

STATEMENT OF POSITION

The League of Women Voters of Alaska favors public disclosure of campaign contributions of money, goods, or services, as well as the disclosure of financial interests of public officials, both elected and appointed. All disclosure reports should be received, compiled and published by an independent commission, which should have final responsibility for monitoring and enforcement. The League also favors limitations on the length of political campaigns, the time allowed for fund raising, the amount of contributions and, notwithstanding the U.S. Supreme Court decision in Buckley v. Valeo, the amount of expenditures.

The goals of a campaign system should be:

1. To ensure the public's right to know.
2. To combat corruption and undue influence.
3. To enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office.
4. To promote citizen participation in the political process.

"To enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office" reflects two distinct concerns: First, that differences in candidates' personal wealth and other financial resources not be a necessary consideration in seeking public office; and, second, that insofar as possible there be an equalization of opportunity for challengers and incumbents.

AMPLIFICATION

The League of Women Voters of Alaska's position on campaign financing reflects our concern for open and honest elections and for maximum citizen participation in the political process. The League believes that regulation of the length of campaigns and limitations on campaign contributions are necessary to increase participation in the democratic system. Campaign costs have skyrocketed, resulting in constant fund raising and driving candidates toward contributions from special interest. There is a growing perception of undue influence of special interest on officials and of unfair advantage for the incumbent.

In response, instead of the existing limit of \$1000 per year as set forth in AS 15.13, the League supports a limit on contributions to a candidate of \$1000 per election (e.g. \$1000 for a primary election and \$1000 for a general election) from any one source, except for political parties. And, further, the League supports movement toward public funding of campaigns.

Disclosure

"Disclosure" means disclosure of contributions and expenditures in a timely manner before and after elections as set forth in AS 15.13, except for the filing of the 24-hour report as now required by Sec. 15.13.110(b). The law should be amended to close the existing two-day loophole for reporting contributions and expenditures in excess of \$250 within 24 hours. The League supports disclosure on the premise that voter participation in the governmental process depends on the public perception of the integrity of public servants.

Limitations

The League believes that limits on contributions and expenditures should be realistic and reasonable: high enough to be enforceable and to allow both for discussion of the issues and for visibility of the candidates. Limits should not be so low as to affect challengers adversely.

(Continued)

Contributions

"Contributions" includes contributions of goods and services, such as space, personnel, telephone, mail, use of credit cards, etc., as well as money from any and all sources.

Enforcement

"An independent commission" refers to a commission to centralize reporting and overseeing of campaign contributions and expenditures of candidates, judges and groups, and to enforce the campaign disclosure law. Such a commission must be adequately funded and staffed, with powers to investigate, to subpoena and to initiate court action against violators. Strong penalties should be provided for violations.

Base Of Funding

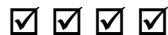
The League favors a system of individual contributions, political party contributions and public funding of campaigns that encourages maximum citizen participation and equitable competition among candidates. In the event an income tax is reinstated, the system should include the use of tax credits, tax deductions and income tax check-off for those who make individual contributions.

Length Of Campaigns

The League believes that the length of campaigns should be shortened, for example, by limiting the time period between the time of filing and the general election. Campaigns should be long enough, however, to allow for discussion of the issues and adequate visibility of all candidates, especially challengers.

Conflict Of Interests

Disclosure of financial interests of public officials, both elected and appointed, is a way of making known any possible conflict of interests. Disclosure reports should be received, compiled and published by an independent commission.



Adopted 1968; Revised 1991; Reaffirmed each year since at LWVAK Convention.