



February 26, 2007

Dear Representative:

The Campaign Legal Center strongly urges you to join as a sponsor of H.R. 776, the Presidential Funding Act of 2007. The presidential public financing system has played a vital role in every presidential election since Watergate and has admirably served candidates from each party for more than 30 years, ranging from Ronald Reagan to Bill Clinton. The system is too important to the health of our democracy to let fade away.

Because the public financing system has not received the legislative maintenance necessary to keep it running smoothly and up-to-date with today's presidential campaigns, the system no longer meets the needs of presidential campaigns. Candidates who receive public funding are at a distinct disadvantage to their privately funded opponents. Fortunately, the problems facing the presidential funding system are easily identified, and the solutions are remarkably straightforward. H.R. 776 would update the presidential public financing system to make it a viable option for even the most well-funded candidates. Companion legislation, S. 436, has also been introduced in the Senate.

With the 2008 presidential campaign in full swing more than a year before the first primary, we are headed towards the most expensive—likely exceeding \$1 billion—presidential campaign in our nation's history. Leading Republican and Democratic candidates have already announced that they will opt out of the public funding system in both the primary and general elections. Presidential candidates are engaged in massive fundraising efforts to build their campaign war chests; this is exactly the kind of arms race that the presidential public financing system was designed to prevent.

There is a remarkable degree of consensus among campaign finance experts and supporters of the public financing system on what needs to be done to revive the system. The necessary changes, all of which are incorporated in H.R. 776, include:

- Increasing the primary spending limit;
- Abolishing the state-by-state primary spending limits;
- Increasing the matching fund ratio to encourage candidates to raise money from small-dollar donors;

- Distributing primary matching funds earlier to accommodate the frontloaded primary cycle;
- And creating an escape hatch for publicly funded candidates to compete with non-participating candidates who operate without spending restrictions.

Reviving the presidential public financing system should be a top priority for the 110th Congress. Although the proposed bill would not take effect until after the 2008 campaign, Congress should act to repair this important system and send a message to the American people that the campaign for the White House is not a competition of fundraising.

Attached to this letter is a chart comparing current law with H. R. 776. The chart shows how this bill addresses the problems with the current public financing system and will make the system compatible with modern presidential campaigns.

If you would like to discuss the presidential financing system or have questions about proposals to repair the system, please do not hesitate to contact me. To cosponsor H.R. 776, please contact the offices of Rep. Marty Meehan (D-MA), Rep. Christopher Shays or Rep. David Price (D-NC).

Thank you for your consideration of this issue critical to the vitality of our democracy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M McGehee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of the first name being a large, stylized "M".

Meredith McGehee
Policy Director