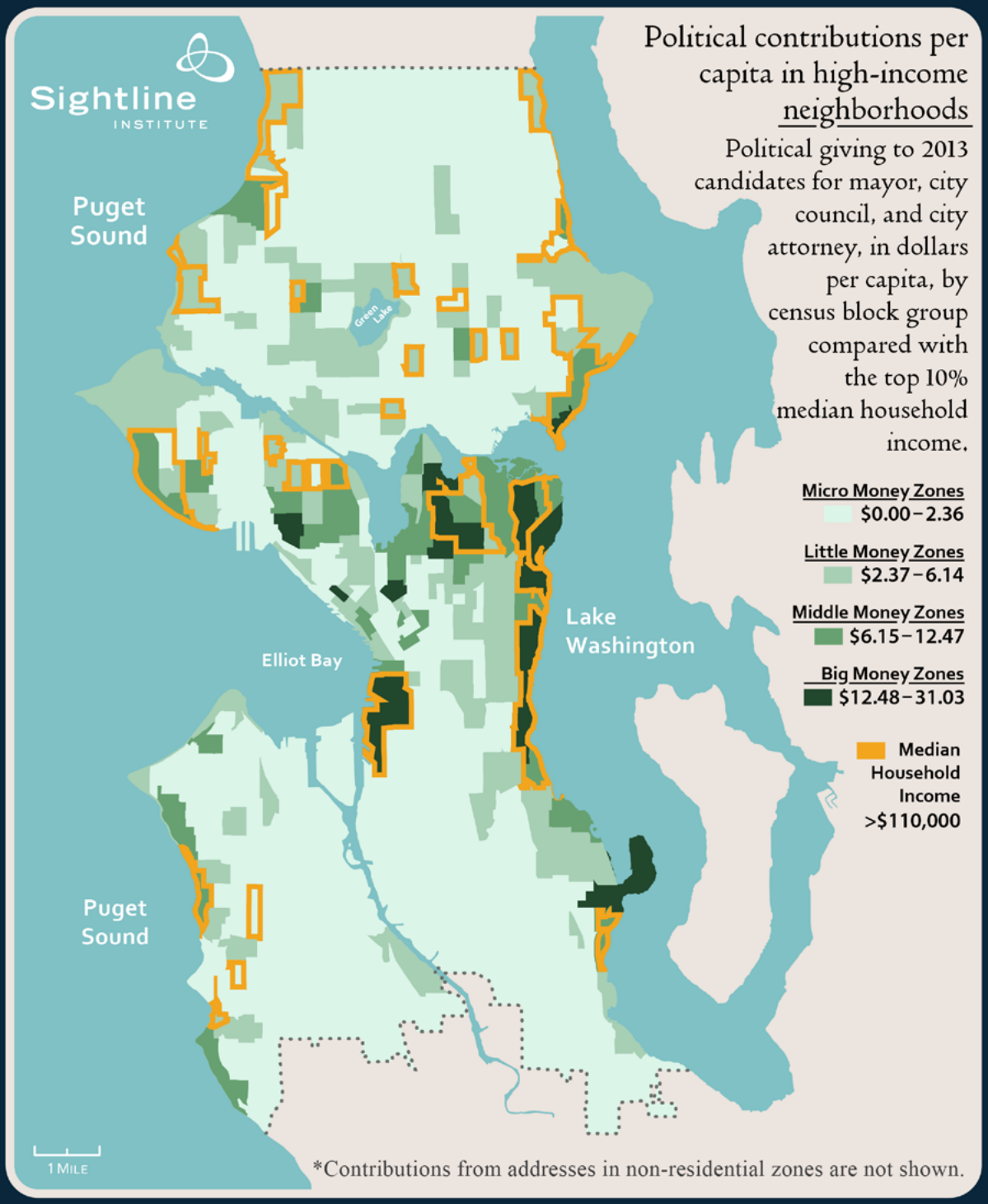


To an impressive but perhaps not surprising degree, campaigns raise money where the money is—in neighborhoods where many rich people live. Madrona and Denny-Blaine, Webster Point in Laurelhurst, and the southwest quadrant of Magnolia have the highest median incomes in Seattle. They are shown in the darkest shades on the map and defined as census block groups in the top 1 percent of median incomes in the city, those with median household incomes above $160,000 a year. These favored places account for just 1 percent of the city's population. The second-richest category of neighborhoods (the second-darkest shades on the map) is home to people with median annual household incomes above $110,000. They hold another 9 percent of the city's residents. These two categories together—the richest tenth of neighborhoods—contributed 26 percent of political money in the 2013 campaigns.
Another 43 percent of the political money came from the category shown in the second-lightest shade on the map. These areas house 37 percent of Seattleites and have median incomes above $70,000 a year. The neighborhoods in the bottom 60 percentiles of median household incomes in Seattle, the lightest shaded zones on the map, contributed just 30 percent of the political cash.

These figures may understate the degree to which income and giving are tied, because Seattle neighborhoods are not uniform in household incomes. Retirees who bought their Madrona homes in the 1960s live beside tech millionaires, and pockets of high-end housing are sprinkled across the city. Unfortunately, no separate source of data is available on the incomes of donors; we can only estimate from the neighborhoods they live in.

Another way to examine the relationship between affluence and giving is to consider the incomes of the neighborhoods that give the most, rather than the contributions of the richest neighborhoods. As the figure illustrates, median incomes rise in steps from the Micro Money Zones to the Big Money Zones.

Overlap: Political Giving Comes from High Income Areas



Data sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2008-12 American Community Survey, Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission, City of Seattle, King County

Cartography by CORE GIS LLC, www.coregis.net

Design by GoodMeasures, www.GoodMeasures.biz

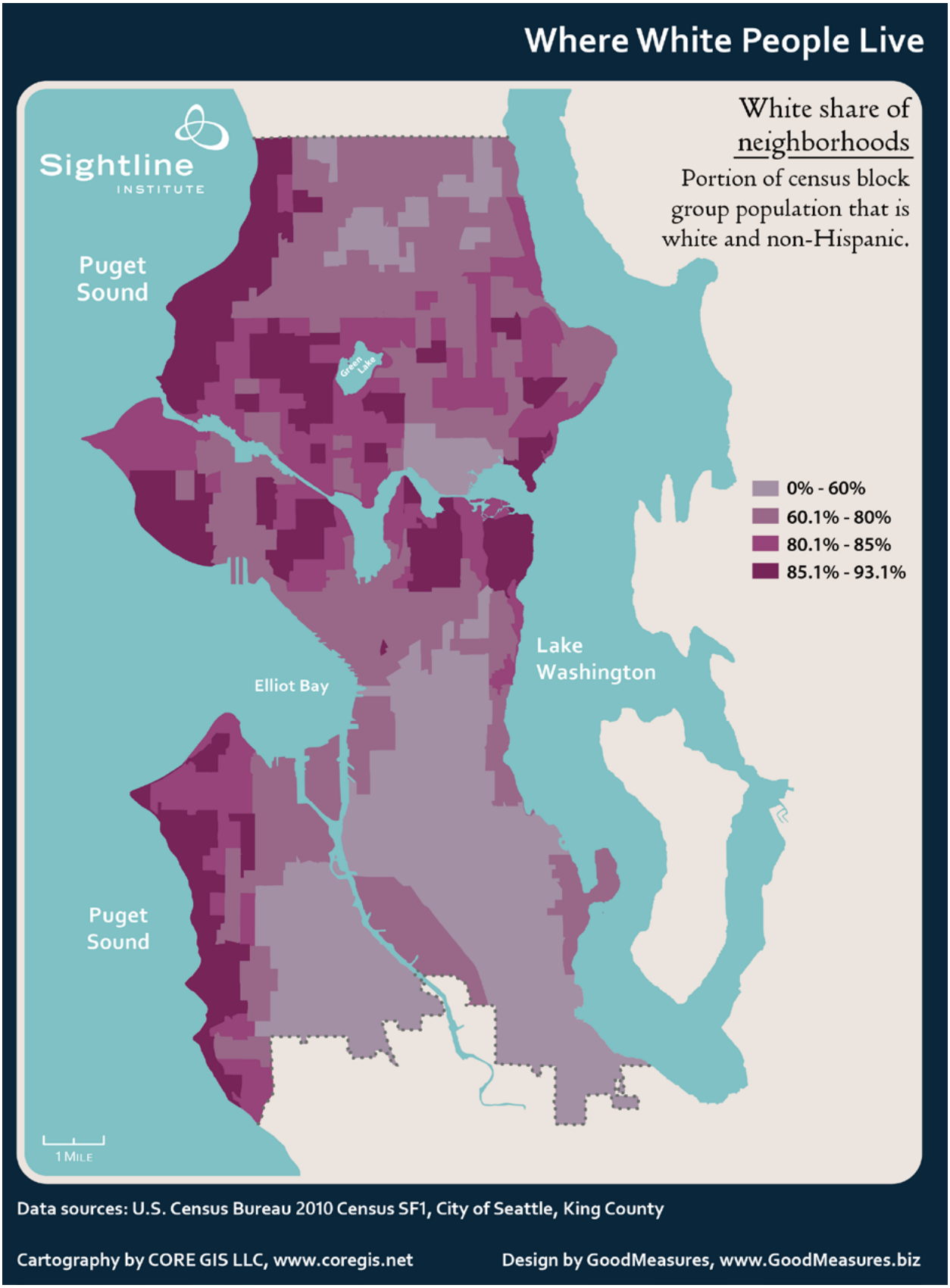
6. Overlap: Political Giving Comes from High-Income Areas

This map draws the boundaries of the richest neighborhoods on the political giving map. That is, we superimpose the outline in yellow from Map 5 "Where the Money Is" of census block groups in the top two income categories—where median household income exceeds $110,000 per year—on Map 4 "Political Money per Person." The result reveals the close overlap between high incomes and political giving. The Big Money and Middle Money Zones in many cases *are* the richest neighborhoods. In other cases they are nearby, and almost no Big Money or Middle Money neighborhood has a median income below $70,000.

Because neighborhood incomes are not uniform, political giving and incomes may match even more closely than this map suggests. In Queen Anne, for example, this map shows the high income areas in yellow, slightly farther north than the belt of Big Money and Middle Money. Neighborhood demographics may explain this pattern. South Queen Anne holds both multi-million-dollar homes and middle-income apartments. This mixing lowers the neighborhood's median income. North Queen Anne is more uniform in holding only single-family homes. Although those homes are less expensive than the ones in South Queen Anne, the median income is higher in the north because there are no middle-income apartments to pull down the median. The Big Money Zone in Queen Anne is in the south, where the most expensive homes are. A fine grained analysis might therefore find an even tighter correlation between income and giving.

Furthermore, the fact that some of the contributions on "Political Money per Capita" were recorded with workplace addresses may also weaken the correlation. For example, in the mixed neighborhoods of workplaces and apartments close to downtown, political giving is more prevalent than high incomes. Workplace giving likely inflates the political money tallies in these neighborhoods.

Even with these distortions, the overlap between political giving and high incomes is striking. Political money comes mostly from high-income neighborhoods.

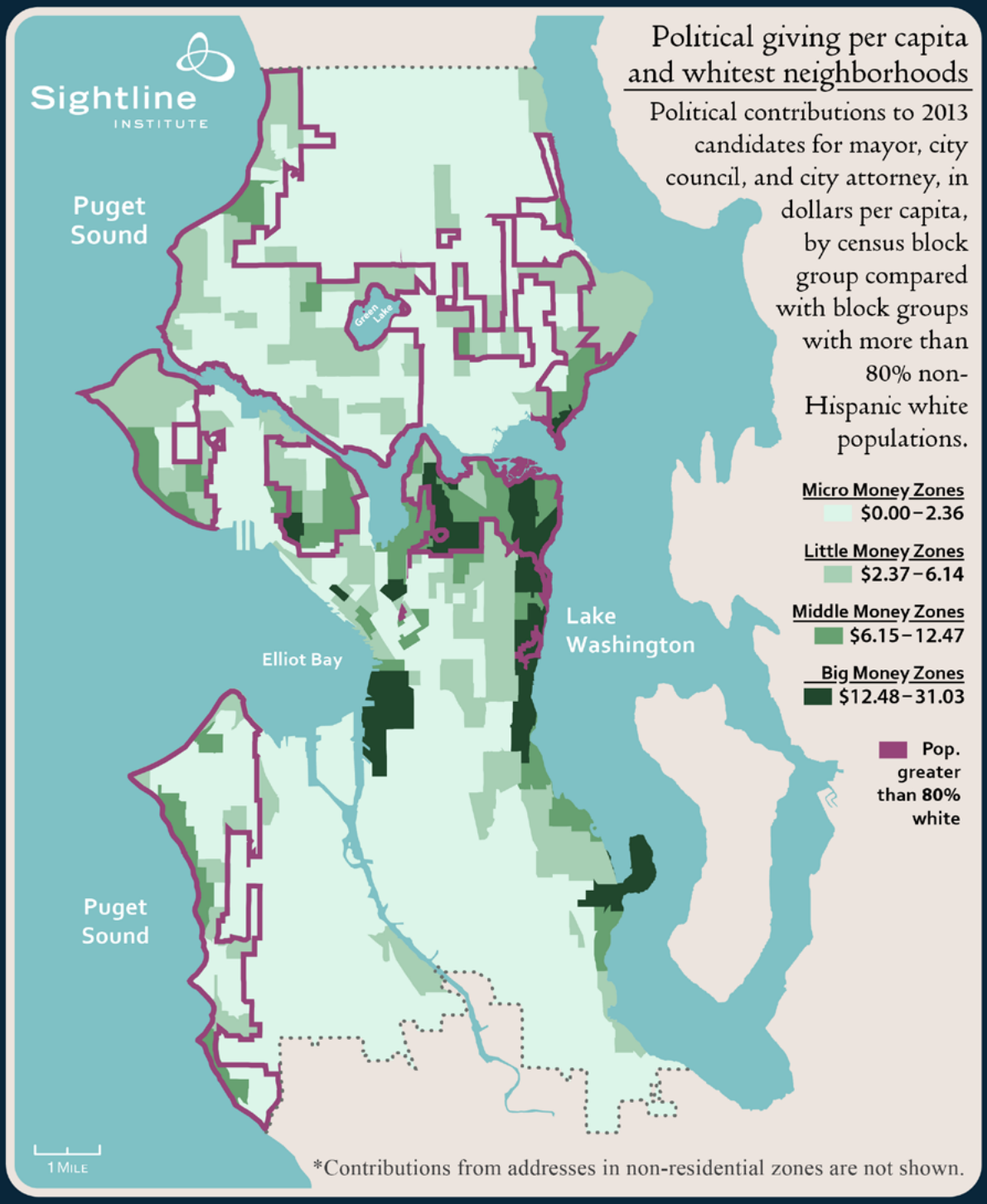

Where White People Live
Sightline
INSTITUTE
White share of neighborhoods
Portion of census block group population that is white and non-Hispanic.
Puget Sound
Green Lake
0% - 60%
60.1% - 80%
80.1% - 85%
85.1% - 93.1%
Lake Washington
Elliot Bay
Puget Sound
1 Mile
Data sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2010 Census SF1, City of Seattle, King County
Cartography by CORE GIS LLC, www.coregis.net
Design by GoodMeasures, www.GoodMeasures.biz

7. Where White People Live

This map shows the whitest neighborhoods of Seattle, and it looks a lot like the Map 4 "Political Money per Capita": the shading shows the same belt from Magnolia to Madison Park, the same streak from Laurelhurst south to Seward Park, the same waterfronts elsewhere in the city. Judging from the neighborhoods it inhabits, the political donor class is not only overwhelming rich, it's also overwhelmingly white and non-Hispanic.

Seattle is a heavily white city in any event, with 67 percent of the population non-Hispanic white at the time of the 2010 census. But the subset of neighborhoods that gave half of the money (the two darkest shades on Map 4) were 80 percent white. Conversely, the lightest shaded zones in Map 4, which were home to 64 percent of Seattleites and gave just 20 percent of the political money, were only 61 percent non-Hispanic white.

Overlap: Political Giving and White Neighborhoods



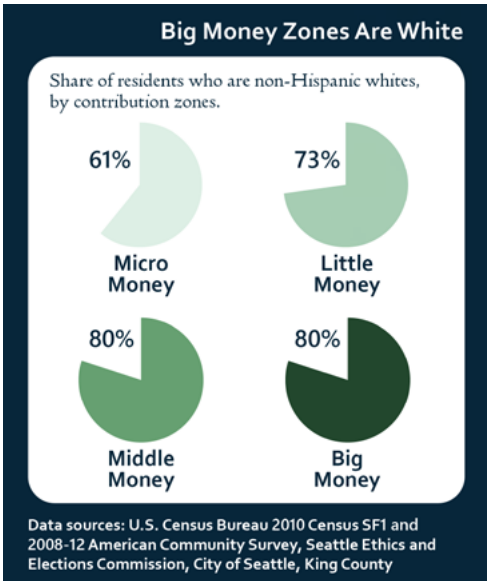
Data sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2010 Census SF1 and 2008-12 American Community Survey, Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission, City of Seattle, King County

Cartography by CORE GIS LLC, www.coregis.net Design by GoodMeasures, www.GoodMeasures.biz

8. Overlap: Political Giving and White Neighborhoods

This map shows the whitest neighborhoods overlaid on Map 4 "Political Giving per Capita." The census block groups outlined in purple are the ones where the 2010 census reported that non-Hispanic whites constituted 80 percent or more of the population.

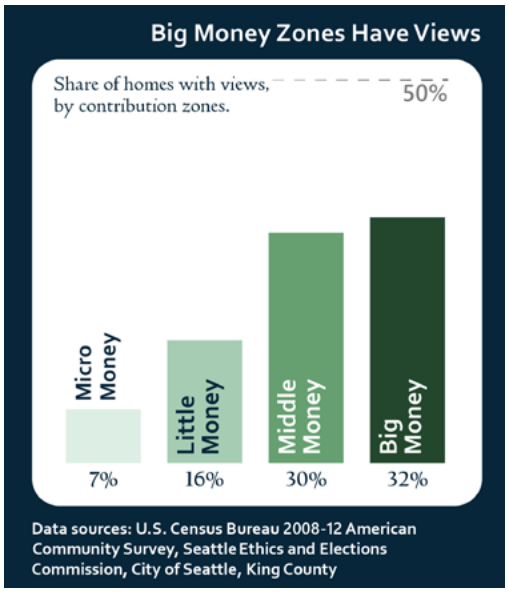
With few exceptions, Seattle's Big Money and Middle Money Zones are inside the purple lines. Exceptions include areas close to downtown, where workplaces likely distort the political giving map, and on the shores of Lake Washington south of Madison Park.



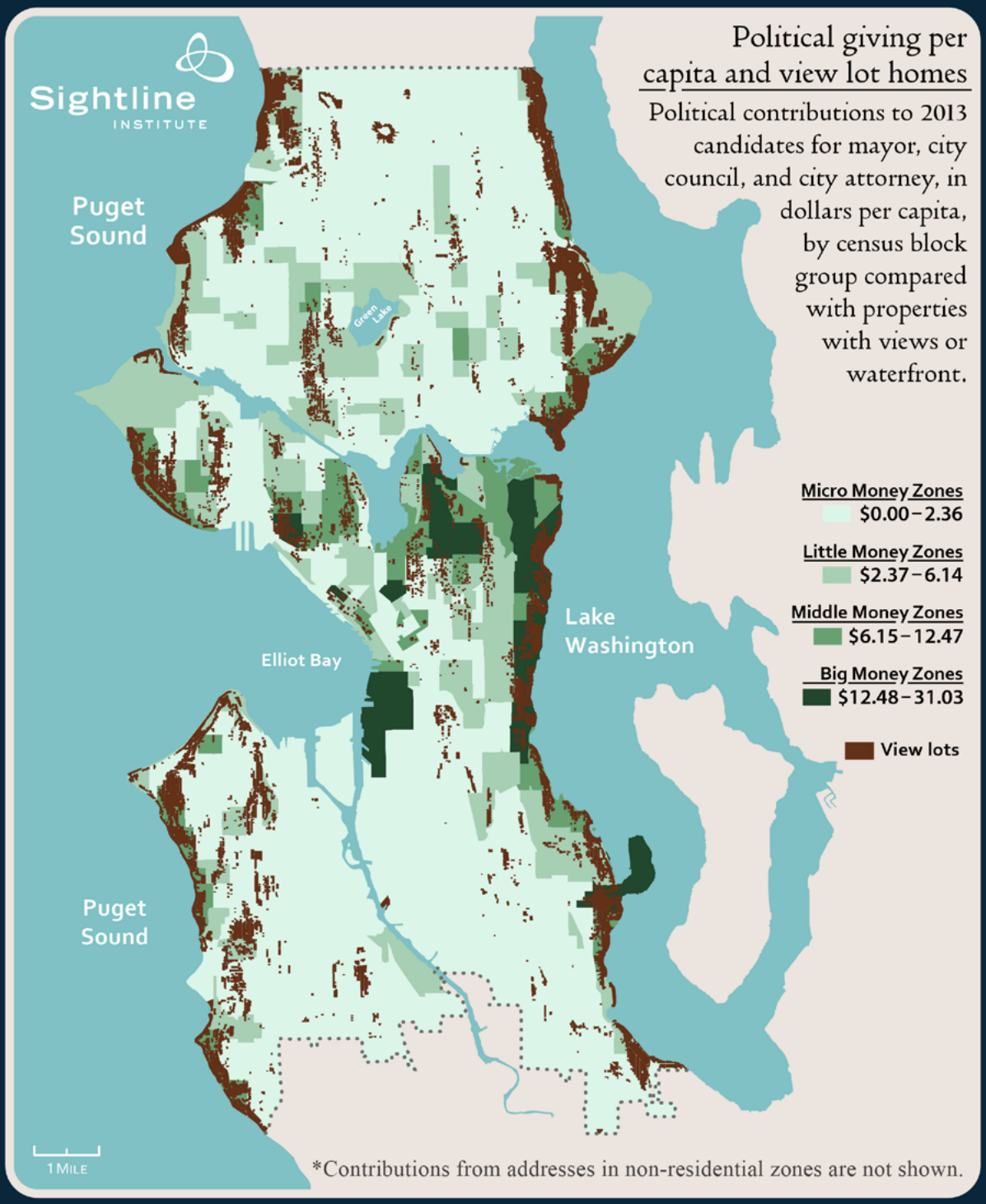
Homes With Views
Waterfront and view lots
Waterfront parcels or parcels with views of Mt. Rainier, Olympic or Cascade Mountains, Puget Sound, or Lake Washington, according to King County Assessor.
Sightline INSTITUTE
Puget Sound
Green Lake
Lake Washington
Elliot Bay
View lots
Puget Sound
1 MILE
Data sources: City of Seattle, King County
Cartography by CORE GIS LLC, www.coregis.net
Design by GoodMeasures, www.GoodMeasures.biz

9. Homes with Views

In Seattle, political giving is also correlated with living in a home with a view of the water or the mountains. This map shows all residential lots in the city that the King County Assessor records as being either waterfront property or having a mountain or water view. It too shows the pattern of Map 4 "Political Money per Capita": the belt from Magnolia to Madison Park, the stripe along Lake Washington, and many of the same other dark spots. In Seattle, having a view is a function of having money, and so is political giving.



Overlap: Political Giving Comes from View Homes



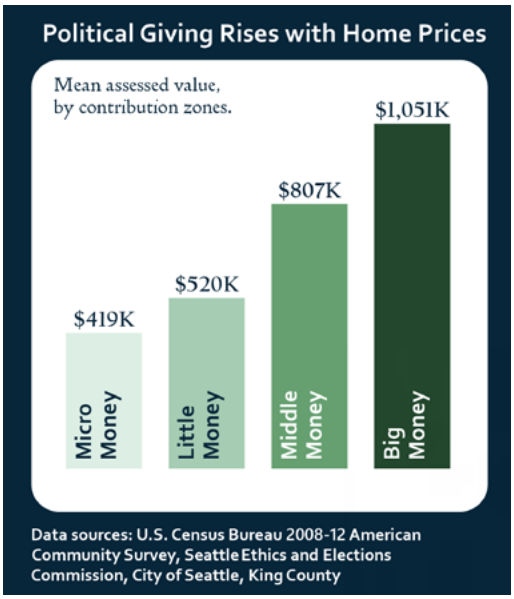
Data sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2008-12 American Community Survey, Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission, City of Seattle, King County

Cartography by CORE GIS LLC, www.coregis.net

Design by GoodMeasures, www.GoodMeasures.biz

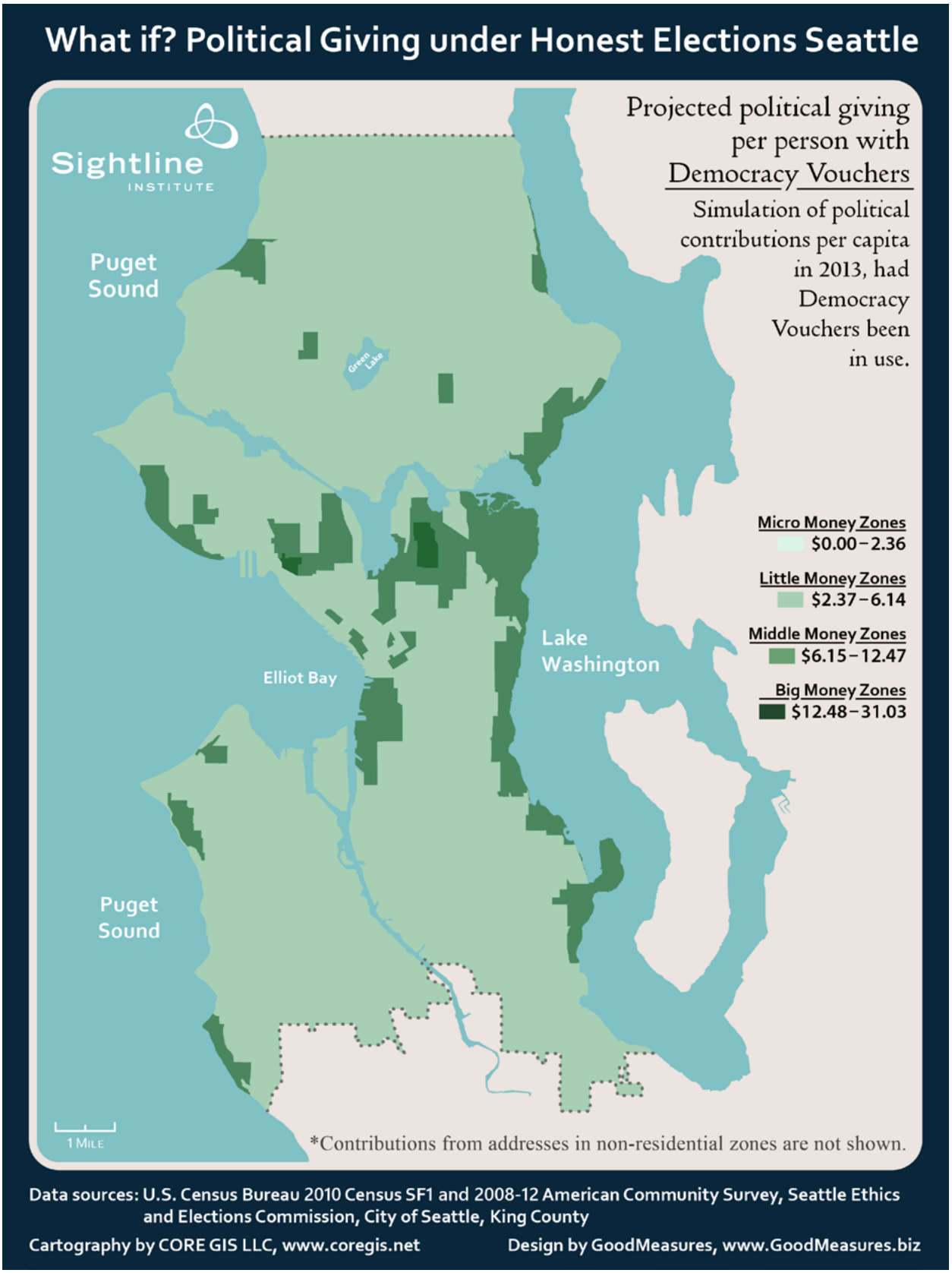
10. Overlap: Political Giving Comes from View Homes

This map overlays view lots from the previous on Map 4 "Political Money per Capita" to show how closely the two line up.



Only 7 percent of homes in the Micro Money Zones have a view, while 32 percent of homes in the Big Money Zones do. A more fine-grained analysis, contributor by contributor and lot by lot, might find an even closer correlation.

More generally, political money overwhelmingly comes from parts of the city with high property values. A map (not published here) of assessed values shows the same pattern as Map 4, though somewhat less powerfully than does the map of view homes. Assessed values reflect population density, land-use regulations, and proximity to downtown, which complicate the relationship to political giving. Average assessed home values, from the King County Assessor's Office, reflect the familiar pattern (see figure): the typical assessed home in the Micro Money Zones is worth about $414,000; among the elite donors of the Big Money Zones, homes average two-and-a-half times as much, at about $1,050,000.


What if? Political Giving under Honest Elections Seattle
Sightline INSTITUTE
Projected political giving per person with Democracy Vouchers
Simulation of political contributions per capita in 2013, had Democracy Vouchers been in use.
Puget Sound
Green Lake
Elliot Bay
Lake Washington
Puget Sound
Micro Money Zones $0.00–2.36
Little Money Zones $2.37–6.14
Middle Money Zones $6.15–12.47
Big Money Zones $12.48–31.03
1 Mile
*Contributions from addresses in non-residential zones are not shown.
Data sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2010 Census SF1 and 2008-12 American Community Survey, Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission, City of Seattle, King County
Cartography by CORE GIS LLC, www.coregis.net
Design by GoodMeasures, www.GoodMeasures.biz

11. What Honest Elections Seattle Will Do

In 1999, University of Washington demographer Richard Morrill mapped contributions in the 1997 city election cycle. He found, as summarized by the Seattle Times, "that downtown, north Capitol Hill, Madrona, and south Queen Anne dominated the contribution list, and that minority neighborhoods hardly contributed at all to most of the campaigns." Apparently, little has changed. The same rich, white neighborhoods still dominate political giving in Seattle.

If voters approve the Honest Elections Seattle Initiative in November 2015, what might it do to the map of Seattle's political giving? Let's take the initiative's key provisions about campaign funding in turn.

Honest Elections Seattle will reduce the maximum contribution any donor may make to any candidate from $700 to $500.

If the maximum contribution in 2013 had been $500 rather than $700, donors would have "maxed out" with smaller checks. In the 2013 cycle, 924 contributions were greater than $500. They totaled $643,000. If those 924 contributions had each been trimmed to $500, the total raised would have been $462,000, reducing fundraising totals by $181,000. Of course, candidates might have worked harder to raise $500 contributions from others because they have campaign budgets to support. The people who can write $500 checks are a slightly less exclusive club than the people who can write $700 checks. Still, the change would have been modest and likely would not have changed the map of political giving dramatically.

Honest Elections Seattle will provide $100 in Democracy Vouchers to every registered voter in the city.

Voters may give their vouchers (four of them worth $25 each) to city candidates who have qualified for the Honest Elections program and pledged to limit their spending and cap contributions at $250 plus vouchers.

Democracy Vouchers are a pioneering venture discussed by theorists for years and awaiting their world debut in practice. The rate of voter participation is therefore impossible to predict. In 2013, some 1.5 percent of Seattle adults contributed to any local candidate's campaign. In Minnesota, as many as 5 percent of adults contribute to state candidates, thanks to a tax program that allows voters to get a refund for small-dollar contributions they make. Democracy Vouchers will be simpler for voters to use than Minnesota's tax refund. We therefore expect them to attract wider utilization: perhaps as many as 10 percent of adults will contribute at least one of their vouchers to a candidate, raising the number of contributors from the 8,450 witnessed in 2013 to perhaps 55,000. The number seems unlikely to go much higher than that, unfortunately, considering that most people pay only glancing attention to politics, especially local politics. Fewer than a third of registered Seattle voters cast a ballot in primary elections, even in the hotly contested primary between Kshama Sawant and Richard Conlin in 2013.

Vouchers will make it easy for voters to contribute. They will also give voters more reason to attend candidate forums, house parties, and the like: they'll have vouchers to give to their favorite candidates.

Similarly, Democracy Vouchers will upend the incentives for candidates: they'll make every voter in the city an easy prospect for $100 in contributions. It will probably be easier to collect vouchers than to dial for dollars from the donor class. Candidates may instead call on their supporters mostly to assemble their friends and neighbors to meet the candidate and let the candidate ask for vouchers. Members of the donor class may even become less inclined to give money themselves, knowing that vouchers are plentiful and free for the taking by any well-run and persuasive campaign. Community groups, unions, business associations, and many other organizations, for their part, will likely rush to assemble voters and then encourage candidates to come ask for support—and vouchers. Democracy Vouchers could be game changers that rearrange the political money map of the city.

The Big Money and Middle Money Zones will still give, no doubt. They are already on candidates' fundraising lists and are accustomed to participating in campaigns as donors. Because of their wealth, furthermore, they will likely continue to give a disproportionate share of remaining financial contributions to campaigns. But vouchers will make the Micro Money and Little Money Zones fruitful fundraising territory for the first time. Doorbelling, house parties, receptions, fundraisers of many types, community forums, debates, street markets, and outdoor festivals—all the places candidates go to meet voters in person will become fundraising venues. Grassroots campaigning may expand markedly.

The final map shows one possible outcome: a hypothetical 2013 campaign cycle in which we imagine Democracy Vouchers had been in use. In it, we assume that candidates collected two-thirds of their funds from vouchers and one-third the old-fashioned way. We assume that slightly more than 10 percent of Seattle adults gave at least one voucher to an Honest Elections-qualified candidate, and that on average, these adults assigned half of their vouchers, or $50 each. We assume that contributions of money diminish by two-thirds, and that the decrease is proportional across the city. That is, all neighborhoods give one-third as much in this scenario as what they actually gave in 2013. We then sum voucher giving and money giving and map the results.

Under these assumptions, no part of the city remains in the Micro Money Zones. There is a new floor of political participation citywide, and the Big Money and Middle Money Zones both shrink. That's what Honest Elections Seattle might do to the political map of Seattle: spread participation from the rich, white, expensive neighborhoods with view homes to the whole city.

Note on Methods

For the maps in this report, Sightline made a public information request from the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission and received a complete data file of donors' names, addresses, contribution amounts, and recipients. Sightline retained the services of CoreGIS to sort, clean, and geocode the data to create the maps presented here. CoreGIS excluded several thousand contributions from contributors who listed non-Seattle addresses. CoreGIS added data layers to the maps from public sources, such as the US Bureau of the Census, for population, race and ethnicity, and median household income by census block group. From the King County Assessor's office, CoreGIS obtained data on assessed property values and the locations of view lots. From the city of Seattle, it obtained non-residential land-use classification data in order to screen out some of the workplace giving to political campaigns. Under Sightline's instructions, CoreGIS then analyzed the overlaps and relationships among these various data layers.

Meanwhile, Sightline separately downloaded data from the state Public Disclosure Commission for the same races in the City of Seattle for separate analysis. (SEEC and PDC both track spending in city campaigns.) Like CoreGIS, Sightline excluded contributions from contributors who listed non-Seattle addresses. Sightline researchers went through all of the more than 15,000 contributions, line by line, to correct typos, synchronize spellings and abbreviations of names (in order to be able to correctly analyze for *contributors*, not just *contributions*), and to categorize contributors into three classes: individual people, unions and liberal advocacy nonprofits, and for-profit corporations and those who represent them such as trade associations.

Because Sightline and CoreGIS used different data sources and different data-cleaning methods, the numbers from these two methods do not match perfectly. Nonetheless, they are so close that they tend to validate each other's accuracy. In this report, we relied on CoreGIS analysis when the statements are directly related to the maps. We added context from the Sightline/PDC data.

Our maps all show political contributions during the 2013 election cycle, not just during calendar year 2013. Under state and city rules, the 2013 election fundraising cycle ran from April 2011 to April 2014, but fundraising began in earnest in 2012 and dwindled quickly after the election in November 2013.

Many contributors' addresses are so close together that the dots on the first two maps ("Contributors to Seattle Candidates" and "$500+ Contributors") are stacked on top of each other. For example, three family members might each be campaign contributors, along with a next door neighbor. At the scale of our maps, all of those four dots merge into one. In both maps, the number of dots on the map is only about one-third of the actual number of contributors, because of this stacking effect. The stacking effect is most pronounced in areas with more people or more contributors, so the maps tend to understate political giving in densely populated or giving-intensive zones.

About 3.5 percent of contributors were corporations, not people. (Sightline plans a subsequent analysis of these contributions.) Corporations included, among others, for-profit companies, trade associations, political action committees, and trade unions. Another share of contributors were individual people who reported not their home addresses but their work addresses on disclosure forms. Consequently,

a small share of the dots on the first two maps reflect not home addresses but business addresses—either of corporations that gave or of employees. To focus on where contributors lived, not where they worked, Sightline instructed CoreGIS to exclude areas of the city where housing is not permitted, such as in industrial zones and parts of downtown. CoreGIS did the same for all of the maps of political money and for the data summarizing those maps.

This decision to exclude nonresidential zones removed about one fifth of the dots from the first two maps and one-fourth of the dollars contributed from all of the maps. The lion's share of these contributors was probably Seattle residents who reported workplace addresses. We have no way of knowing what neighborhoods they lived in, or even if they lived in the city, except that some contributors reported their home addresses on some contributions and their business addresses on others. In these cases, the map reflects the residential addresses.

Others of the excluded contributors were from among the 3.5 percent of all contributors that were corporations. Because many corporations have offices in parts of the city where housing is allowed, though, some corporate contributors are still on the maps. It's also true that some political money still shown on the maps reflect workplace addresses of employees who live elsewhere in the city or beyond its borders. Still, the overall pattern would not likely change significantly if we could more-accurately pin point residential addresses for all contributors.

Credits

Author: Alan Durning is founder and executive director of Sightline Institute, the Pacific Northwest's sustainability think tank. He is author or coauthor of more than a dozen books, including Green-Collar Jobs and This Place on Earth. He lives in Seattle.

Sightline Institute is a think tank providing leading original analysis of energy, economic, and environmental policy in the Pacific Northwest.

Research assistance: Jane Harvey

Mapping and analysis: Matt Stevenson, CORE GIS LLC

Graphic design of maps and figures: Devin Porter, Good Measures

Cover Photo: King County Metro Seattle to Vashon Island Water Taxi by The West End, used under CC BY-NC-ND.

Appendix: Seattle Neighborhoods

Diversifying the Donor Pool: Did Seattle's Democracy Vouchers Program Reshape Participation in Municipal Campaign Finance?*

Brian J. McCabe
Associate Professor of Sociology
Georgetown University

Jennifer A. Heerwig
Assistant Professor of Sociology
SUNY-Stony Brook

Paper prepared for the 76th Annual Conference of the Midwest Political Science Association, April 5-8, 2018, Chicago, IL.

**Please do not cite without authors' permission.*

Diversifying the Donor Pool: Did Seattle's Democracy Vouchers Program Reshape Participation in Municipal Campaign Finance?

Abstract: The Democracy Voucher program in Seattle was designed to broaden representation in the campaign finance system and expand participation from marginalized communities. By providing four, twenty-five-dollar vouchers to every registered voter in Seattle that voters could, in turn, assign to the candidate(s) of their choice, this radical first-in-the-nation public financing system aimed to dramatically reshape the way local elections are funded. In this paper, we investigate whether the Democracy Voucher program increased involvement from underrepresented groups and created a more representative donor pool for local elections. By comparing the demographic and geographic composition of participants in the program ("voucher users") to the composition of Seattle residents who made cash contributions in the election ("donors"), we evaluate the impact of this public-financing program. Voucher users are less likely to be high-income and more likely to come from poor neighborhoods compared to donors. However, older residents are over-represented among voucher users, and there is little difference in the racial composition of cash donors and voucher users. Although voucher users remain demographically unrepresentative of the electorate, our analysis suggests that the program is shifting the donor pool in an egalitarian direction relative to the pool of cash donors. This analysis of an innovative public policy offers lessons for other municipalities and for the national conversation on the influence of political money.

In 2015, voters in Seattle, Washington passed a radical initiative to create the nation's first ever taxpayer-financed Democracy Vouchers program (Berman 2015). Under the rules of the program, each voter in Seattle would receive four, twenty-five dollar "democracy vouchers" to assign to the municipal candidate(s) of their choice. Launched in the 2017 elections, residents of the city were permitted to redeem their vouchers for qualifying candidates in the City Council and City Attorney races. The Democracy Vouchers program was designed to address growing concerns about the representational distortions that privately financed elections introduced into local races.

The implementation of the Democracy Vouchers program in Seattle comes at a time of growing national concern about the influence of money in American politics. Research on the federal campaign finance system has repeatedly demonstrated that campaign donors are descriptively unrepresentative of the electorate at large (Brown, Powell & Wilcox 1995; Francia

et al. 2003). Scholars have also suggested that our system of privately financed elections is a key mechanism by which the wealthy and interest groups are able to distort policy outcomes in their favor. Given this link, Page and Gilens (2017) have even proposed a national democracy vouchers system as a corrective to the problem of representation and policy responsiveness.

In this paper, we turn our attention to evaluating the Seattle Democracy Vouchers program's impact on the demographic and ideological diversity of the Seattle donor pool during the 2017 municipal elections. As we note above, concerns about representational distortion in the campaign finance system – and more broadly, the role of money in politics – have been widely researched and debated in federal elections, but they have been largely neglected in the study of urban politics. This oversight is important because municipal elections are financed by a relatively smaller number of donors who may garner greater access to political candidates through their contributions. This unequal exercise of political voice through the contribution process generates new forms of inequality in American cities.

Advocates for democracy vouchers have argued that such a system would increase participation in the campaign finance system, broaden the donor base and enable a more diverse group of citizens to exercise their political voice. Using Seattle as a test case with national implications, we investigate how the nation's first ever implementation of a democracy voucher program affected participation in the 2017 Seattle municipal election. Did the Democracy Voucher program, in fact, democratize the system of campaign finance in Seattle? We offer the first empirical assessment of the program by comparing participants in the Democracy Voucher program to three groups – campaign contributors who made cash donations, voters in the 2017 election, and the broader Seattle electorate. We examine how representative voucher users are – both demographically and geographically – compared to these three groups. Then, treating

voucher redemption as an act of political participation (akin to voting in an election), we estimate regression models to predict voucher usage in the 2017 election. Taken together, this paper offers the first analysis of the success of the Democracy Voucher program as a tool for broadening participation in city elections, attracting more residents into local funding coalitions and building a more diverse group of contributors. In doing so, we offer an indication of how such a program might—or might not—democratize national elections.

Equality and Representation in Campaign Finance

While the Democracy Voucher program was designed to increase representation in the local campaign finance system, questions of representational inequality have been largely confined to the study of federal elections, rather than local ones. In federal elections, the plurality of campaign cash—both within and outside of the traditional hard money system—comes from individual donors (Herrnson 2011; Heerwig 2018). Given the salience of individual donors in the federal system, a significant share of past work has concentrated on the demographic characteristics, ideological positions, and policy preferences of these activists.

Research on the federal system has been consistent in the finding that the individual donors who populate the federal campaign finance system are demographically unrepresentative of the electorate and, especially, of the population at large. In particular, donors to federal elections tend to be much whiter, more affluent, educated, and disproportionately male (Brown, Powell & Wilcox 1995; Francia et al. 2003; Heerwig and Gordon 2018). The degree to which donor characteristics depart from the electorate at large tends to increase with the size of a contributor's donation—in other words, larger donors are even more unrepresentative than those who make small contributions (Joe et al. 2008: 9).

At the same time, new work in the field has pointed to the influence of campaign donors in explaining two critical developments in American party politics: 1) the ideological polarization of the two political parties in government and in the electorate (Bonica 2014; Barber 2016), and 2) the weak link between the policy preferences of the least well-off Americans and policy outcomes (Gilens 2012; Page & Gilens 2017). Private political money is an important potential causal mechanism in many explanations of both phenomena. For instance, Barber and McCarty (2013: 11) hypothesize that "an increasing reliance of candidates on ideologically extreme individual donors might force candidates to move towards the ideological poles to raise money. Similarly, Page and Gilens (2017 :111) implicate the system of privately funded elections in the "feeble state of democratic responsiveness" vis-à-vis both political parties.

By contrast, research on local election tends to focus on individual cities to identify the influence of organized interests in local contexts. Citing a rich theoretical tradition on the urban growth machine, these studies have hypothesized that development interests are paramount in local elections. For instance, past studies have identified the relative share of funds originating from labor unions, real estate interests, and developers. Although these studies implicitly ask about the undue influence of organized interests, this framework by-and-large neglects any comprehensive analysis of the broader coalitions that fund local elections. This omission is notable considering that many case studies of American cities have found limited support for the role of development interests in local politics (Adams 2006, 2007; Fleischmann & Stein 1998; Krebs & Pelissero 2001). And, in fact, donor coalitions in Seattle elections mimic the patterns known to national elections (Heerwig and McCabe 2018).

We argue that the lack of research on local campaign finance neglects an important way that the affluent may distort policy in their favor (Trounstine 2009). Previous to the program

implementation in Seattle, individual donors—across a range of industries—supplied the lion's share of funding in local races. Within this constituency, high-dollar individual donors contributed a plurality of donations in City Council races and a majority of the money received by candidates for mayor. These campaign contributors tended to be geographically concentrated in high-income neighborhoods, rather than spread evenly across the city (Heerwig and McCabe 2018). As a result, the voices of some city residents were disproportionately heard in local politics while those of others were marginalized from the political process.

Given these patterns of political influence in local politics, a handful of municipalities around the country have adopted some form of public financing. Perhaps the most well-known system is the matching system where candidates are incentivized to solicit donations from low-dollar donors. In the most well-known such system, New York City provides $6 in matching funds for each of the first $175 raised by participating candidates (Malbin, Brusoe & Glavin 2012). This system has successfully increased the proportion of low-dollar donors in local races and seems to have also broadened the geographic distribution of the donor base. However, a system of democracy vouchers may be more effective in ameliorating or eradicating representational inequalities than other forms of public financing. While matching systems incentivize candidates to solicit funds from small donors, even small donors may be disproportionately white, wealthy, and male. In other words, donating even a small sum may be too high a cost for many Americans.

As we describe below, the Democracy Voucher system is far more ambitious in its implementation and potentially more effective in increasing participation in the campaign finance system. In the next section, we describe the nation's first-ever Democracy Voucher

program before analyzing how the program impacted the demographic and ideological composition of the Seattle campaign finance system.

Publicly Financing in Municipal Elections: The Democracy Voucher Program

In 2015, voters in Seattle overwhelmingly passed a referendum (I-122) to create a publicly-financed campaign finance system for municipal elections. The program, which would be funded through a 10-year, $30 million property tax levy, was expected to generate $3 million annually to support the creation of the Democracy Voucher program.

With the creation of the Democracy Voucher program, Seattle became the first municipality in the United States to utilize a voucher-based program to fund municipal elections. Twelve other municipalities, including Santa Fe, New York City, Tucson, San Francisco and Los Angeles, have public financing programs for local elections, but these programs primarily rely on matching funds or grants to finance candidates (Demos 2016). For example, mayoral candidates in San Francisco can qualify for public funding through the San Francisco Ethics Commission by raising at least $50,000 in qualifying funds from at least 500 contributors. Candidates accepting these supplemental funds must agree to participate in several public debates and abide by spending limits outlined by the Ethics Commission. Then, qualified candidates receive a 2:1 or 1:1 match of public funds to match the private funds raised.[1]

In Seattle, the Democracy Voucher program launched with the 2017 municipal election. The Seattle Elections and Ethics Commission mailed four, twenty-five dollar vouchers to registered voters on January 3, 2017. Vouchers were mailed to every person who, by November 15th of the previous year, was a registered voter in the city. Residents who registered to vote between

[1] https://sfethics.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Supplemental-Guide-Mayor-June-2018-Election-.pdf

November 15th, 2016 and October 1st, 2017 were automatically mailed a voucher. Eligible citizens *not* registered to vote in Seattle could request a voucher directly from the Seattle Ethics and Election Commission.

Upon receiving their vouchers, residents could redeem their vouchers by assigning them to any qualifying candidate for City Council or City Attorney in the 2017 election. To participate in the program, candidates were required to participate in series of public debates; comply with spending and contribution limits detailed by the Seattle Ethics and Election Commission (SEEC); and agree not to solicit money from political parties or PACs that make independent expenditures. After agreeing to these program rules, candidates qualified for the Democracy Voucher program upon receiving a minimum number of *qualifying contributions* of *at least* $10. At-large City Council candidates qualified for the program by receiving 400 qualifying donations of $10. Candidates for City Attorney qualified after receiving 150 qualifying donations of $10.[2] (Since collecting these qualifying contributions likely also worked to democratize the pool of campaign contributors, we exclude these initial small-dollar donations from our analysis below.)

As a term of their participation, candidates agreed to both contribution limits from individual donors and overall spending limits in the election. In the City Council race, candidates could not accept more than $250 in contributions from a single individual. This amount *excluded* any vouchers assigned to the candidate, meaning that a City Council candidate could accept $250 *plus* $100 in vouchers from a single contributor. At-large City Council candidates participating in the program also agreed to limit their spending to $150,000 in the primary election and a combined $300,000 in the primary and general elections.

[2] In 2019, the candidates for each of Seattle's seven district-level City Council seats will be eligible to participate in the Democracy Voucher program and in 2021, mayoral candidates will be eligible to participate, as well.

In 2017, two at-large City Council positions – Position 8 and Position 9 – were on the ballot. Eight candidates contested the election for Position 8 and seven candidates contested the election for Position 9 in the primary election. Five at-large City Council candidates qualified for the voucher program (and one candidate for City Attorney qualified for the program).[3]

Local proponents of the Democracy Vouchers program made several claims about the expected impact of the program that echoed the larger concerns about private money in American elections cited by scholars. First, advocates of the program argued that the donor pool for local candidates was descriptively unrepresentative of the Seattle electorate. By providing vouchers to every registered voter in the city, advocates for Democracy Vouchers expected that the number of low- and moderate-income residents of Seattle participating in the campaign finance system would increase. Likewise, they expected the program to reshape the pool of campaign donors to more accurately reflect the demographic and geographic composition of registered voters in the city.

In the next section, we turn to evaluating the impact of the Seattle Democracy Voucher initiative.

Data and Methods

To investigate the impact of the program, we begin with a complete list of all registered voters in Seattle as of October 2, 2017 from the state of Washington. According to the state data, there were 512,057 registered voters in Seattle. This list reflects the full universe of citizens eligible to receive and redeem Democracy Vouchers. The state voter file includes the name,

[3] The qualifying City Council candidates were Jon Grant (General, 8), Teresa Mosqueda (Winner, 8), Lorena Gonzalez (Winner, 9), Pat Murakami (General, 9), and Hisam Goueli (Primary, 8). City Attorney candidate Pete Holmes (Winner) also qualified for the program.

address, registration date and full vote history of each citizen including the last election in which each voter voted. This file also includes each registered voter's gender and date of birth (age). Importantly for our purposes, the state voter file also contains a state voter ID that can be used to uniquely identify each individual in the file. Because Democracy Vouchers were mailed to every resident on the voter roll, this universe of individuals represents all Seattle residents eligible to redeem a Democracy Voucher.[4]

Next, we merge in publicly available donation records from the 2017 election. Each cash contributor to a municipal campaign is recorded by the Seattle Elections and Ethics Commission, and their record includes the campaign(s) to which they donated, the size of their contribution and the date of their contribution. Before matching to the voter file, the contributions of each unique donor were assigned a donor identification number using a variety of deterministic and fuzzy deduplication techniques. Because the donor data do not include the Washington State Voter Identification Number for each campaign contributor, we then matched the contribution records to the voter file primarily through a deterministic match on last and first names, as well as street address (see Methodological Appendix for details).

Using the residential address of every voter in the Seattle voter file, we also geocode each voter to identify the census tract where voters live. We then merge the voter file with data from the 2016 American Community Survey. This includes information on the racial composition, the median income and the poverty rate of the census tract. For this analysis, we create quintiles of census tracts by median household income so we can identify whether voters live in the poorest quintile of neighborhoods, the second poorest quintile of neighborhoods, etc.

[4] Seattle residents *not* registered to vote could request a Democracy Voucher independently, but in practice, only a very small number did so. If new voters registered after the vouchers were initially mailed at the beginning of 2017, these voters were mailed a Democracy Voucher.

Our central variable of interest identifies whether each citizen in Seattle redeemed their vouchers. The final version of this data was provided by the Seattle Election and Ethics Commission (SEEC) on January 3, 2018. It identifies the date each voucher was redeemed, the candidate to whom the voucher was assigned, the number of vouchers used by each city resident, and the status of each voucher. Information about voucher usage is merged into our dataset using the Washington State Voter Identification Number.

Throughout the analysis, we refer to everyone registered to vote by October 2, 2017 – the full set of registered voters in the city – as *registered voters* (n=512,057). We describe to citizens who voted in the 2017 municipal elections as *2017 voters* (n=229,967). Seattle residents who made a cash contribution to a municipal campaign outside of an eligible candidate's qualifying period are referred to as *donors* (n=6,747) and residents who used their Democracy Vouchers to contribute to a campaign are referred to as *voucher users* (n=20,727). These final two groups –donors and voucher users – are not mutually exclusive, as a significant share of Seattle residents (n=1,970) both used their vouchers and made a cash contribution (outside of the qualifying period).

Since the publicly-available voter, voucher, and donor files lack basic demographic characteristics, we supplement this data with a proprietary dataset from Catalist. This file includes information on the income, race, and political ideology of each eligible voter in Seattle along with their state voter identification number. Each of the demographic variables is coded as follows:

Age: Age is measured in years and is available in the Washington state voter registration data. We recode age into 4 categories: 18-29, 30-44, 45-59, and 60 years or older.

Gender: Gender is also available in the Washington state voter file. We code gender as female or male.

Race: Washington state does not require race on its voter registration form. Therefore, the Catalist data includes an imputed race variable that is modelled from a voter's surname and geographic location.[5] For validation, see Rhodes, Schaffner and La Raja (2017).

Income: Catalist models a voter's household income bin based on a large, nationally representative survey. We recode income into 5 bins: less than $30,000, $30,000 to $50,000, $50,000-$75,000, $75,000-$100,000, and over $100,000.

Ideology: Finally, Catalist estimates a predicted continuous measure of ideology with zero indicating the most conservative (least progressive) and 100 indicating the most liberal. We recode ideology into three categories: conservative (0-39), moderate (40-60), and liberal (61-100).

Using these variables, we begin with a descriptive analysis that compares voucher users and donors in the municipal election to all registered voters in Seattle and voters in the 2017 election. Given our broad interest in the *representativeness* of the pool of voucher users, we focus on two sets of comparisons. First, we compare these groups on a range of demographic

[5] Catalist reports the variable for *race* in two separate ways – first, as a seven-category indicator (including other and unknown) identifying a respondent's race; and second, as a three-category confidence score (Highly Likely, Likely and Possible) identifying the model's confidence in the selected racial category.

indicators, including age, income, race, gender, and ideology to identify whether the composition of voucher users differs meaningfully from the composition of donors. We take large differences between the demographic composition of voucher users and voters – for example, a larger share of whites in the voucher pool than the electorate – as evidence that participants in the Democracy Voucher program are *not* representative of the electorate. (Conversely, when we observe only small differences, we take this as evidence that voucher users *are* fairly representative.)

We then extend this descriptive analysis to the *geographic* composition of voucher users. After classifying Seattle neighborhoods into quintiles by median income, we identify the share of voucher users from each quintile. We again make comparisons to donors to understand the way the voucher program shifted the donor pool. This section extends our previous research on municipal campaign finance, which identifies a spatial concentration of campaign contributors in wealthy Seattle neighborhoods (Heerwig and McCabe 2018). Finally, we conclude with a multivariate analysis of voucher usage and successful voucher redemption.

Results

Demographic Composition of Voucher Users

In the 2017 election, 20,727 residents of Seattle redeemed their Democracy Vouchers in the races for City Council and City Attorney. This represents approximately 4.05% of the electorate in Seattle. By contrast, in the 2013 election, Heerwig and McCabe (2018) report that only 1.49% of the voting-age population in Seattle made a cash contribution to a municipal candidate. While the number of voucher users represents only a small share of the electorate, it is nearly a three-fold increase over the total number of contributors in the 2013 election. These 20,727 contributors, each armed with four vouchers to spend, redeemed 79,923 vouchers in 2017

election. We present the raw number of unique campaign contributors in 2013 and 2017 as compared to the number of unique voucher users in Figure 1.

<<Insert Figure 1>>

In Table 1, we compare voucher users in the Democracy Voucher program to cash donors, voters in the 2017 election, and registered voters. Compared to the pool of registered voters, voucher users are disproportionately female, older, more likely to be white and more likely to be liberal. In fact, 55 percent of voucher users are female compared to only 51 percent of the electorate. More than 86 percent of voucher users are white compared to only 78 percent of the electorate. Older Seattle residents (age 60 and over) make up 36 percent of voucher users, but they comprise only 23 percent of the electorate. On the other side, residents under the age of 30 comprise 21 percent of the electorate, but they make up only 11 percent of the voucher users. Similarly, the wealthiest Seattle residents are disproportionately represented in the voucher pool. Residents with an estimated income above $100,000 comprise more than 16 percent of the voucher pool, but they make up only 13 percent of the electorate. Interestingly, Table 1 also indicates that liberal Seattle residents are overrepresented among vouchers user and donors, while conservative and moderate Seattleites remain underrepresented.

<<Insert Table 1>>

While voucher users are older, wealthier and more likely to be white compared to the pool of registered voters, we find fewer differences when we compare voucher users to voters in

the 2017 election. Similar to voucher users, nearly 86 percent of 2017 voters are white (Figure 1). About 11 percent of 2017 voters are under the age of 30 years old and 29 percent of voters were between the ages of 30 and 44 – numbers that are remarkably similar to the composition of the voucher pool itself. Voters in the 2017 election are slightly more likely than voucher users to come from the highest income category. About 20 percent of voters, compared to only 16 percent of voucher users, came from the highest income category.

Finally, when we compare voucher users to cash donors, we find some evidence that the pool of voucher users is more egalitarian. While 12 percent of voucher users are under 30 years old, only 7 percent of cash donors fall into this age category. Cash donors are substantially more likely to come from the highest income category than voucher users. In fact, about 26 percent of cash donors have an income above $100,000 compared to only 16 percent of voucher users—evidence for the democratizing impact of the Democracy Vouchers program. The Table also indicates a modest increase in the percentage of people of color in the voucher pool compared to donors in the 2017 cycle. And, we find that women are overrepresented among voucher users compared to the traditional campaign finance system.

Geographic Distribution of Voucher Usage

Next, we compare the geographic distribution of voucher users to the geographic composition of cash donors, 2017 voters and registered voters. After dividing Seattle neighborhoods (census tracts) into quintiles based on the median neighborhood income, we identify the share of voucher users residing in each quintile of neighborhood. In Table 2, we report that, in total, about 13 percent of voucher users live in the poorest quintile of

neighborhoods and approximately 22 percent of voucher users live in the wealthiest quintile of neighborhoods.

<<Insert Table 2>>

Relative to the electorate, voucher users are more likely to come from wealthy neighborhoods and less likely to come from poor ones. Almost 16 percent of registered voters live in the poorest quintile of neighborhoods and fewer than 20 percent of registered voters live in the wealthiest quintile. However, we observe the opposite pattern when we compare voucher users to voters in the 2017 election. Compared to 2017 voters, voucher users are slightly more likely to come from the poorest neighborhoods and slightly less likely to come from wealthy ones. Only 12 percent of voters in the 2017 election came from the poorest quintile of neighborhoods and more than 24 percent came from the wealthiest quintile.

Finally, when we compare voucher users to cash donors, we show that voucher users are substantially more representative of the electorate. While 33 percent of voucher users came from the bottom two quintiles, only 25 percent of cash donors came from these neighborhoods. Likewise, while 22 percent of voucher users were from the wealthiest quintile of neighborhoods, 31 percent of cash donors came from these wealthy communities. Cash donors are more likely to be drawn from the wealthiest neighborhoods and less likely to be drawn from the poorest ones, thereby making voucher users more representative of the Seattle electorate than cash contributors.

Modeling the Likelihood of Using a Voucher: Multivariate Analyses

Finally, we estimate two logistic regressions predicting the likelihood of voucher redemption and voucher status among Seattle residents. First, we model the likelihood of voucher usage regardless of the final status of the voucher. In these models, citizens who redeemed or attempted to redeem one or more of their vouchers are coded "1" and "0" for voters who did not participate in the program. Second, for those who participated in the program, we model the likelihood that a voucher user had all 4 of her vouchers successfully redeemed by a qualifying candidate. In these models, vouchers users who redeemed all 4 of their vouchers are coded "1", while vouchers users who redeemed less than 4 vouchers (including those whose vouchers were voided, put on hold for review, or merely accepted but not redeemed) are coded as "0".

In addition to the demographic characteristics used in the analyses above, we also add two additional control variables to the multivariate models. The first is a continuous measure of past voting history. For each voter in Seattle, we code the percentage of elections she participated in after registering to vote and excluding 2017 (after the vouchers were mailed). We also control for whether or not the voter is also a campaign donor. For this measure, we again exclude qualifying donors.

The results are reported in Table 3. In Column 1, we show that standard demographic predictors of political participation are, as expected, associated with voucher redemption. Older residents are more significantly likely than younger ones to redeem a voucher. Each racial category in Table 3 is less likely to redeem a voucher compared to whites. Compared to the lowest income category, more affluent Seattle voters are more likely to be voucher users, but the relationship is not monotonic. Voters with incomes between $75,000 and $100,000 per year were

the most likely to participate in the program, followed by those in the $50,000 to $75,000, those in the $30,000 to $50,000 range, and finally the most affluent Seattleites with incomes over $100,000. Seattle voters with incomes below $30,000 were the least likely to participate, all else constant. We also find a strong association with political ideology—liberal Seattle voters were nearly three times as likely as conservatives to participate in the program.

<<Insert Table 3>>

Finally, we show that past political participation—as measured by the percentage of elections a voter voted in after her/his registration date—and being a cash donor are also strong predictors of voucher usage.

In Column 2, we model the likelihood of a voucher user having all of her vouchers redeemed conditional on being a voucher user. Unlike Column 1, these models give insight into which demographics were able to successfully navigate the program's voucher redemption rules and provide some indication of which demographic groups might be targeted in future iterations of the program for support.

Column 2 shows several interesting patterns compared to the coefficients in Column 1. In particular, while older residents in Seattle were much more likely to participate in the program, they were also the least likely to have all four of their vouchers successfully redeemed. While most of the race coefficients are insignificant, Hispanics were more likely than whites (and other groups) to successfully redeem all four of their vouchers. Campaign contributors were far more likely than non-donors to redeem their full set of vouchers. This relationship may be driven by campaign donors' familiarity with local politics and disclosure forms, as well as higher overall

levels of political interest and efficacy. There were no significant gender, income, or ideological differences in successful redemption.

Discussion

Our analysis offers the first evaluation of the Democracy Voucher program in Seattle. We offer several preliminary insights. First, compared to the electorate – broadly, the group of people represented by elected officials – voucher users are more likely to be white, female and older. They are disproportionately drawn from the highest income category compared to registered voters. These patterns of unrepresentativeness endure when we evaluate their geographic distribution. Compared to the pool of registered voters, voucher users are slightly less likely to come from the poorest neighborhoods in Seattle and slightly more likely to come from the wealthiest ones. However, voucher users appear to be more representative of voters in the 2017 election – a finding that underscores the theoretical equivalency of voucher participation to the binary act of voting. The racial composition of voucher users closely mirrors the composition of voters in the 2017 election. Voters in the 2017 election, like voucher users, are drawn disproportionately from the oldest and wealthiest groups of Seattle residents. In fact, 2017 voters are even more likely than voucher users to be from the highest income category or live in the wealthiest quintile of neighborhoods.

However, our comparison to cash donors in the 2017 election reveals that voucher users are substantially more representative of the population than citizens who made a cash contribution. Cash donors are wealthier than voucher users and more likely to come from the wealthiest neighborhoods in the city. Moreover, residents under 30 are substantially more likely to use a voucher than make a cash contribution to a political campaign.

Taken together, the findings suggest that democratizing the campaign finance system fully—in ways that eradicate the known participatory inequalities that also mark voting habits—may require a deeper institutional transformation. Although the Democracy Voucher program did succeed in making the donor pool look "more like" the electorate, active voters themselves are an unrepresentative slice of the American population. Indeed, without addressing underlying structural inequalities between social groups, political inequalities seem to endure. As Page and Gilens (2017) note, a constellation of political reforms—including changes to the voter registration system, stronger disclosure laws, and perhaps even a system of proportional representation—may be necessary to ensure equal and effective political representation in the US.

While this paper offers a preliminary analysis of the voucher program, we will continue to deepen the analysis by merging additional campaign finance data. With a longitudinal file of campaign contribution history, we will be able to identify the impact of contribution history on voucher participation in our regression analysis. Additionally, we will be able to assess whether donors substitute their cash contribution for a voucher donation, or whether they continued to make cash contributions to favored candidates. These findings, along with future research on the program, are centrally important for crafting more egalitarian, representative systems of campaign finance to fund municipal, and potentially national, elections.

REFERENCES

Adams, Brian E. 2006. "Suburban Money in Central City Elections: The Geographic Distribution of Campaign Contributions." *Urban Affairs Review* 42 (2): 267–80.

———. 2011. "Financing Local Elections: The Impact of Institutions on Electoral Outcomes and Democratic Representation." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44 (1): 111–12.

Barber, Michael J. 2016. "Representing the Preferences of Donors, Partisans, and Voters in the US Senate." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 80: 225-249.

Berman, Russell. 2015. "Seattle's Experiment with Campaign Funding." *The Atlantic*, November 10, 2015.

Bonica, Adam. 2014. "Mapping the Ideological Marketplace." American Journal of Political Science 58:367–86.

Brown, Clifford W., Lynda W. Powell, and Clyde Wilcox. 1995. *Serious Money: Fundraising and Contributing in Presidential Nomination Campaigns*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Fleischmann, Arnold, and Lana Stein. 1998. "Campaign Contributions in Local Elections." *Political Research Quarterly* 51 (3): 673–89.

Francia, Peter L., John C. Green, Paul S. Herrnson, Lynda W. Powell, and Clyde Wilcox. 2003. *The Financiers of Congressional Elections: Investors, Ideologues, and Intimates*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Gilens, Martin. 2012. *Affluence and Influence: Economic Inequality and Political Power in America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Page, Benjamin I. and Martin Gilens. 2017. *Democracy in America? What Has Gone Wrong and What We Can Do About It*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Heerwig, Jennifer A. 2018. "Money in the Middle: Contribution Strategies among Affluent Donors to Federal Elections, 1980-2008." *American Journal of Sociology* 123: 1004-1063.

Heerwig, Jennifer A. and Katie M. Gordon. 2018. "Buying a Voice: Gendered Contribution Careers Among Affluent Political Donors to Federal Elections, 1980-2008." *Sociological Forum*.

Heerwig, Jennifer A. and Brian J. McCabe. 2018. "High-Dollar Donors and Donor-Rich Neighborhoods: Representational Distortion in Financing Municipal Elections in Seattle." *Urban Affairs Review.*

Herrnson, Paul S. 2012. *Congressional Elections: Campaigning at Home and in Washington, 6th Edition*. 6th ed. CQ Press College.

Joe, Wesley, Michael J. Malbin, Clyde Wilcox, Peter W. Brusoe, and Jamie P. Pimlott. 2008. "Do Small Donors Improve Representation? Some Answers from Recent Gubernatorial and State Legislative Elections." Presentation at the 2008 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association.

Krebs, Timothy B. 2001. "Political Experience and Fundraising in City Council Elections." *Social Science Quarterly* 82 (3): 536–51.

———. 2005. "Urban Interests and Campaign Contributions: Evidence from Los Angeles." *Journal of Urban Affairs* 27 (2): 165–76.

Krebs, Timothy B., and John P. Pelissero. 2001. "Fund-Raising Coalitions in Mayoral Campaigns." *Urban Affairs Review* 37 (1): 67–84.

Malbin, Michael J., Peter W. Brusoe, and Brendan Glavin. 2012. "Small Donors, Big Democracy: New York City's Matching Funds as a Model for the Nation and States." *Election Law Journal: Rules, Politics, and Policy* 11 (1): 3–20.

Oliver, J. Eric. 2001. *Democracy in Suburbia.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Oliver, J. Eric, Shang E. Ha and Zachary Callen. 2012. *Local Elections and the Politics of Small-Scale Democracy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Rhodes, Jesse H., Brian F. Schaffner, and Raymond J. La Raja. 2017. "Race and Inequality in Representation: New Evidence from Local Politics." Paper presented at the Midwest Political Science Association annual meeting, April 6-9, 2017.

Trounstine, Jessica. 2009. "All Politics Is Local: The Reemergence of the Study of City Politics." *Perspectives on Politics* 7(3): 611-18.

Figure 1:

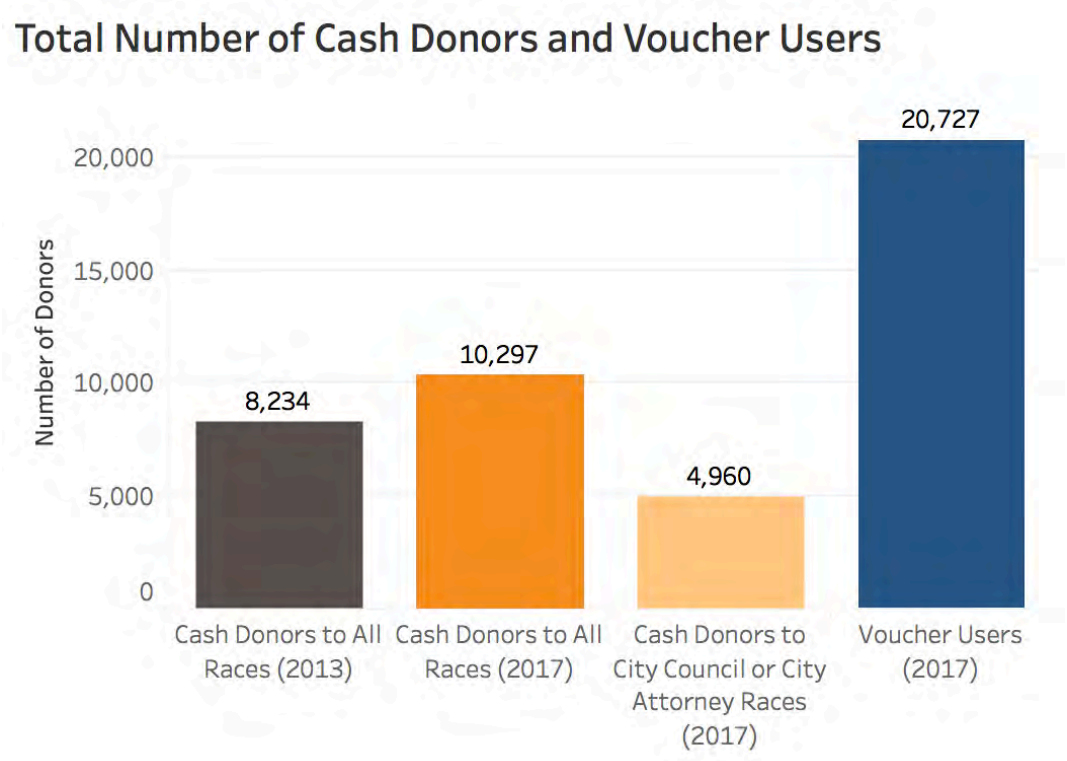

Total Number of Cash Donors and Voucher Users
Number of Donors
20,000
15,000
10,000
5,000
0
8,234
10,297
4,960
20,727
Cash Donors to All Races (2013)
Cash Donors to All Races (2017)
Cash Donors to City Council or City Attorney Races (2017)
Voucher Users (2017)

Table 1: Demographic Composition of Registered Voters, Active Voters, Cash Donors and Voucher Users in the 2017 Election

	Registered Voters	Voters (2017)	Donors	Voucher Users
Gender				
Male	49.24%	47.61%	49.58%	44.97%
Female	50.76%	52.39%	50.42%	55.03%
Race				
White	78.48%	85.69%	88.74%	86.07%
Black	6.02%	3.85%	3.26%	3.68%
Other	3.05%	2.23%	1.76%	2.24%
Hispanic	3.40%	2.18%	2.06%	2.35%
Asian	9.05%	6.05%	4.18%	5.67%
Age				
18-29	20.69%	11.14%	7.86%	11.86%
30-44	33.75%	29.20%	27.46%	29.25%
45-59	22.75%	26.47%	29.6%	23.19%
60+	22.81%	32.89%	35.08%	35.70%
Income				
< $30K	8.28%	3.99%	2.35%	4.05%
$30K - $50K	33.22%	24.77	20.91%	25.94%
$50K - $75K	30.63%	31.30%	28.37%	33.12%
$75K - $100K	15.12%	20.08%	22.24%	20.46%
$100K +	12.75%	19.85%	26.14%	16.43%
Ideology				
Conservative	1.60%	2.12%	1.4%	1.01%
Moderate	10.33%	6.16%	3.29%	3.80%
Liberal	88.07%	91.72%	95.31%	95.19%
N	512,056	229,967	6,747	20,727

Table 2: Geographic Composition of Registered Voters, Active Voters, Cash Donors and Voucher Users in the 2017 Election

Median Neighborhood Income	Registered Voters	Voters in the 2017 Election	Cash Donors in the 2017 Election	Voucher Users in the 2017 Election
Bottom Quintile	15.76 %	12.03%	10.35%	12.86%
Second Quintile	19.51%	18.27%	15.08%	20.04%
Third Quintile	23.32%	22.04%	20.25%	21.13%
Fourth Quintile	21.55%	23.41%	23.60%	23.94%
Top Quintile	19.86%	24.26%	30.71%	22.03%

Table 3: Logistic Regression Analyses Predicting Voucher Usage and Full Voucher Redemption

	(1): Voucher User	**(2): Full Redemption**
Age		
30-44	1.36***	1.05
	(0.04)	(0.05)
45-59	1.26***	0.78***
	(0.04)	(0.04)
60+	1.52***	0.70***
	(0.04)	(0.04)
Gender		
Female	1.09***	0.97
	(0.02)	(0.03)
Race		
Black	0.82***	1.02
	(0.03)	(0.08)
Hispanic	0.85***	1.46***
	(0.04)	(0.15)
Asian	0.80***	0.92
	(0.03)	(0.06)
Other	0.89**	1.11
	(0.05)	(0.11)
Income		
$30K - $50K	1.22***	1.12
	(0.05)	(0.09)
$50K - $75K	1.36***	1.11
	(0.05)	(0.09)
$75K-$100K	1.37***	1.09
	(0.06)	(0.09)
>$100K	1.16***	1.12
	(0.05)	(0.09)
Ideology		
Moderate	1.00	0.81
	(0.08)	(0.13)
Liberal	2.77***	0.92
	(0.21)	(0.14)
Past Voting (%)	1.03***	1.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)
Cash Donor	6.53***	2.23***
	(0.19)	(0.11)
Constant	0.00***	1.06
	(0.00)	(0.19)
Observations	489,155	19,500
Pseudo R^2	0.1160	0.0169

Notes: Coefficients are odds ratios with standard errors in parentheses. Excluded categories are 18-29 (age), White (race), < $30,000 (income) and conservative (ideology). *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

METHODOLOGICAL APPENDIX

Match Procedure	N	% of Matched Records
Last name, first name, zip code, street number	6,736	82.13
Last name, first name, zip code	705	8.60
Last name, nickname, zip code, street number	384	4.68
Last name and street number	183	2.23
Last name and first two characters of first name	148	1.80
Exact street address	46	0.56
Total	*8,202*	*100.00*
Final Match Rate: 79.65%		

Although the Seattle PDC matches campaign donors within candidates for each election, there is no unique donor identification number that would allow us to cleanly merge the donor records and voter file. Because of this, we matched the records using the personal identifying information available in both the donor records and voter files. These match variables include the donor's last and first names as well as street address and zip code.

Of the 10,297 unique donors to city council, mayoral, and city attorney candidates, we matched a total of 8,202 (79.65%) donors to the voter file. Of these matched donors, the large majority (N=6,736) matched a unique voter record exactly on full name, zip code, and street number. Next, a significantly smaller portion (N=705) of donors matched a voter record exactly on last and first name and zip code; these matches were limited to those where only one unique voter in the voter file existed for that combination of match variables.

A much smaller portion of donors were matched using one of four techniques. First, we matched donor records to the voter file where one of the listed first names was a nickname (e.g., Ben versus Benjamin), but otherwise matched exactly on last name, zip code, and street number (N=384). The last three matching procedures were the least stringent and matches produced by these procedures were manually reviewed for accuracy. First, we brought together records where last name and street number matched (N=183); this matching procedure identified contributors whose listed first names deviated from the name used in the voter file (e.g., Hank versus Henry). Second, we matched and then manually reviewed donors that matched a voter record on last name and first two characters of first name (N=148). Finally, we manually reviewed donors that matched a voter entry exactly on street address. This match (N=46) identified contributors where variations in the last/first names prevented a match on other identifiers.

Of the 8,202 donors matched to the donor file, 6,747 were what we refer to as "cash donors" and 1,455 were qualifying donors who gave a small dollar donation during a participating candidate's qualifying period.

The Outsized Influence of Big Money in Seattle Elections

How Honest Elections Seattle Can Empower Regular Voters

By

Bruce Speight
Executive Director
WashPIRG

Paid for by Honest Elections Seattle
PO Box 20664, Seattle WA 98102
Top 5 Contributors: Sean Eldridge, Amalgamated Bank, Every Voice, Represent Us, and Sightline

Acknowledgments

WashPIRG would like to thank Alan Durning of Sightline Institute and Dan Smith of U.S. PIRG for their review of this report. WashPIRG also wishes to thank Sofie Madden of WashPIRG for collecting and organizing the data presented in the report.

The author bears any responsibility for factual errors. The views expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of those who provided review.

This report is paid for by Honest Elections Seattle, PO Box 20664, Seattle, WA 98102.

Copyright 2015 WashPIRG.

WashPIRG is a consumer group that stands up to powerful interests whenever they threaten our health and safety, our financial security, or our right to fully participate in our democratic society. For decades, we've stood up for consumers, countering the influence of big banks, insurers, chemical manufacturers and other powerful special interests. For more information, please visit our website at www.washpirg.org.

Executive Summary

The role of money in elections is typically discussed in the context of high profile races such as those for President, Congress, or Governor, but big money from a tiny sliver of wealthy donors has an outsized role even in cities like Seattle. The influence of money in smaller races like City Council is often underestimated.

This report looks at political giving in Seattle's first district elections – the August 4, 2015 primary. We found that:

- A very small percentage of elite donors, those giving contributions of $500 or more, provides the majority of funding in city races,
- Big donors outside Seattle are a major source of funding for city races, and
- Small donors, giving contributions of $100 or less, an amount that an average Seattleite can afford, provide a small share of the money raised in city campaigns.

More than half of the $2.5 million raised by candidates came from 1,589 contributors whose individual contributions were worth $500 or more. Candidates raised roughly one-fifth of all funds from 596 non-resident donors giving $500 or more. Of all contributions given up to August 4, 2015, 32 percent were from donors who live outside of Seattle; 14 percent were from out-of-state donors.

Only 18 percent of the money raised by all Seattle city council candidates leading up to the August 4 primary came from small donors giving $100 or less. In other words, some 82 percent of the money raised by candidates came from contributions of more than $100.

On issue after issue at the local, state and federal level, politicians often favor the donors who funded their campaigns over the people they are elected to represent. If candidates can turn to a pool of roughly 1,600 donors, a significant percentage of whom aren't even constituents, to fund the bulk of their campaign, what does that mean for the hundreds of thousands of Seattleites who didn't give, many of whom couldn't afford a contribution of more than $100?

If campaigns relied on small donors for financing, candidates would be encouraged to engage a large number of voters in the political process and would focus on appealing to a broad swath of the population they seek to represent.

Democracy works best when our representatives are focused on their constituents, not just an elite class of donors. Imagine a system in which more constituents were contributing to their elected officials, and 75 or even 90 percent of contributions were coming from constituents giving $100 or less, in $10, $25 or $50 contributions - amounts that the average person in Seattle might be able to afford.

Honest Elections Seattle, or Initiative 122, would improve our democracy by creating such a system. If approved, this initiative would lower contribution limits, decreasing the outsized role of large donors, while incentivizing more small donors and encouraging candidates to engage these donors, and likely a greater percentage of their constituents.

Ultimately, these reforms will help to return democracy to the people, empowering more people rather than an elite class of donors.

I. Elite Donors

Donors who gave contributions of $500 or more provided the lion's share of funding for Seattle's August 2015 primary election. Just 1,589 individual or unique donors gave at this level, making a total of 2,063 contributions of $500 or more; they accounted for $1.3 million of the $2.5 million raised by candidates. The average contribution of these donors was $843.

A smaller, and even more elite, class of donors gave contributions of $700 or more. Of the 1,314 contributions of $700 or more, there were only 1,011 individual contributors at this level, and they alone gave $943,920.

Nearly 40 percent of all money raised by candidates came from the 1,011 contributors who gave contributions of $700 or more. Candidates in city council districts 2, 3 and 7 received more than 40 percent of their funding from these donors, while candidates in most districts received at least one-third of funding from this elite class of donors.

Table I. Percentage of Candidate Funding from Elite Donors Giving $700 or more, by District

	Total $ Raised	Total Funding from Contributors Giving $700+ Contributions	Percentage of Candidate Funding from $700+ Contributions
District 1	$ 292,417	$ 98,600	34%
District 2	$ 291,133	$ 126,898	44%
District 3	$ 554,686	$ 239,653	43%
District 4	$ 243,801	$ 77,900	32%
District 5	$ 268,629	$ 103,100	38%
District 6	$ 98,105	$ 23,100	24%
District 7	$ 102,395	$ 46,200	45%
District 8	$ 407,078	$ 157,750	39%
District 9	$ 264,618	$ 80,270	30%
TOTAL	**$ 2,522,862**	**$ 953,471**	**38%**

II. The Outsized Impact of Elite Donors Living Outside Seattle

How much are candidates paying attention to, and for that matter influenced by, people they don't even represent? If donors are any indication, the influence of non-constituents might be greater than the average voter is willing to stomach.

This study did not attempt to decipher how much money candidates raised from constituents in the districts they are running to represent, compared to those outside of their districts. But we did assess whether candidates are raising funds from residents of the City of Seattle. One complicating factor is that it is not always clear whether donors are noting a home or business address for their contribution. But, based on their filing, this study found that a significant number of donors and large contributions came from people who don't live in the city. Of all contributions given up to August 4, 2015, 32 percent were from donors who live outside of Seattle; 14 percent were from out-of-state donors.

Table II. Percentage of Contributions that were from Outside Seattle and Outside WA State

	Total Contributions	Contributions from Outside Seattle	% from Outside Seattle	Contributions from Outside WA	% from Outside of WA
District 1	1447	431	30%	172	12%
District 2	1148	321	28%	71	6%
District 3	2739	884	32%	455	17%
District 4	1241	335	27%	81	7%
District 5	1237	597	48%	126	10%
District 6	662	72	11%	23	3%
District 7	380	61	16%	13	3%
District 8	2312	946	41%	670	29%
District 9	1245	337	27%	147	12%
TOTAL	**12411**	**3984**	**32%**	**1758**	**14%**

Among donors giving larger contributions, the percentage of non-resident donors is even greater. For those who gave $700 or more, 369 of 1008 donors, or 37 percent, were from outside of Seattle; for those giving $500 or more, 596 of 1,589 donors, or 38 percent, were from outside of Seattle. Candidates raised more than $450,000, or roughly one-fifth of all funds, from the 596 non-resident donors who gave contributions greater than $500.

When you subtract these non-constituent donors, you are left with an even smaller pool of large donors from Seattle. There were 993 Seattle donors who gave contributions of $500 or more, representing 35 percent of the all funds raised by candidates.

III. The Minute Percentage of Seattle's Voting Population that was an Elite Donor

Thus far, this report has focused its analysis on contributions of and donors giving $500 or more – more than the average Seattleite can afford. What about the average Seattleite?

According to the American Community Survey, there are 479,650 eligible voters in the City of Seattle. As already noted, a pool of 993 Seattleites gave contributions of $500 or more. These donors represent 0.2 percent of the eligible voting population. The vast majority of Seattleites cannot afford to make $500 contributions, and when candidates are dependent upon just 0.02% of the voters for the funding that makes their campaign viable, the system is leaving out the vast majority of voters.

Number of Eligible Voters in City of Seattle	Number of Seattleites who have Contributions of $500+	% of Seattle Voters who gave $500+
479,650	993	0.21%

Seattle's August primary for city council illustrated once again how a few large contributors account for the majority of campaign contributions, giving a mega-phone to those who can afford to make large contributions at the expense of the vast majority of constituents whose voices get drowned out.

When candidates are raising the majority of their funds from less than 1 percent of the voting population, who are they listening to? Which voices are heard and who do they represent? The overall amount of money spent on elections is less important than where the funds are coming from. If campaigns relied on small donors for financing, candidates would be encouraged to engage a large number of voters in the political process and would focus on appealing to a broad swath of the population they seek to represent.

IV. The Role of Small Donors in Seattle's Primary Election

There were many "small donor" contributions – defined in this report as being $100 or less – given to candidates leading up to the August primary. The question is: what is their impact when candidates are raising the bulk of their money from a minute percentage of the voting population?

While there were 7,245 contributions of $100 or less, only 18 percent of the money raised by all candidates came from these small donors. That means 82 percent of the money raised came from large contributions above $100.

Table III: The share of total money fundraised from small contributions

	Total $ Raised	Total $100 or less	Percentage of funding from small contributions of $100 or less
District 1	$ 292,417	$ 53,092	18%
District 2	$ 291,133	$ 40,249	14%
District 3	$ 554,686	$ 102,241	18%
District 4	$ 243,801	$ 46,062	19%

District 5	$ 268,629	$ 46,756	17%
District 6	$ 98,105	$ 27,986	29%
District 7	$ 102,395	$ 13,229	13%
District 8	$ 407,078	$ 83,003	20%
District 9	$ 264,618	$ 45,752	17%
TOTAL	**$ 2,522,862**	**$ 458,369**	**18%**

V. Honest Elections Seattle

Honest Elections Seattle - Initiative 122 - will limit the influence of big money and increase the power of ordinary people in our politics.

The rise of election spending by mega donors in our elections generally means candidates spend more time chasing checks from big donors than listening to their constituents.

The good news is that it's possible to enact programs that will help bring more small donors into our elections and increase their impact. Honest Elections Seattle would implement the following policies:

- Limit corporate and wealthy interests' influence on elections by lowering contribution limits,
- Increase participation of everyday people by creating a democracy voucher program that empowers everyday people to engage in elections and encourages qualified candidates to focus on regular voters,
- Keep elected officials honest by closing the revolving door of top officials and their aides taking lobbying jobs immediately after leaving office and require they disclose conflicts of interest, and
- Increase transparency, accountability, and fines on rule breakers.

If enacted, Honest Elections Seattle will help to ensure candidates listen to the people, not just their biggest donors.

VI. Conclusion

Democracy works best when our elected officials are focused on their constituents, rather than dialing for dollars from out-of-district contributors or focusing on an elite set of donors who can afford to give more than the average voter. Instead, even in Seattle, an elite class of donors plays an outsized role in financing campaigns.

Taking steps to advance small donor reforms such as Honest Elections Seattle would help to return our democracy to the people and help build the movement for reform both in Seattle and beyond.

Methodology

Source of the data:
The source of the fundraising and donor data for this report was the Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) online candidate database (http://pdc.wa.gov/MvcQuerySystem/Candidate/sw_candidates). The donor data was compiled from a search of any contributions to the Seattle City Council candidates from January 1, 2014 up to August 4, 2015, the day of the primary election. To pull the August 2015 primary data from the database, we chose year "2015," filtered the "location" column to show all rows that contain "Seattle," and filtered the "office" column to show all rows that contain "city council." All candidate fundraising information was then exported. We excluded candidates for which "position" was "u" for "undecided" and candidates that had not raised any funds.

The percentage of contributors from Seattle and from Washington State is based on the City that contributors noted in their filing with the PDC.

The number of eligible voters in the City of Seattle is from the American Community Survey.

Analysis:
The analysis compiled all candidate fundraising by district. For each district, the contributions were ordered by amount, and compiled into categories of: contributions of $700 or more, $500 or more, and $100 or less. In order to compile data regarding donors giving contributions of $500 or more, and $700 or more, a separate database of contributions of $500 or more, and $700 or more was created. These lists were deduped and the total amount contributed by each individual donor was calculated.

FIRST LOOK: SEATTLE'S DEMOCRACY VOUCHER PROGRAM

Reducing the Power of Big Money and Expanding Political Participation

NOVEMBER 15, 2017

SEATTLE'S DEMOCRACY VOUCHERS REDUCE THE POWER OF BIG MONEY AND INCREASE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Seattle's new Democracy Voucher Program is reducing the power of big money and giving everyday people a bigger voice in local elections, according to initial analysis of the system in this year's municipal elections by the Seattle-based Win/Win Network and national money-in-politics reform group Every Voice Center.

In 2015, Seattle voters overwhelmingly approved the Honest Elections Seattle ballot initiative by a 63 percent to 37 percent vote to create the first-in-the-nation Democracy Voucher Program. In 2017, the program went into effect for the first time, distributing four $25 Democracy Vouchers to every Seattle resident for use in two at-large city council races and the contest for city attorney. The program will expand to other races including the race for mayor in future election cycles.

To qualify to spend the vouchers, candidates agreed to only accept small donations of $250 or less, raise a threshold number of small contributions, gather signatures, and agree to limit their campaign spending. Use of the program was widespread in 2017, with 13 out of the 17 candidates in the primary election agreeing to participate, and six of them meeting the qualification requirements to redeem the vouchers. Five out of the six contestants in these races who advanced to the general election ran using Democracy Vouchers.

As the following analysis details, Seattle's Democracy Voucher Program is achieving its intended goals by generating historic numbers of new and small donors, diversifying the makeup of campaign supporters to better reflect the people of Seattle, and limiting the reliance on big money in local elections.

Using data currently available, our initial analysis of the 2017 election surfaced these key findings:

- At least 25,000 Seattle residents—a historic number—participated as campaign donors in this election cycle, three times the roughly 8,200 residents who donated to candidates in 2013.
- As of publication, more than 18,000 Seattle residents gave nearly 70,000 Democracy Vouchers to 2017 candidates, and more Democracy Vouchers are likely to be received before the December 1 deadline.
- An estimated 84 percent of this election cycle's Seattle donors were new donors—about 20,900 individuals who had not contributed to city candidates in the 2015 or 2013 cycles. Among these new donors, 71 percent were voucher donors.
- Contrasting voucher donors to city council and city attorney candidates with cash donors to mayoral candidates in 2017, Democracy Voucher donors better reflected Seattle's population including young people, women, people of color, and less affluent residents.
- Candidates in races eligible for Democracy Vouchers relied less on big money. Instead, 87 percent of the support for their campaigns came from small donations of $250 or less and Democracy Vouchers. By contrast, small donations accounted for just 48 percent of the money backing candidates for city council and city attorney in the 2013 elections.

ENSURING EVERYDAY PEOPLE HAVE A BIGGER VOICE IN SEATTLE ELECTIONS

In its first outing, the Democracy Voucher Program generated historic levels of new and small donors and made measurable strides towards altering the pool of donors to be more reflective of the city's population as a whole.

At least 25,000 Seattle residents—a historic number—participated as campaign donors in this election cycle, three times the roughly 8,200 residents who donated to candidates in 2013 before Democracy Vouchers were in place. By comparison, candidates for six 2013 races including for mayor, city attorney, and city council ran with donations from fewer donors than the 2017 candidates in just four citywide races. As of publication, more than 18,000 Seattle residents gave nearly 70,000 Democracy Vouchers to 2017 candidates, and more Democracy Vouchers are likely to be received before the December 1 deadline.

"At least 25,000 Seattle residents—a historic number—participated as campaign donors in this election cycle, three times the roughly 8,200 residents who donated to candidates in 2013."

Incredibly, we estimate 84 percent of this cycle's Seattle donors were new donors—about 20,900 individuals who had not contributed to city candidates in the 2015 or 2013 cycles. Among these new donors, 71 percent were voucher donors.

One of those first-time donors, Gina Owens told the Seattle Times, "my income has never been the highest in Seattle, so I always had a problem using my finances for campaigns, when I have to take care of home." Now because of the Democracy Voucher Program she says, "People like me can contribute in ways that we never have before. We can participate in ways that big money always has."[1]

Figure 1. Donors to 2017 Citywide Candidates

Cash Donors to Mayoral Race

Voucher Donors

Based on an early analysis of available donor data on November 6,[2] the Democracy Voucher Program diversified the makeup of campaign funders in a city where past elections have been funded disproportionately by rich, white donors.[3] In a comparison of roughly 17,000 voucher donors and 6,000 donors to mayoral candidates in 2017 (who were not eligible to use vouchers in this first phase of the program), Democracy Voucher donors better

1 Gene Balk, "Do Seattle's democracy vouchers work? New analysis says yes," Seattle Times, October 13, 2017, accessed November 11, 2017, https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/data/do-seattles-democracy-vouchers-work-new-analysis-says-yes/

2 Data available for the analyses in this report include vouchers received through November 2 and private donations made through November 6, 2017 and were provided by the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission.

3 Alan Durning, "Who Funds Seattle Candidates? Rich, white people with view homes." Sightline Institute, July 21, 2015, http://www.sightline.org/research_item/who-funds-seattles-political-candidates/

Figure 2. Young People (18 to 35) Contribute More in Voucher Races

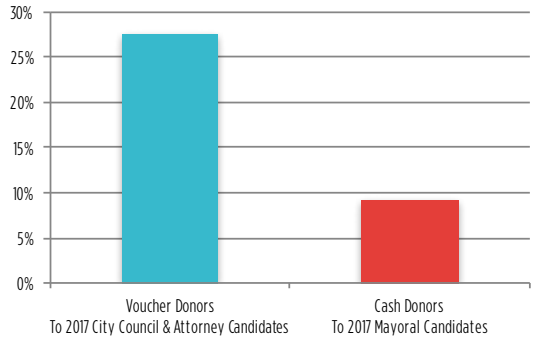
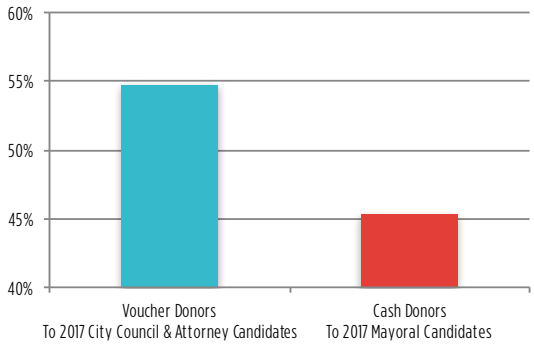


Figure 3. Women Contribute More in Voucher Races



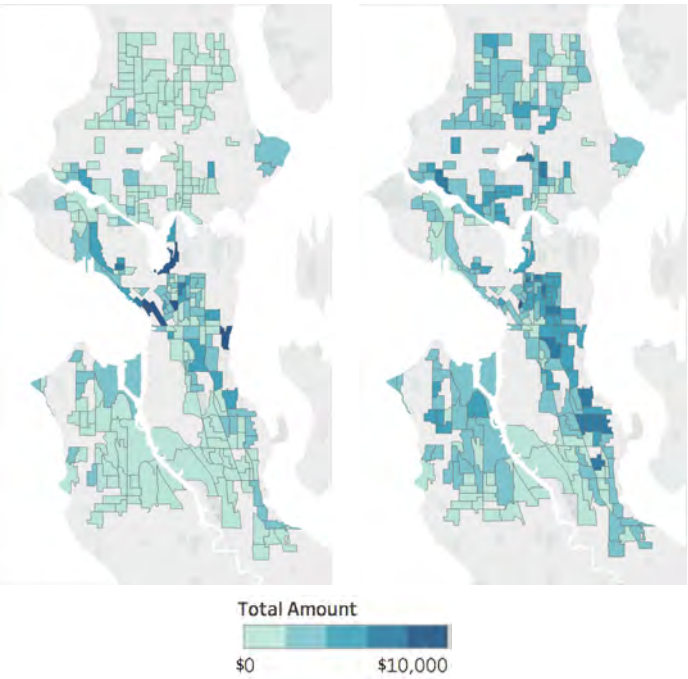
reflected Seattle's population of young people, women, people of color, and less affluent residents.[4]

Among voucher donors, the share of funds from young people (aged 18 to 35) was 27 percent, three times greater than the 9 percent share found in the mayoral pool of cash donors and closer to the age group's representation among registered voters of 35 percent. (Figure 2) Women contributed the majority of voucher money when, by contrast, women were underrepresented as donors to mayoral candidates—making up less than half the cash in that race even though they account for more than half of registered voters in Seattle. (Figure 3)

Figure 4. Contributions from Lower Income Communities

Cash Donations to Mayoral Race

Voucher Donations

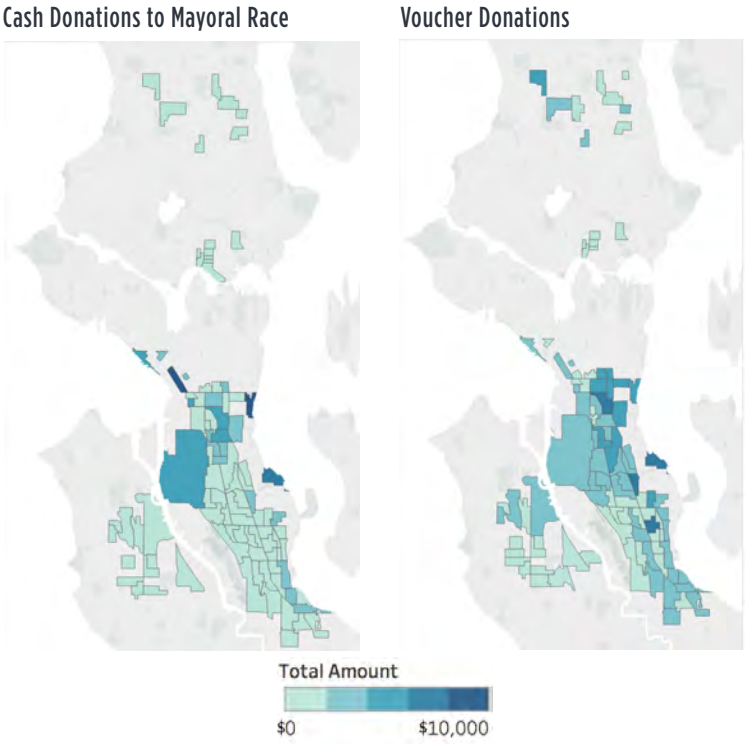


Lower income communities and communities of color also saw a rise in representation among voucher donors compared to cash donors to the mayoral race. Neighborhoods with household incomes below the city median[5] saw a 42 percent improvement in the share of their giving among voucher donors, compared to their share of mayoral cash. Figure 4, with total donation amounts from each of these lower income neighborhoods to mayoral candidates, shows low amounts of giving throughout most the city, while the same map for voucher donors shows an overall increase in giving that is dispersed across the city.

4 For analyses based on age and sex, individuals were matched in Catalist to voter file data, sourced from the Washington Secretary of State. For analyses based on race and income, individuals were geocoded to Census block groups and the demographic information available for their neighborhoods.

5 We used $83,476 for household median income, the 2016 American Community Survey estimate posted on the city's website. (Seattle Office of Planning & Community Development, accessed November 13, 2017, https://www.seattle.gov/opcd/population-and-demographics/about-seattle#prosperity)

Figure 5. Contributions from Neighborhoods Where People of Color Are the Majority



Neighborhoods where people of color are the majority saw a 46 percent improvement in their share of giving among voucher donors, compared to their share of mayoral cash. The maps showing these neighborhoods with higher racial diversity (Figure 5) tell a similar story, with just a few neighborhoods contributing high cash totals to mayoral candidates, compared to increased giving with vouchers across many of these neighborhoods.

By diversifying and expanding the pool of people that candidates rely on to fund their races, candidates were able to spend more time talking to and seeking the support of everyday people in Seattle, including marginalized communities that are typically excluded from the political process. For example, Democracy Voucher candidate Jon Grant explained that during his campaign, "we mobilized homeless residents to use their Democracy Vouchers to expand their political agency."[6]

These findings show that the Democracy Voucher Program has already given everyday people a bigger voice in Seattle elections and made politicians more accountable to their constituents by ensuring candidates spent time fundraising from a wide and diverse base of people, instead of the typical white and wealthy donor base.

LIMITING THE POWER OF BIG MONEY

Compared to past elections, the Democracy Voucher Program dramatically reduced the role big money played in funding candidates in the three races included in the program.

Candidates participating in the voucher system agreed to limit their cash contributions to $250 from any individual. Non-participants could accept donations up to $500. During the primary elections, 13 out of the 17 candidates agreed to limit their donations in order to enter the program, with six of them meeting the qualification requirements to redeem the vouchers. In November's general elections, five of the six contestants in the three races where the program was available ran using Democracy Vouchers.

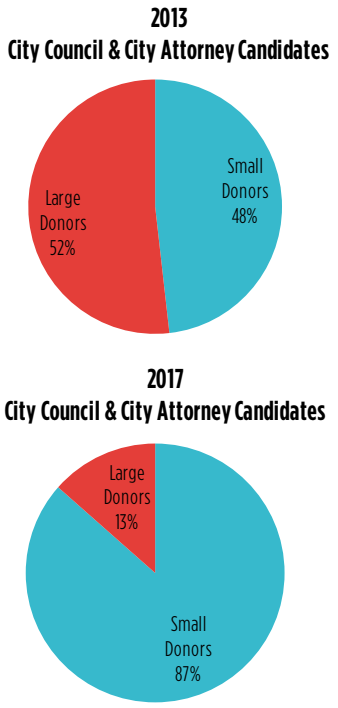
6 Heidi Groover, "Jon Grant Concedes, Calls on Supporters to Show Up for Head Tax," The Stranger, November 9, 2017, accessed November 11, 2017, http://www.thestranger.com/slog/2017/11/09/25555453/jon-grant-concedes-calls-on-supporters-to-show-up-for-head-tax

Small donations of $250 or less and Democracy Voucher donors made up 87 percent of the contributions to candidates running in the races eligible for Democracy Vouchers this year. In contrast, donations of $250 or less accounted for just 48 percent of the money backing candidates for city council and city attorney in the 2013 elections.[7] (Figure 6)

Candidates funded primarily by Democracy Vouchers won all three races. Newcomer Teresa Mosqueda raised two-thirds of her total campaign money from $25 vouchers to win the race to fill Position 8.[8] Lorena González raised 70 percent of her money from vouchers to win her re-election bid for Position 9.[9] Incumbent City Attorney Pete Holmes defended against a privately-financed challenger by raising a little more than half his money from vouchers.[10]

By allowing candidates to run mainly with the support of small donors and Democracy Vouchers, the program breaks down the barriers for qualified candidates to run for office. Mosqueda, running for the first time, credits the Democracy Voucher Program for "making it possible" for her to run for office.[11] "I'm still paying rent, I still pay student loans," Mosqueda said. "I think the intent was to try to get more folks who aren't independently wealthy who have a job like I do to be able to see themselves running for office."[12]

Figure 6. Reliance on Small vs. Large donors



Reducing the role of big money in city elections opens the door for a more diverse pool of candidates to run for office while keeping those candidates accountable to regular people.

7 Analyses relating to 2013 and 2015 donations relied on data downloaded from the Washington Public Disclosure Commission.

8 Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission, accessed November 11, 2017, http://web6.seattle.gov/ethics/elections/campaigns.aspx?cycle=2017&type=campaign&IDNum=533&leftmenu=expanded

9 Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission, accessed November 11, 2017, http://web6.seattle.gov/ethics/elections/campaigns.aspx?cycle=2017&type=campaign&IDNum=530&leftmenu=expanded

10 Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission, accessed November 11, 2017, http://web6.seattle.gov/ethics/elections/campaigns.aspx?cycle=2017&type=campaign&IDNum=524&leftmenu=expanded

11 Jimmy Tobias, "Imagine a Campaign-Finance System That's the Opposite of Today's Dark-Money Monster: Seattle just created it," The Nation, July 26, 2017 accessed November 11, 2017, https://www.thenation.com/article/imagine-a-campaign-finance-system-thats-the-opposite-of-todays-dark-money-nightmare/

12 "Seattle City Council hopefuls rely on democracy vouchers to help fund race," Q13 Fox News, October 13, 2017, accessed November 11, 2017, http://q13fox.com/2017/10/18/seattle-city-council-hopefuls-rely-on-democracy-vouchers-to-help-fund-race/

CONCLUSION

The Democracy Voucher Program is fulfilling the goals that led an overwhelming majority of city residents to vote for it in 2015.

For the first time, every Seattle resident—not just those with deep pockets—became an important potential campaign funder with their four $25 vouchers. As a result, this initial analysis finds that candidates in races with Democracy Vouchers relied on a deep and diverse pool of Seattleites for their campaign money, instead of the disproportionately white, wealthy donor pool that funds conventional elections. The role of big money in these races was dramatically reduced as candidates relied heavily on a mix of Democracy Vouchers and small donors. As public awareness of the program increases and Democracy Vouchers become available for every citywide race including for mayor, we can expect the trend toward reliance on a more inclusive and representative pool of small donors to continue.

The ability of Democracy Voucher candidates to successfully compete is a strong indicator of the program's strength even in a post-Citizens United world that, under current law, allows for unlimited outside spending. Following this initial analysis, a further area of study could look at the success of the Democracy Voucher Program in relation to such independent expenditures, even in the face of limitations imposed by the current Supreme Court.

By giving candidates the opportunity to be less dependent on wealthy donors and spend more time fundraising among the general public, the Seattle Democracy Voucher Program could produce leaders who are more accountable to their voters. Seattle's Democracy Voucher Program is a promising example for the nation on how to limit the power of big money and give everyday people a bigger voice in politics.

win|win NETWORK

WINWINNETWORK.ORG

1402 Third Ave, #201
Seattle, WA 98101

EVERY VOICE CENTER

EVERYVOICE.ORG

1133 19th Street, NW, 9th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20036

Honest Elections Seattle
Frequency Questionnaire

August 27-September 1, 2015
506 Likely 2015 Voters

Q.4 Are you registered to vote at this address?

	Total
Yes	100
No	-
(ref:SCREEN1)	

Q.5 In Seattle there are elections for city council and statewide ballot measures, but not mayor, every four years. In these years there are NOT elections for federal or state offices like Governor or Senator. The last such election was in 2011 and the next such election will be in 2015. Very few people vote in these types of elections. What about you? Do you always, usually, sometimes or almost never vote in these off-year elections?

	Total
Always	77
Usually	23
Sometimes	-
Almost never	-
(Don't know/refused)	-
(Refused)	-
(ref:MUNVOTE)	

Q.6 As I mentioned, the next one of these elections will be in November of 2015. This will be an election for city council and ballot measures, but there will NOT be an election for Mayor. I know it's a long way off, but what are the chances of you voting in the November 2015 election for Seattle city council - are you almost certain to vote, will you probably vote, are the chances 50-50, or don't you think you will vote?

	Total
Almost certain	92
Probably	8
50-50	-
Will not vote	-
(Don't know)	-
(Refused)	-
(ref:WILLVOTE)	

© 2015 Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, All Rights Reserved.

Q.7 Generally speaking, do you think that things in Seattle are going in the right direction, or do you feel things have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track?

	Total
Right direction	49
Wrong track	39
(Don't know/Refused)	12
Right - Wrong	**10**

(ref:DIRECT)

Q.8 Next I would like to read you a ballot initiative that will appear on the ballot in Seattle this November.

The City of Seattle Initiative Measure Number 122 concerns public participation in government, including publicly-financed election campaigns and lobbying. If enacted, the measure would limit election campaign contributions from entities receiving City contracts totaling 250 thousand dollars or more, or from persons spending 5 thousand dollars or more for lobbying; require 24-hour reporting of electronic contributions; require paid signature gatherer identification; limit lobbying by former City officials; create a voluntary program for public campaign financing through 100 dollar vouchers issued to registered voters funded by ten years of additional property taxes, with 3 million dollars or approximately 2 cents per one thousand dollars of assessed value collected in 2016.

If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this measure, or are you not sure?

	Total	Ballots 1st	Statements 1st
Yes - strong	26	25	27
Yes - not so strong	13	14	13
Undecided - lean yes	16	19	12
Undecided/Don't know - no lean	17	16	18
Undecided - lean no	7	6	8
No - not so strong	6	6	5
No - strong	15	14	17
(Refused)	0	0	0
Total Yes	**55**	**58**	**52**
Total No	**28**	**26**	**30**

(ref:BL122VT1)

© 2015 Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, All Rights Reserved.

Q.9 Now, let me read you some more information about Initiative 122.

Initiative 122 concerns public participation in government, sets limits on campaign fundraising and lobbying, changes reporting requirements, increases penalties, includes public financing for election campaigns, and authorizes the City Council to finance it by a property tax increase.

Having heard this information, if the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on Initiative 122, or are you not sure?

	Total	Ballots 1st	Statements 1st
Yes - strong	21	21	22
Yes - not so strong	13	17	10
Undecided - lean yes	12	15	10
Undecided/Don't know - no lean	15	13	17
Undecided - lean no	7	6	8
No - not so strong	8	8	8
No - strong	22	20	24
(Refused)	0	-	0
Total Yes	**46**	**53**	**42**
Total No	**37**	**34**	**40**

(ref:BL122VT2)

Q.10 Now let me read you some short pairs of statements. For each pair, please tell me which one you agree with more, even if neither is exactly right.

	1st Stmt Much	1st Stmt Smwt	2nd Stmt Smwt	2nd Stmt Much	Both	Nei-ther	DK/ Ref	Total 1st Stmt	Total 2nd Stmt	1st - 2nd
15 The City needs to focus more on supporting our neighborhoods, not downtown development.										
The City needs to support continued job creation and keep downtown Seattle a world class destination.	34	27	17	13	4	3	2	**61**	**30**	**31**

© 2015 Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, All Rights Reserved.

	1st Stmt Much	1st Stmt Smwt	2nd Stmt Smwt	2nd Stmt Much	Both	Nei-ther	DK/ Ref	Total 1st Stmt	Total 2nd Stmt	1st - 2nd
[253 Respondents] 13 (SPLIT A) We need stronger laws to keep big money interests out of our local elections.										
Seattle's current campaign finance laws do a good job of keeping big money interests out of our local elections.....	31	27	16	11	-	5	9	**58**	**27**	**31**
[253 Respondents] 14 (SPLIT B) As big money interests dominate political campaigns nationally, it is important to have stronger campaign finance laws to protect Seattle's elections from the corrupting influence of big money.										
Big money interests dominate political campaigns nationally, but Seattle's campaign finance laws are sufficient to protect Seattle's elections from the corrupting influence of big money.	28	30	23	9	1	5	4	**58**	**32**	**26**
12 Corruption is a problem in Seattle politics.										
Corruption is not a problem in Seattle politics.	13	22	32	21	1	3	8	**35**	**53**	**-18**

© 2015 Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, All Rights Reserved.

	1st Stmt Much	1st Stmt Smwt	2nd Stmt Smwt	2nd Stmt Much	Both	Nei-ther	DK/ Ref	Total 1st Stmt	Total 2nd Stmt	1st - 2nd
[253 Respondents] 11 (SPLIT B) Seattle's growth has been good for the city, creating good paying jobs and keeping Seattle a culturally vibrant place to live. Seattle has grown too fast, leaving middle class and low-income residents behind while the wealthy thrive.	12	25	23	36	3	1	1	**37**	**59**	**-22**
16 Ordinary people in Seattle have a stronger voice in local government than lobbyists and big money interests. Lobbyists and big money interests in Seattle have a stronger voice in local government than ordinary people.	11	19	28	35	0	1	6	**30**	**63**	**-33**
[253 Respondents] 10 (SPLIT A) Seattle's growth has been good for the city, creating good paying jobs and keeping Seattle a culturally vibrant place to live. Seattle has grown too fast, the cost of living is skyrocketing, affordable housing is too hard to find, and traffic is getting worse every day. (ref:STPAIRS)	12	15	21	43	6	2	1	**27**	**64**	**-37**

© 2015 Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, All Rights Reserved.

Q.17 Next, I'm going to read you a list of different groups in Seattle. For each, please tell me how well the Mayor and City Council are representing their interests - do the Mayor and City Council represent their interests very well, somewhat well, not very well, or not well at all?

	Very Well	Well	Not Very Well	Not Well At All	DK/ Ref	Total Well	Total Not Well	Well - Not
[253 Respondents] 19 (SPLIT A) Big corporations	46	41	6	3	4	**87**	**9**	**78**
[253 Respondents] 18 (SPLIT B) Lobbyists	29	37	10	3	21	**66**	**13**	**53**
[253 Respondents] 20 (SPLIT B) Unions	20	47	15	7	11	**67**	**22**	**45**
[253 Respondents] 22 (SPLIT B) Neighborhood and community groups	12	54	23	10	2	**66**	**33**	**33**
[253 Respondents] 17 (SPLIT A) Ordinary people	8	55	24	11	1	**63**	**35**	**28**
[253 Respondents] 21 (SPLIT A) Small businesses (ref:REPRESEN)	8	52	26	10	5	**60**	**36**	**24**

© 2015 Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, All Rights Reserved.

Q.23 Regardless of how you feel about the initiative, which TWO of the following are the best reasons to SUPPORT Initiative 122? Is it:

	Total
[253 Respondents] (SPLIT B) It means candidates focus less on campaign contributors and can spend more time listening to voters	43
[253 Respondents] (SPLIT A) It reduces the influence of big money interests in city policymaking	39
[253 Respondents] (SPLIT A) It gives ordinary people a stronger voice in government	39
It will increase accountability and transparency in government	32
[253 Respondents] (SPLIT B) Its voucher system means that ordinary people have more influence in local elections and encourages participation in politics	24
[253 Respondents] (SPLIT A) Its voucher system means public financing will only go to candidates with the most voter support, and prevents wasteful, frivolous, or protest candidates from getting public funds	19
It will reduce corruption in politics	17
[253 Respondents] (SPLIT B) It reduces the influence of downtown interests in city policymaking	16
(Other)	1
(All of the above)	2
(None of the above)	9
(Don't know/refused)	6

(ref:BESTSUP)

© 2015 Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, All Rights Reserved.

Q.24 Regardless of how you feel about the initiative, which TWO of the following are the best reasons to OPPOSE Initiative 122? Is it:

	Total
[253 Respondents]	
(SPLIT B) It will raise property taxes on middle and lower class families	42
We could use this money to invest in public education or infrastructure, not politicians and elections	35
It is a good idea but relies on an unproven and confusing voucher system which might not work as intended	32
It will not reduce the influence of big money on elections because candidate spending limits will just drive more money to SuperPAC's and negative advertising	29
[253 Respondents]	
(SPLIT A) It will end up costing taxpayers millions of dollars	22
It's unnecessary, as we already have campaign finance laws in Seattle and they're working fine	17
(Other)	2
(All of the above)	3
(None of the above)	8
(Don't know/refused)	6
(ref:BESTOPP)	

© 2015 Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, All Rights Reserved.

Q.25 Sometimes in surveys like this people change their minds. So now that you have heard more information, let me ask you again about a ballot initiative that will appear on the ballot in Seattle this November.

The City of Seattle Initiative Measure Number 122 concerns public participation in government, including publicly-financed election campaigns and lobbying. If enacted, the measure would limit election campaign contributions from entities receiving City contracts totaling 250 thousand dollars or more, or from persons spending 5 thousand dollars or more for lobbying; require 24-hour reporting of electronic contributions; require paid signature gatherer identification; limit lobbying by former City officials; create a voluntary program for public campaign financing through 100 dollar vouchers issued to registered voters funded by ten years of additional property taxes, with 3 million dollars or approximately 2 cents per one thousand dollars of assessed value collected in 2016.

If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this measure, or are you not sure?

	Total
Yes - strong	25
Yes - not so strong	13
Undecided - lean yes	15
Undecided/Don't know - no lean	14
Undecided - lean no	4
No - not so strong	8
No - strong	22
(Refused)	.
Total Yes	**53**
Total No	**34**
Yes - No	**19**

(ref:BL122VT3)

© 2015 Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, All Rights Reserved.

[253 Respondents]
Q.26 (SPLIT C) Next, I'm going to read you a list of what some people say are problems with elections in Seattle. For each, please tell me if you view that as a major problem, a minor problem, or not a problem with elections in Seattle.

	Major Prob	Minor Prob	Not a Prob	DK/ Ref	Total Prob
28 Big money interests are spending millions of dollars to influence our elections, with no limit on how much money they can raise and spend	67	17	11	4	**85**
26 Campaigns are so expensive that many potential candidates who aren't personally rich or politically connected cannot win or no longer run for office	59	22	17	2	**81**
29 Our election system makes politicians too dependent on big money interests to fund campaigns. Once elected, those politicians are often asked to repay those special interests with favors rather than serving the people	53	30	13	4	**82**
27 In the last general election, candidates for City Council and Mayor raised more than half of their contributions from the same small group of funders, less than half of one percent of Seattle adults (ref:REAS122)	51	29	15	5	**81**

© 2015 Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, All Rights Reserved.

[253 Respondents]
Q.30 (SPLIT D) Next, I'm going to read you a list of what some people say are problems with elections in Seattle. For each, please tell me how likely it is that Initiative 122 solves this problem: is it very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, or not at all likely?

	Very Likly	Smwt Likly	Not Very Likly	Not at All	DK/ Ref	Very/ Smwt	Total Not	Vry/Smwt - Not
33 Our election system makes politicians too dependent on big money interests to fund campaigns. Once elected, those politicians are often asked to repay those special interests with favors rather than serving the people	22	38	21	12	7	**60**	**32**	**28**
32 Big money interests are spending millions of dollars to influence our elections, with no limit on how much money they can raise and spend	21	38	19	18	4	**59**	**37**	**22**
30 Campaigns are so expensive that many potential candidates who aren't personally rich or politically connected cannot win or no longer run for office	20	40	23	14	3	**60**	**37**	**23**
31 In the last general election, candidates for City Council and Mayor raised more than half of their contributions from the same small group of funders, less than half of one percent of Seattle adults (ref:REAS122B)	20	33	21	15	11	**53**	**36**	**17**

© 2015 Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, All Rights Reserved.

Q.34 Next, I'm going to read you a statement people have made in opposition to Initiative 122. Please tell me whether it is a very convincing, somewhat convincing, not very convincing, or not at all convincing reason to oppose Initiative 122.

There's a reason that Seattle election experts oppose Initiative 122: it creates an untested system of vouchers that are a waste of money, raise taxes on every Seattle resident, and open the door to new abuses, loopholes, and election fraud. Even worse, the initiative would push money away from campaigns and into independent expenditures and out of state groups that are less accountable to voters.

	Total
Very convincing	22
Somewhat convincing	40
Not very convincing	25
Not at all convincing	10
(Don't know/refused)	3
Total Convincing	**62**
Total Not	**35**
Convincing - Not	**27**

(ref:DEVOPP)

© 2015 Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, All Rights Reserved.

Q.35 Now, I'd like to read you a response to that statement from SUPPORTERS of Initiative 122. This time, please tell me if the statement is very reassuring, somewhat reassuring, not very reassuring, or not at all reassuring about Initiative 122.

[253 Respondents]
(SPLIT C) (DEFEND) *The attacks on this initiative are just scare tactics. Initiative 122 holds elected officials accountable by increasing transparency and giving everyday people a greater voice in Seattle elections. It sets strict penalties to prevent abuse and fraud, and would cost the average homeowner just 65 cents per month or less than 3 pennies a day. For that modest investment, Seattle can reduce the influence of big money interests and lobbyists, and we can have elections of, by, and for the all the people in the city, not just the wealthy.*

[253 Respondents]
(SPLIT D) (ATTACK DEVS) *The big money interests oppose this initiative because it reduces their influence on politics. Just this month, federal investigators announced that a major foreign developer in Seattle is under investigation for fraud of over 100 million dollars. These are the same big money interests that spend hundreds of thousands of dollars influencing elections in Seattle and getting favorable breaks from our government. We need to pass this reform to make city government more responsive to all of us, not just big money interests.*

	Total	C Def end	D Att ack
Very reassuring	19	21	18
Somewhat reassuring	40	37	42
Not very reassuring	25	24	26
Not at all reassuring	14	16	12
(Don't know/refused)	2	2	3
Total Reassuring	**59**	**58**	**59**
Total Not	**39**	**40**	**38**
Reassuring - Not	**20**	**18**	**21**
(ref:DEVRESP)			

Q.36 Next, I'm going to read you a number of names, people and organizations. After each, I want you to tell me if their SUPPORT for Initiative 122 would make you much more likely to support the initiative, somewhat more likely, a little more likely, or no more likely to support the initiative.

	Much More Likly	Smwt More Likly	Lttle More Likly	No More Likly	Less Likly	DK/ Ref	Much/ Smwt	No/ Less
38 Congressman Jim McDermott	27	28	9	32	1	2	**55**	**33**
39 The League of Women Voters	25	36	9	28	1	2	**61**	**29**
36 Seattle City Councilmember Kshama Sawant	20	22	6	46	4	3	**42**	**50**
37 State Senator Pramila Jayapal	8	18	4	51	1	17	**26**	**52**
(ref:MESSEN)								

© 2015 Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, All Rights Reserved.

Q.40 Turning to one last subject, I am going to read you a list of phrases that summarize how supporters describe Initiative 122. Regardless of how you feel about the initiative, please rate how well each one describes Initiative 122, on a 10-point scale. A ten would mean the phrase describes Initiative 122 VERY well. A zero would mean the phrase does not describe Initiative 122 well at all. A five would be a neutral response. You can use any number between zero and ten.

	Mean	% 10	% 8-10	% 6-10	% 0-5	DK/ Ref
[253 Respondents] 41 (SPLIT B) Accountable Elections Initiative	5.8	6	23	53	44	3
[253 Respondents] 42 (SPLIT A) Clean and Fair Elections Initiative	5.7	6	26	51	47	2
[253 Respondents] 40 (SPLIT A) Honest Elections Initiative	5.4	6	19	49	50	2
[253 Respondents] 43 (SPLIT B) Keep Seattle Of, By, and For the People Initiative	5.3	5	22	46	51	3
[253 Respondents] 44 (SPLIT A) Stop Dishonest Elections Initiative	4.9	9	17	40	58	2
[253 Respondents] 45 (SPLIT B) Seattle Anti-Corruption Initiative (ref:BILLNAME)	4.7	5	14	35	62	3

Q.46 Finally, I'd like to ask you some questions for statistical purposes. In what year were you born?

	Total
18 - 24	3
25 - 29	1
30 - 34	6
35 - 39	9
40 - 44	10
45 - 49	13
50 - 54	10
55 - 59	10
60 - 64	12
65 and over	24
(No answer)	3

(ref:AGE)

© 2015 Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, All Rights Reserved.

Q.47 What is the last year of schooling that you have completed?

	Total
1 - 11th grade	0
High School graduate	9
Non-college post H.S.	1
Some college	18
College graduate	36
Post-graduate school	35
(Don't know/Refused)	1
(ref:EDUC)	

Q.48 Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat or what?

	Total
Strong Democrat	48
Weak Democrat	13
Independent-lean Democrat	15
Independent	9
Independent-lean Republican	5
Weak Republican	4
Strong Republican	4
(Don't know/Refused)	2
(ref:PTYID1)	

Q.51 Do you have any children 18 years of age or younger?

	Total
Yes	28
No	71
(don't know/ Refused)	1
(ref:KIDS)	

Q.52 Last year, that is in 2014, what was your total family income from all sources, before taxes? Just stop me when I get to the right category.

	Total
Less than $10K	2
$10K to under $20K	4
$20K to under $30K	4
$30K to under $50K	12
$50K to under $75K	16
$75K to under $100K	12
$100K or more	32
(Refused)	15
(Don't know)	2
(ref:INCOME)	

© 2015 Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, All Rights Reserved.

Q.53 What is your race?

	Total
White	84
Black/African American	3
Hispanic/Latino	1
Asian	4
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0
(Other)	2
(Don't know/not sure)	0
(Refused)	5

(ref:RACE1)

Q.54 Thinking about your telephone use, of all the personal telephone calls that you receive, do you get:

	Total
All calls on a cell phone	19
Almost all calls on a cell phone	20
Some on a cell phone/some on a regular home phone	31
Almost all calls on a regular home phone	13
All calls on a regular home phone	15
(Don't know/Refused)	3

(ref:PHONEUSE)

Q.2 Respondent gender

	Total
Male	48
Female	52

(ref:GENDER)

© 2015 Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, All Rights Reserved.

The Impact of Seattle's Democracy Voucher Program on Candidates' Ability to Rely on Constituents for Fundraising

Ron Fein

Free Speech For People
Issue Report 2018-01

May 2018

INTRODUCTION

When political candidates rely on non-constituent donors for a significant portion of their campaign funding, democratic self-government may be affected because the policies and preferences of non-constituent donors often differ from those of constituents.[1] The objective of this analysis was to examine whether Seattle's recently-passed democracy voucher program led to candidates relying more on constituents, as opposed to non-constituent donors from other parts of the state or country, for their campaign funding. The results indicate that candidates who chose to participate in the voucher program raised a notably higher percentage of their funds from constituents than the typical percentages raised in pre-voucher elections, or by non-voucher-funded 2017 candidates.

In recent years, cities have experimented with different models of small donor public campaign financing programs, typically involving matching funds.[2] Seattle is the first, however, to use this type of democracy voucher program. The program was passed by a voter initiative in 2015.[3] Under the program, every registered voter in Seattle is issued four "democracy vouchers" valued at $25 each.[4] Candidates for city office may choose to participate in the voucher program if they both qualify by collecting a specified number of $10 contributions, and also agree to voluntary campaign spending limits.[5] Voters may then assign their vouchers to participating candidates, who in turn present them to the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission (SEEC) for redemption into cash to use for legitimate campaign expenses.[6]

The 2017 election was the first to feature democracy vouchers. In 2017, four offices were up for election: two city council seats (positions 8 and 9), both of which are

---

[1] *See* David Fontana, *The Geography of Campaign Finance Law*, 90 S. Cal. L. Rev. 1247 (2017).

[2] *See generally* Michael J. Malbin & Michael Parrott, *Small Donor Empowerment Depends on the Details: Comparing Matching Funds in New York and Los Angeles*, 15 The Forum: A Journal of Applied Research in Contemporary Politics 219 (2017), http://bit.ly/MalbinParrott; Michael J. Malbin, Peter W. Brusoe, & Brendan Glavin, *Small Donors, Big Democracy: New York City's Matching Funds as a Model for the Nation and States*, 11 Elec. Law. J. 3 (2012), http://bit.ly/MalbinBrusoe.

[3] *See* Seattle Ethics & Elections Comm'n (SEEC), *Initiative 122*, http://bit.ly/Init122, *codified at* Seattle Mun. Code §§ 2.04.600-690.

[4] *See* Seattle Mun. Code § 2.04.620; *see also SEEC, Democracy Voucher Program: About the Program*, http://www.seattle.gov/democracyvoucher/about-the-program.

[5] *See* Seattle Mun. Code § 2.04.630.

[6] *See id.* § 2.04.630.

elected citywide (at-large);[7] city attorney, which is elected citywide; and mayor, which is elected citywide. However, the voter initiative specifically provided that "[t]o allow accumulation of Program funds, in the 2017 election only and notwithstanding other provisions of this subchapter, no Mayoral candidate shall be eligible to participate in the Program or receive or redeem Democracy Vouchers."[8] Thus, while there were four citywide offices up for election in 2017, three of them (city council positions 8 and 9, and city attorney) were eligible for vouchers, but the 2017 mayoral race was not.

Several analyses have examined the use and impact of the voucher program in the 2017 election—which saw some 20,000 Seattle residents contribute democracy vouchers totaling $1.14 million—from a variety of angles.[9] A report by SEEC, comparing the *number of contributors* in the 2015 city council election to the number of contributors in the 2017 city council election, observed that "the percentage of contributors from outside Seattle dropped from almost 29 percent to 7 percent in just two years."[10] Conversely, that effect was not observed in the (non-voucher-eligible) mayoral election, where the number of out-of-city contributors barely budged, from 23% in 2013 to 22.6% in 2017.[11]

In contrast, the question examined here was whether the *amount* of campaign funding (as opposed to the number of contributors) shows that the program led to candidates relying more on constituents, as opposed to non-constituent donors from other parts of the state or country. The working hypothesis was that voucher-funded candidates would raise a meaningfully higher percentage of funds from within Seattle, thus enabling candidates to run for office by appealing mainly to constituents and without the need to rely on, or appease, out-of-city donors. This hypothesis would not be supported if either (1) 2017 voucher-funded candidates did not raise a meaningfully higher fraction of in-city funds than candidates for the same seats in pre-voucher elections, *or* (2) 2017 voucher-funded candidates did not raise a meaningfully higher fraction of in-city funds than 2017 non-voucher funded candidates for the same seats,

---

[7] The other seven seats are elected by districts, and were not up for election in 2017. They will next stand for election in 2019.

[8] *See* Seattle Mun. Code § 2.04.690(a).

[9] *See generally* SEEC, *Democracy Voucher Program: Program Data*, http://www.seattle.gov/democracyvoucher/program-data; SEEC, *Democracy Voucher Program Biennial Report 2017*, http://bit.ly/DVPBR2017 (Mar. 15, 2018); SEEC, *2017 Election Report*, http://bit.ly/2017ElecRpt (Mar. 9, 2018); SEEC/BERK Consulting, *Seattle Democracy Voucher Program Evaluation*, http://bit.ly/SDVPE; Jennifer Heerwig & Brian J. McCabe, *Expanding Participation in Municipal Elections: Assessing the Impact of Seattle's Democracy Voucher Program*, http://bit.ly/HeerwigMcCabe; WIN/WIN Network & Every Voice Ctr., *First Look: Seattle's Democracy Voucher Program*, http://bit.ly/FLSDVP (Nov. 15, 2017).

[10] SEEC, *2017 Election Report, supra note 9*, at 9.

[11] *Id.* at 14.

or (3) 2017 voucher-funded candidates did not raise a meaningfully higher fraction of in-city funds than 2017 candidates for other, non-voucher-eligible races. None of these turned out to be the case.

The results indicate that voucher-funded candidates indeed raised much higher percentages of funds from Seattle residents than a pre-voucher baseline or non-voucher 2017 candidates, lending support to the hypothesis. The effect is most striking in the city council races, and analysis of data from the city attorney and mayoral races fails to support any alternative explanation other than the impact of the voucher program.

METHODOLOGY

As noted earlier, the 2017 election was the first election featuring democracy vouchers. The races for city council positions 8 and 9 (both at-large) and city attorney were eligible for vouchers. At the August 2017 primary election, over 20 candidates competed for the mayoral race, and seven or more for each of the at-large city council races. For simplicity, this analysis focused just on the two candidates for each seat who advanced to the November 2017 general election. The top two candidates for both position 8 and position 9 participated in the voucher program. For comparison purposes, the analysis also examined the top two candidates for those same city council positions in 2015, before vouchers. The analysis also included the top two candidates for mayor in 2017 and in 2013, and for city attorney in 2017 and 2009.[12]

Thus, the races and candidates analyzed were:

City Council Position 8, 2015 (Burgess vs. Grant)
City Council Position 8, 2017 (Grant vs. Mosqueda)
City Council Position 9, 2015 (Bradburd vs. González)
City Council Position 9, 2017 (González vs. Murakami)
Mayor, 2013 (McGinn vs. Murray)
Mayor, 2017 (Durkan vs. Moon)
City Attorney, 2009 (Holmes vs. Carr)
City Attorney, 2017 (Holmes vs. Lindsay)

Campaign contribution data for the candidates listed above were downloaded from the Washington Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) at https://www.pdc.wa.gov/ as comma-separated value files, and imported into Microsoft Excel. The PDC's data output lists each contribution as a separate row. Column "C" is City, and column "I" is Amount. Democracy voucher contributions are reported to the PDC (on Form C-3) as if

[12] The 2009 city attorney race was used as a baseline because in 2013 the incumbent, Peter Holmes, ran unopposed.

they were cash contributions.[13] Consequently they simply appear in candidate reports (and hence PDC data) like any other contributions, without being distinguished from cash contributions.[14]

The total contributions raised were calculated by a simple "Sum" formula that sums a range of cells (in this case, Amount). The percentage of money raised in-city was calculated with a "SumIf" formula that sums a range of cells (in this case, Amount) based on a criterion (in this case, that the City field is "SEATTLE").[15] The Seattle subtotal was then divided by the total to derive a percentage, which (like all figures in this analysis) was rounded to the nearest integer.

This methodology has some limitations. At the big picture level, the primary focus is on the two citywide city council races, and the analysis does not include the large number of losers in the city council or mayoral primaries,[16] nor characteristics that may differentiate the types of races, nor other potential unidentified factors that could help explain the observed variations in percentages of money raised in-city. At a more granular level, the PDC's raw data was not independently validated, error-checked, or otherwise adjusted, and appears to contain a few minor anomalies. Furthermore, PDC data files indicate a small amount of unitemized "small contributions" or "miscellaneous receipts" from individuals who contributed less than $25.00 total.[17] This analysis conservatively addresses this issue by counting all contributions in the denominator, but only attributing contributions to Seattle (for the numerator) if the City field is set to "SEATTLE." This likely underestimates the percentage of contributions raised from Seattle residents, as very small dollar cash contributions are probably more likely to have been raised and delivered in-city than out-of-city. However, since these miscellaneous contributions could not be confidently attributed to Seattle residents, this analysis errs conservatively on the side of *undercounting* the impact of the voucher program.[18]

---

[13] *See* PDC, *Commission Interpretation Regarding the Seattle Democracy Voucher Program*, PDC Interpretation No. 17-01, http://bit.ly/PDCInterp17-01 (Feb. 23, 2017) ("Candidates who receive voucher proceeds must report them as contributions received from the individual assigning the voucher."); PDC, *Public Disclosure Commission Discussion: Seattle Democracy Vouchers*, http://bit.ly/2HUemNW (Jan. 26, 2017).

[14] Detailed voucher contribution data are also available from SEEC. *See* SEEC, *Democracy Voucher Data - 01_05_2018*, http://bit.ly/Vouchers2017XLS (Jan. 5, 2018) (Excel file).

[15] For example, for M. Lorena González's 2017 city council race, the formula is SumIf (C2:C4655, "SEATTLE", I2:I4655).

[16] There was no primary for city attorney in 2017 because there were only two candidates.

[17] *See* Rev. Code. Wash. § 42.17A.235(3). For example, the PDC data file for M. Lorena González's 2017 city council race shows $586.15 in such miscellaneous receipts.

[18] In theory, this method could slightly overcount Seattle contributions if pre-voucher candidates raised a much higher percent of unitemized contributions than 2017 candidates, but this does not appear to be the case.

ANALYSIS

The first question examined was whether the 2017 general election candidates for city council positions 8 and 9, all of whom participated in the voucher program, raised proportionally more funds from within the city than did the 2015 (pre-voucher) candidates for those same seats. Table 1 compares contribution data from the general election candidates for city council positions 8 and 9 in 2017 versus 2015, and shows that the percentage of funds raised from Seattle residents increased substantially. (Tables 2 and 3, in the following pages, provide the actual dollar figures.)

Table 1: Percent of funds in campaigns for city council positions 8 and 9 raised from Seattle residents[19]

	2015		2017	
Position 8	Burgess, Timothy (i)	83%	Mosqueda, Teresa (p)	88%
	Grant, Jonathan	65%	Grant, Jonathan (p)	96%
Position 9	González, M. Lorena	65%	González, M. Lorena (i) (p)	95%
	Bradburd, William	82%	Murakami, Pat (p)	98%

Table 1 shows a clear shift towards candidates relying on Seattle residents for funding their campaigns, with 2015 candidates raising 65-83% of funds in-city and 2017 candidates raising 88-98% of funds in-city.[20] The *highest* percent of in-city fundraising in 2015 (Burgess, 83%) was lower than the *lowest* percent of in-city fundraising in 2017 (Mosqueda, 88%). Moreover, the fact that two of the four candidates (Grant and González) ran for these seats in *both* 2015 (pre-voucher) and 2017 (with vouchers) fortuitously helps eliminate the possibility that this difference is due to the nature of the candidates themselves. Both Grant and González shifted from just 65% in-city funds to 95%-96% in-city funds. Furthermore, the possibility of an incumbency effect is ruled out by the fact that three of the four 2017 city council general election candidates were non-incumbents, and they raised 88-98% of their funds in-city, at or nearly at the same rate as the one incumbent (González), who raised 95% of her funds in-city.

[19] The first listed candidate in each cell is the victor. (i) indicates the incumbent, if any. (p) indicates that the candidate participated in the voucher program.

[20] This analysis did not quantitatively characterize the geographic distribution of non-Seattle contributions, but a visual inspection indicates that out-of-city funds came from a mix of suburbs of Seattle (particularly affluent suburbs such as Bellevue and Redmond); affluent areas elsewhere in the country, such as northern California; and miscellaneous other areas.

Thus, in just one election cycle, both winning and losing candidates for these positions went from being dependent on non-constituents for 17-35% of their funding to just 2-12%. These differences are unlikely to be due to chance or candidate-specific factors.

Tables 2 and 3 drill down further into the 2015 and 2017 data respectively.

Table 2: Details on funds raised for positions 8 and 9 (2015)			
Candidate	Total $ raised in Seattle	Total $ raised	Seattle %
Burgess	$359,386	$432,786	83%
Grant	$48,761	$75,135	65%
Position 8 subtotal[21]	$408,147	$507,921	80%
González	$148,022	$229,084	65%
Bradburd	$69,353	$84,190	82%
Position 9 subtotal	$556,169	$737,005	69%
Total for these candidates	$118,114	$159,325	76%

As Table 2 shows, in 2015, 76% of the funds of the top two candidates for each at-large city council position were raised within Seattle. Table 3 (next page) shows that, just two years later, that number had risen to 93%.

[21] The Position 8 and Position 9 subtotals include the entire fundraising for those two candidates for both the primary and general elections, but do not include funds raised by primary election candidates who failed to advance to the general election.

Table 3: Details on funds raised for positions 8 and 9 (2017)					
Candidate	**$ from vouchers[22]**	**Total $ raised in Seattle[23]**	**Total $ raised**	**Voucher %[24]**	**Seattle %**
Mosqueda	$300,000	$404,732	$458,960	65%	88%
Grant	$300,000	$345,177	$358,929	84%	96%
Position 8 subtotal[25]	$600,000	$749,909	$817,889	73%	92%
González	$213,175	$281,967	$297,158	72%	95%
Murakami	$152,675	$172,327	$175,397	87%	98%
Position 9 subtotal	$365,850	$454,294	$472,555	77%	96%
Total for these candidates	$965,850	$1,204,203	$1,290,444	75%	93%

Furthermore, Table 3 suggests that the voucher program is mostly responsible for this increase. Focusing again on candidates Grant and González (who ran both years), candidate Grant raised about the same dollar amount of *non*-voucher donations in 2017 (both in-city and out-of-city) as he had in 2015; his increased in-city money came mostly from voucher funds. Candidate González actually raised significantly less in non-voucher-donations in 2017 than she had in 2015, shifting to a more voucher-heavy funding base that, naturally, resulted in more reliance on in-city donors. Finally, while there are only four data points, in 2017 there was a monotonically increasing association between the percentage of funds raised from vouchers and the percentage of funds raised from Seattle residents. As Figure 1 shows, the more that a particular candidate relied on *vouchers* for funding, the more that candidate relied on *constituents* for funding.

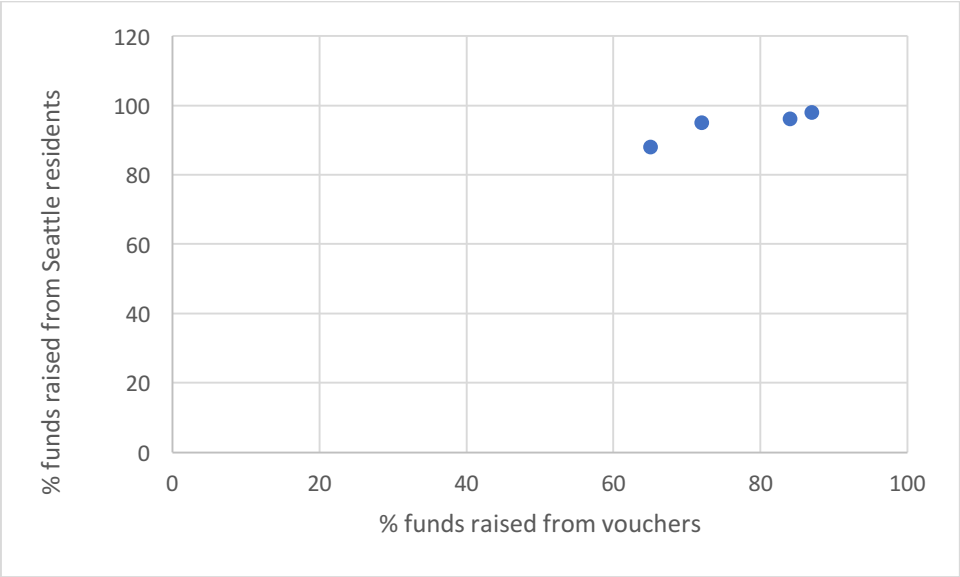
[22] SEEC, *Program Data: Final Democracy Voucher Funds Allocated to 2017 Candidates*, http://www.seattle.gov/democracyvoucher/program-data.

[23] Including vouchers, cash, and in-kind.

[24] Percentage of total funds raised that derived from vouchers.

[25] The Position 8 and Position 9 subtotals include the entire fundraising for those two candidates for both the primary and general elections, but do not include funds raised by primary election candidates who failed to advance to the general election. *See supra* note 21.

Figure 1: Percent Seattle funds vs. percent voucher funds in 2017 city council races



The city attorney's race provides an interesting comparison to the city council races. The data for these races, which also became eligible for vouchers in 2017, is consistent with the pattern in the city council races. But the city attorney race also presented a natural experiment: one candidate (Holmes) chose to participate in the voucher program, while the other candidate (Lindsay) did not.[26] Table 4 compares the percentage of funds raised from Seattle residents for this race in 2009 (pre-vouchers)[27] and 2017.

Table 4: Percent of funds in campaigns for city attorney raised from Seattle residents

	2009		2017	
City attorney	Holmes, Peter	66%	Holmes, Peter (i) (p)	91%
	Carr, Thomas (i)	79%	Lindsay, Scott	73%

In 2009, the percentages of in-city contributions were 66-79%, roughly comparable to the 2015 city council races. In 2017, incumbent Holmes dramatically increased his percentage of in-city contributions from 66% to 91%, like the 2017 city council races. On the other hand, challenger Lindsay—who chose not to participate in the voucher

[26] Daniel Beekman, *Seattle residents spent $1.14 million in 'democracy vouchers'*, Seattle Times, Dec. 4, 2017, https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/seattle-residents-spent-1-14-million-in-democracy-vouchers/.

[27] The relevant pre-voucher baseline for the city attorney race is 2009 rather than 2013 because incumbent Holmes ran unopposed in 2013.

program—raised money in-city at a percentage consistent with pre-voucher levels (in fact, a bit less than Holmes's 2009 opponent). If the city council races suggest that pre-voucher in-city fundraising is generally 65-80% and in-city fundraising for voucher participants is generally 90% or more, then the city attorney's race shows that Holmes's increase in in-city funding from 2009 to 2017 is consistent with the voucher program. Conversely, Lindsay's campaign, which did not participate in the voucher program, relied on out-of-city donors at more historical (pre-voucher) levels.

Of course, the data from the city attorney's race is not as strong as the data from the city council races. The necessary use of an earlier baseline, a possibly different incumbency effect, and differences in the offices themselves limit the force of the data from this race. Still, the fact that it is consistent with the pattern seen in the city council races is highly suggestive.

Finally, a comparison to the open 2017 mayoral election, which was *not* voucher-eligible in 2017, shows that the pronounced shift of voucher-funded candidates towards raising funds in-city was not an incidental byproduct of some unrelated trend, because it did not extend to the mayoral race. In the 2013 race, the percentages of funds raised from within Seattle by the top two candidates were 73% (McGinn) and 74% (Murray). These numbers are about the same as the percentages of in-city funds raised by the 2015 city council candidates. And as Table 5 shows, the 2017 mayoral candidates raised funds in-city at about the same level.

Table 5: Percent of funds in campaigns for mayor raised from Seattle residents

	2015		2017	
Mayor	Murray, Edward	74%	Durkan, Jenny	70%
	McGinn, Michael (i)	73%	Moon, Cary	28-84%

In 2017, the percentage of funds raised from within Seattle by candidate (and victor) Jenny Durkan was 70%, similar to the 2013 levels. Candidate Cary Moon's data complicates the analysis, because she self-funded 67% of her campaign.[28] The percentage of funds raised from Seattleites could be calculated as the percentage of Moon's total contributions raised from *Seattleites other than herself* (28%), or as the percentage of funds that Moon raised from other people which came from Seattleites

[28] This was determined via the formula SumIf(B2:B1299, "MOON CARY*", I2:I1299). Of the total $571,524 raised by her campaign, she provided $383,883. Of the remaining $187,642 contributed by others, $158,338 was contributed by Seattle residents and $29,303 by non-Seattle residents.

(84%), or, probably least usefully, the percentage of total contributions that came from Seattleites *including Moon herself* (95%).[29] Consequently, Moon's data is not an ideal comparator. But however Moon's percentage of funds raised in Seattle are calculated, it is fair to say that her data certainly does not reveal any broader, non-voucher-related trend of movement towards raising campaign funds from Seattle residents.

CONCLUSION

Before the voucher program, recent candidates for Seattle city office generally raised 65-80% of their funds from in-city. In the first voucher election, city council positions 8 and 9 saw a dramatic increase in the percentage of contributions from Seattle residents, with 93% or more of contributions coming from in-city. The city attorney candidate who participated in the voucher program saw a similar increase into the 90% in-city range from 2009 to 2017. In contrast, candidates who did not use the voucher program—either because they chose not to participate in the program, or ran in the mayoral race, which was not eligible for vouchers—raised funds in-city consistent with pre-voucher levels.

While this analysis has some acknowledged limitations, the overall trend is clear. The democracy voucher program enables candidates to raise the vast majority of their funds from constituents, as opposed to out-of-city donors.

[29] This issue does not arise for any of the other three mayoral candidates examined, whose contributions to their own campaigns were relatively small.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to Adam Lioz and Stephen Weissman for commenting on earlier drafts of this analysis.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ron Fein is the Legal Director for Free Speech For People. Mr. Fein previously served as Assistant Regional Counsel in the United States Environmental Protection Agency's New England office, where he received the EPA's National Gold Medal for Exceptional Service. Earlier, Mr. Fein clerked for the Honorable Kermit Lipez of the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit and the Honorable Douglas Woodlock of the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts. He graduated Order of the Coif from Stanford Law School and *summa cum laude* from Harvard College.

ABOUT FREE SPEECH FOR PEOPLE

Free Speech For People works to renew our democracy and our United States Constitution for we the people. Founded on the day of the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* ruling, Free Speech For People envisions a democratic process in which all people have an equal voice and an equal vote. We educate, we organize, we fight in the courts, and we press for a constitutional amendment to reclaim our democracy. To learn more, please visit our website: www.freespeechforpeople.org.

LAW OFFICE OF HARRY WILLIAMS LLC

April 12, 2019 - 2:48 PM

Transmittal Information

Filed with Court:	Supreme Court
Appellate Court Case Number:	96660-5
Appellate Court Case Title:	Mark Elster, et al v. The City of Seattle
Superior Court Case Number:	17-2-16501-8

The following documents have been uploaded:

- 966605_Exhibit_20190412144608SC966511_3792.pdf
  This File Contains:
  Exhibit
  The Original File Name was Appendix to Supreme Court brief.pdf

A copy of the uploaded files will be sent to:

- bth@pacificlegal.org
- christi@jaglaw.net
- ewb@pacificlegal.org
- gregory.narver@seattle.gov
- jeff.slayton@seattle.gov
- karen@jaglaw.net
- kent.meyer@seattle.gov
- lessig@law.harvard.edu
- lise.kim@seattle.gov
- mmcallen@campaignlegalcenter.org
- stephens@sklegal.pro
- tmalloy@campaignlegalcenter.org
- walter@smithdietrich.com

Comments:

This is the appendix to the amicus brief of Washington CAN! et al., filed March 22, 2019. it is identical to the appendix attached to the amicus filed in the court of appeals.

Sender Name: Harry Williams - Email: harry@harrywilliamslaw.com
Address:
707 E HARRISON ST
SEATTLE, WA, 98102-5410
Phone: 206-451-7195

Note: The Filing Id is 20190412144608SC966511

LAW OFFICE OF HARRY WILLIAMS LLC

March 22, 2019 - 1:28 PM

Transmittal Information

Filed with Court:	Supreme Court
Appellate Court Case Number:	96660-5
Appellate Court Case Title:	Mark Elster, et al v. The City of Seattle
Superior Court Case Number:	17-2-16501-8

The following documents have been uploaded:

- 966605_Briefs_20190322132619SC306596_8186.pdf
  This File Contains:
  Briefs - Amicus Curiae
  The Original File Name was Elster Amicus 20190322 Washington Supreme Court FINAL.pdf
- 966605_Cert_of_Service_20190322132619SC306596_6831.pdf
  This File Contains:
  Certificate of Service
  The Original File Name was Certificate of Service.pdf
- 966605_Motion_20190322132619SC306596_5849.pdf
  This File Contains:
  Motion 1 - Amicus Curiae Brief
  The Original File Name was Elster Motion for Leave to File Amicus 20190322 Washinton Supreme Court.pdf
- 966605_Other_20190322132619SC306596_7899.pdf
  This File Contains:
  Other - Proposed Order
  The Original File Name was Elster Proposed Order 5 31 18 FINAL.pdf

A copy of the uploaded files will be sent to:

- bth@pacificlegal.org
- christi@jaglaw.net
- ewb@pacificlegal.org
- gregory.narver@seattle.gov
- jeff.slayton@seattle.gov
- karen@jaglaw.net
- kent.meyer@seattle.gov
- lessig@law.harvard.edu
- lise.kim@seattle.gov
- mmcallen@campaignlegalcenter.org
- tmalloy@campaignlegalcenter.org
- walter@smithdietrich.com

Comments:

Sender Name: Harry Williams - Email: harry@harrywilliamslaw.com
Address:
707 E HARRISON ST
SEATTLE, WA, 98102-5410
Phone: 206-451-7195

Note: The Filing Id is 20190322132619SC306596