

Campaign Finance Reform 12/8/2006

EDITOR: Staff Writer Mike McCoy reported on Dec. 3 that Mayor Jane Bender advocates eliminating the voluntary spending limit from the Santa Rosa ordinance governing City Council elections and allowing all candidates to receive the voter-mandated public financing. Why should candidates who can easily raise sizeable campaign contributions receive public financing?

The League of Women Voters of Sonoma County supports public financing that is only available to candidates who agree to limit their spending. Together, these two measures allow candidates who do not have well-financed supporters to get their message out to all Santa Rosa households in a publicly financed mailer and Web site keeping campaign costs low. Together, they help level the playing field.

In November 2002, 62.8 percent of Santa Rosa voters approved a charter revision that requires public financing of council election campaigns. Both the impartial analysis of the ballot measure by the city attorney and the argument in favor signed by then-Mayor Sharon Wright said that it is customary for candidates to agree to voluntary spending limits to be eligible for public financing. Voters were led to expect that both provisions would be enacted. Eliminating voluntary spending limits would be a windfall for well-funded candidates and a loss for the community.

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