



DC FAIR ELECTIONS FAQ

WHAT IS DC FAIR ELECTIONS?

The Fair Elections Amendment Act of 2018 created the Fair Elections Program (FEP). The Fair Elections Program is a voluntary campaign financing program that provides limited public matching funds to qualified candidates that pledge to only accept small donations and forgo all corporate and PAC money.

WHAT DOES DC FAIR ELECTIONS AIM TO ACCOMPLISH?

DC Fair Elections aims to strengthen local democracy by allowing candidates and elected officials to spend more time with their constituents and reining in the influence of big money in our elections.

HOW DOES THE FAIR ELECTIONS PROGRAM (FEP) BENEFIT CANDIDATES AND ENSURE THAT ELECTIONS ARE COMPETITIVE?

By providing each certified participating candidates with a base amount payment, matching eligible contributions \$5:1, and allowing People PACs (see below), the FEP ensures that candidates and elected officials who choose to participate are competitive. Freeing candidates from having to devote time dialing for dollars allows them to spend more time with voters, which ensures that they hear everyday people's priorities directly from constituents.

The FEP is a simple and straight forward system – it has already been tested in other cities, counties, and states, such as New York City, Connecticut, and Montgomery County, MD.

HOW DOES THE PROGRAM PROMOTE RACIAL AND GENDER EQUITY AND ENSURE CANDIDATES WHO RELY ON CONTRIBUTIONS FROM LOW-INCOME FAMILIES REMAIN COMPETITIVE?

The current campaign finance arrangement disadvantages people of color, women and DC residents. A **report from the think tank Demos** looking at the most recent elections found that DC's donor class is whiter, wealthier, older, and more male than the District's population. For instance, more than 60% of campaign contributions come from either individuals who don't live in DC, or from corporations, while only 5% came from voters giving \$100 or less. More than 62% of campaign donors to the Mayor and Council are white, compared to 37% of DC's overall population.

It doesn't have to be this way, there are plenty of small donors whom we should encourage and whose voices we can and should amplify. Women make up nearly half of donors giving less than \$50, and people of color make up 47% of donors giving less than \$25. Each of these groups makes up less than 31% of donors giving more than \$1,000.

Matching funds would help create a better balance by empowering people of color, women and DC residents.

DC Fair Elections is a broad and diverse coalition of residents and advocates from across the District. We are committed to empowering voters through creating a program that will strengthen local democracy and limit the influence of big money in politics through public financing of elections.



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(Last updated: May 2019)



ARE CANDIDATES REQUIRED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM?

No. This is a voluntary program available to candidates running for Mayor, Attorney General, Council and Board of Education. Any candidate is eligible if they accept the program's requirements, including campaign contribution limits and collect enough small donations to receive matching funds. Candidates are not required to participate in this program.

HOW DO THE INITIAL EARNED PAYMENT, SMALL DOLLAR LIMITS AND QUALIFICATION THRESHOLDS COMPARE FOR EACH OFFICE COMPARE AGAINST EACH OTHER?

Office	Qualification Requirements			Voter Empowerment Support	
	Max. Contribution Amount per Donor	Minimum # of Eligible Donors	Minimum Amount Raised	Base Amount Payments	Max. matching funds for <u>2020</u> Election Cycle
Mayor	\$200	1,000	\$40,000	\$160,000	n/a
Attorney General	\$200	500	\$20,000	\$40,000	n/a
Council Chairman	\$200	300	\$15,000	\$40,000	n/a
At-large Councilmember	\$100	250	\$12,000	\$40,000	\$308,639
Ward Councilmember	\$50	150	\$5,000	\$40,000	\$241,055
At-large State Board of Education Member	\$50	\$150	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$21,877
Ward State Board of Education member	\$20	50	\$1,000	\$10,000	\$14,006

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WHAT ARE THE QUALIFYING THRESHOLDS TO RECEIVE PUBLIC MATCHING FUNDS?

Candidates who wish to participate in the program must receive a minimum number of eligible contributions totaling a minimum amount, based on the office they are seeking. This ensures that the program's funds are well spent and only support candidates who make a serious effort to compete. The qualifying thresholds for each office*:

- Mayor: 1,000 contributions, totaling \$40,000
- Attorney General: 500 contributions, totaling \$20,000
- Council Chairman: 300 contributions, totaling \$15,000
- At-Large Councilmember: 250 contributions, totaling \$12,000
- Ward Councilmember: 150 contributions, totaling \$5,000
- At-Large Board of Education: 150 contributions, totaling \$5,000
- Ward Board of Education: 50 contributions, totaling \$1,000

*Only contributions from DC residents may be counted toward the qualifying threshold

*The contribution totals are *minimum* amounts to qualify

HOW MUCH IS THE BASE AMOUNT AND WHEN IS IT DISTRIBUTED?

A candidate will receive half of the base amount payment within five business days of receiving certification as a "Participating Candidate." The second half of the base amount will be distributed once the candidate qualifies for the ballot.

The total base amount payment for each office:

- Mayor: \$160,000
- Attorney General: \$40,000
- Council Chairman: \$40,000
- At-Large Councilmember: \$40,000
- Ward Councilmember: \$40,000
- At-Large Board of Education: \$10,000
- Ward Board of Education: \$10,000

WHAT ARE THE INDIVIDUAL CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTION LIMITS?

The contributions limits per donor for each office:

- Mayor: \$200 for Mayor
- Attorney General: \$200
- Council Chairman: \$200
- At-Large Councilmember: \$100
- Ward Councilmember: \$50
- At-Large Board of Education: \$50
- Ward Board of Education: \$20

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WHAT IS THE MATCH RATE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

The 5:1 match rate ensures that candidates who participate in the program are competitive by multiplying small dollar contributions from DC residents. By matching funds, it means a \$50 donation to a ward level councilmember would result in \$250 in public funds for a total contribution of \$300.

Once a candidate qualifies for the ballot the match rate is 5:1.

HOW AND WHEN WILL MATCHING FUNDS BE DISTRIBUTED?

After the submitting the receipt of a report from a participating candidate, the Office of Campaign Finance will have no more than five (5) business days to review the receipts and then the Chief Financial Officer will have no more than five (5) business days to disburse the matching funds.

IS THERE A LIMIT TO HOW MUCH A CANDIDATE CAN RAISE?

No. Candidates can raise as much money from small donor contributions as they like. The program's matching funds ensure a participating candidate is competitive.

There is a cap on the total public matching funds available based on the number of registered voters, but there is no limit to how many small donations they can collect.

WHAT ARE THE CAPS ON MATCHING FUNDS AVAILABLE?

The cap on matching funds will vary each election cycle.

❖ For the 2020 election cycle, the maximum amount participating candidates may receive for the matching payments at the 5:1 rate for QSDC from individual district residents is as follows:

- At Large Council Member – \$308,639
- Ward Council Member – \$241,055
- At Large State Board of Education Member – \$21,877
- Ward State Board of Education Member – \$14,006

The cap is based on a look back at 110% of the average expenditures of all winning candidates for the covered office sought in the prior two (2) election cycles

ARE CORPORATIONS AND POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEES (PACS) ALLOWED TO CONTRIBUTE?

Candidates who participate in the program must forgo direct contributions from corporations and traditional PACs. Contributions from People PACs are allowed.

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WHAT IS A PEOPLE PAC?

A People PACs is a PAC that accepts contributions of \$250 or less from individual contributors. They are designed to allow candidates to accept support from traditional mass membership based organizations that wish to express their support. People PAC contributions are not matched. Candidates may accept contributions from People PACs up to \$1,500.

ARE CASH CONTRIBUTIONS ALLOWED AND ARE THEY MATCHED?

Yes. Cash, check, credit cards and money orders are all allowed for making contributions and are matched if they have the qualifying criteria.

Cash contributions have the same limits as other types of contributions. They also require a statement indicating that the contribution is voluntary and that the money belongs to the donor.

ARE CANDIDATES ALLOWED TO ACCEPT DONATIONS FROM SUPPORTERS OUTSIDE OF THE DISTRICT?

Yes, candidates can accept small dollar contributions from individuals outside the District, however these contributions will not be matched and do not count toward the qualifying threshold.

WHY AREN'T CONTRIBUTIONS FROM NON-DC RESIDENTS MATCHED?

The goal of the program is to empower voters and invest in civic engagement in the District.

HOW MUCH WILL THE PROGRAM COST AND HOW WILL IT BE FUNDED?

We invest in roads, schools and vital community programs, our democracy is no different. The program is only expected to cost \$5 million per year, or 0.06% of the budget.

DOES THE PROGRAM AFFECT INDEPENDENT EXPENDITURES?

No. Independent expenditures will not change under the proposed program.

WHEN WILL THE PROGRAM BE UP AND RUNNING?

D.C. Fair Elections is here!

The Office of Campaign Finance is currently implementing the Fair Elections Program (FEP).

Candidates can register now to participate.

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