

Policy Note

Reject Forced Political Campaign Contributions in Seattle

People should not be required to give money to political causes they oppose

by Paul Guppy
Vice President for Research

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Key Findings

- 1. This proposal goes against the moral principle that it is wrong to force people to contribute money to political causes they don't believe in.*
- 2. City councilmembers support it because their re-election campaigns would directly benefit.*
- 3. Taxes should not go to fund the narrow interests of candidates; taxes should serve the whole community.*
- 4. It is not part of our values to enact a law that enforces conformity on others by funding only political candidates who meet the city's arbitrary threshold.*
- 5. We do not believe in using the taxing power to force contributions from people who may not want their money to go to politics.*

Backers of a ballot proposal in Seattle this year want to funnel public money to certain political campaigns in city elections. This proposal goes against the moral principle that it is wrong to force people to contribute money - in this case through a special property tax - to political causes they don't believe in.

Simply put, the measure would make people engage in political activity against their will. The strength of our democracy is voluntary participation in civic life. Giving to politics should be based on principles and belief, not force. Each of us should be free to give to the people and ideas we support or, if we choose, not give to political campaigns at all.

With forced campaign contributions, the law would make people provide money to the campaigns of candidates we may want to keep out of office. If Tim Eyman moved to Seattle and ran for office, he would likely get public money to advance political ideas that most people in Seattle strongly oppose. Even if he lost, he would be spending our money to push his agenda.

A forced political contributions law would not enrich our democracy or create better choices, it would just direct public money to certain candidates. No wonder every member of the city council voted for it. If it passes, their re-election campaigns will directly benefit. The best way to give people more voice in local government is to elect city councilmembers by district, so every neighborhood has its own representative and its own voice.

The taxes we pay should not go to fund the narrow interests of candidates trying to advance their political careers. Taxes should serve the whole community, like funding good schools, roads, public transit, parks, quality social services, public safety and a better quality of life for all.

People in Seattle have always been welcoming and tolerant of others, and we invite everyone to get involved in the civic life of our communities. It is not part of our values to enact a law that enforces conformity on others by funding only political candidates who meet the city's arbitrary threshold. That is not who we are.

People in Seattle have always been for respectful and open debate, where everyone is welcome to participate on a voluntary basis and to vigorously support the candidates they believe in, or to not participate at all if that's what they prefer. We do not believe in using public money to support some candidates while excluding others. We do not believe in using



Paul Guppy is Vice President for Research at WPC. He is a graduate of Seattle University and holds graduate degrees in political science from Claremont Graduate University and the London School of Economics.

the taxing power to force contributions from people who may not want their money to go to politics.

Hopefully people will support Seattle's historic tradition of free political speech, respectful tolerance and open debate, and will not create a system that imposes forced campaign contributions on everyone.

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