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PUBLIC FINANCING ACROSS THE STATES

In all or parts of seven states, Clean Elections-style public financing laws are now on the books. In **Arizona**, **Connecticut**, and **Maine** for all state elections; in **North Carolina** and in **New Mexico** for judicial elections; in **Albuquerque, New Mexico**, and **Portland, Oregon** for city elections; in New Mexico for the statewide Public Regulation Commission; and in **New Jersey**, where the legislative pilot program began in 2005.

The momentum continued to build in 2008, with a successful first year of the Connecticut Citizens' Elections Program and new measures passed in **California**, **Hawaii**, and **Santa Fe, New Mexico** that will lay the groundwork for new systems in those states. Candidates receive a set amount of public funds if they agree to spending limits and to take little or no private money. Hundreds of candidates from all backgrounds – Democrats and Republicans, incumbents and challengers – have run and won under these laws. In these places, there is a new type of politics that puts people ahead of wealthy interests. Here are some facts about the successful experiences:

- In **Arizona**, more than half of those in state elective office covered by the Clean Elections Act ran with public funds, including ten of the 11 statewide elected officials.
- When the next legislature assembles in **Maine**, Clean Elections candidates will hold 85% of seats in the statehouse.
- In 2005, **Connecticut** was the first state in the nation where the legislature and governor approved full public financing for their own races. When the next Connecticut General Assembly convenes, 81% of the legislators will have been elected without taking a single large donation from a wealthy contributor or special interest.
- Also in 2005, the **Portland, Oregon** City Council and voters in **Albuquerque, New Mexico** approved public funding for municipal elections.
- In 2003, **North Carolina** enacted a public funding option for State Supreme Court and Court of Appeals candidates—now 68% of the state's top judicial seats will be held by Clean Elections candidates, including five of the seven Supreme Court Justices. In addition to judicial races, the state has public financing for 3 Council of State seats, and two of the three winners used public funds. The town of Chapel Hill will use a public financing pilot project for its 2009 and 2011 municipal elections.
- A public financing pilot project was created for two state House districts in 2005 in **New Jersey**, extended to three state Senate districts in 2007, and may be further extended in 2009.
- In March 2008, the city of **Santa Fe, New Mexico** passed a ballot initiative for public financing of campaigns for candidates for city council and mayor.
- The **California** legislature passed a bill that will refer a ballot measure to the Spring 2010 ballot that would establish a full public financing program for Secretary of State races in California.
- In 2008, the **Hawaii** legislature passed a bill that would bring full public financing of elections to the Council races on the Big Island—the pilot program begins in 2010.

Everywhere Clean Elections-style public financing has been given the chance to work, voters and candidates have supported it. States with Clean Elections in place for several election cycles have seen voter turnout and electoral competition improve. Amid the public outcry for reform, at least ten more states will have public financing bills introduced in 2009, and the emerging efforts in **New York**, **Wisconsin** and other states reveal the growing movement around the country towards full public financing of elections.