

Clean Elections: How it works – House, Senate, Statewide

(There are many other ways, as well. For a city or county election, numbers & dates would need to be revised.)

by Mary Francis

- 1) Participation is voluntary - wealthy candidates may spend own \$\$\$\$. Others who choose not to participate in Clean Elections may use fund-raising methods as allowed by current law.
- 2) Candidates must prove they are 'viable' with 2 -3 % of voter signatures from constituents within the candidate's district on a petition-to-run and petition must be circulated by the candidate and non-paid volunteers only.
- 3) Voter signatures on candidate petition must be accompanied by a \$10 check payable to the Oklahoma Clean Elections Fund (OCE Fund) - not to the candidate.
- 4) Collection of signatures & donations made from 6/1/11 – 6/1/12 (duration of one year) for candidates for Statewide offices and 12/1/11 – 6/1/12 (duration of six months) for candidates for the Legislature remitted on a weekly basis. (House districts usually have about 35,000 registered voters, 3% is 1050 signatures accompanied by 1050 checks of at least \$10, or minimum of \$10,500.)
- 5) Participants must maintain records and file with Ethics Commission as current law requires.
- 6) Once qualified, Clean Elections candidates are immediately allowed to tap into the OCE funds, but must abide by strict spending limits and EC rules. (One of the biggest problems in other states has been the slow release of funds - early funding is critical to one's campaign.)
- 7) Candidates may contribute his or her personal/private funds to up to a maximum amount of 100 times the Minimum Wage for candidates for the legislature (\$725) and 300 times the Min wage for Statewide offices (\$2175). The personal contribution limit includes contributions received from certain family members. Contributions from political action committees (PACs), businesses, corporations, political parties and labor unions to an individual candidate are prohibited. But they may contribute as much as they want to the OK Clean Elections Fund. Contributors to OCE Fund do not know to whom their money will go – hence no power or influence over any candidate.
- 8) A Clean Elections Commission shall be established by the Judiciary - five Commissioners appointed by the Chief Justice of the OK Supreme Court and five by the Presiding Judge of the OK Court of Criminal Appeals. These ten Commissioners shall unanimously select an eleventh Commissioner as Chair. (Or perhaps we need to somehow connect this with the existing Ethics Commission. The LWV says only one authority should govern elections. However, any increase in EC powers would never fly with Dems or Repubs.)
- 9) A participating candidate is required to attend a Clean Elections Commission's training workshop and a Clean Elections Commission sponsored debate on pain of disqualification.

10) After establishing viability, donations to CE candidates are allowed up to \$200, provided the donor has not reached the \$200 per candidate limit. Full disclosure of Name, address, occupation, employer required else donation must be returned. Anonymous donations go to Ethics Commission coffers. Individual donations are matched six to one from the OCE fund (like the NYC law.) Contributions allowed from in-district only.

11) Violations of the Clean Elections regulations will void the candidacy or (if elected) make the office immediately vacant and may be punishable by one (1) year in jail and up to \$10,000 fine.

12) Funding. See suggestions from document sent by Brennan Center:

<http://www.policyarchive.org/handle/10207/23>, which includes the following and many more:

- ⤴ Punitive Damage Surcharges and Proportional Awards from Legal judgments over \$100,000
- ⤴ Criminal and Civil Fines and Civil Filing fees
- ⤴ “Good citizen” donations – all voluntary and no limit on amount by supporters of Clean Elections.

- ⤴ “Sin” Taxes on Alcohol, cigarettes and Gambling

- ⤴ Voluntary Attorney Fees or Corporate Contributions

- ⤴ Refundable Deposits on Containers

- ⤴ State Funded Tax Check-Off Programs

- ⤴ Voluntary Taxpayer-Funded Tax Add-On Programs

- ⤴ Penalties for Public Campaign Finance Law Violations

- ⤴ Public Campaign Finance Bonds

See a description of these funding methods and many others at the Brennan Center link:

<http://www.policyarchive.org/handle/10207/23>

More information available from:

Mary Francis

mary.francis111@gmail.com

405 474-0695