To: Wayne Barnett & Staff of the Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission

From: Honest Elections Seattle Implementation & Outreach Coalition

Date: September 22, 2016

Re: How Organizations Would Like to Use Vouchers in Outreach Efforts

Background

This September, excitement is growing around the roll out of democracy vouchers. A diverse coalition of advocacy and community-based groups in Seattle are interested and ready to educate their members about the program. The organizations comprising the Honest Elections Seattle Implementation and Outreach Coalition have been active on SEEC's advisory committee, tracking the implementation process, and meeting to discuss the different ways the system will impact their organizing work. We have some specific ideas on how 501c(3), (4), and (5) organizations can combine their organizing and community education work and the use of vouchers to increase civic participation and build grassroots power and we are asking staff at SEEC to take these into consideration when developing program guidelines.

Grassroots Organizing and Democracy Vouchers

There is a strong interest in using democracy vouchers as a conversation starter with Seattle residents around deeper civic engagement including, candidate support, education on how elections are run, the importance of voting, and the influence of money in politics.

Coalition members want to have the freedom to educate organizational members *and* the general public on the use of vouchers and be able to discuss who people should give their vouchers to. Their education efforts include door-knocking, phone banking, digital media, voter guides, and community events about what democracy vouches are and giving them a list of their endorsed candidates.

There are three primary concerns we would like SEEC to take into consideration:

1. **Contribution Limits**: organizations would like to pursue their outreach work without fear of bumping up against the newly lowered contribution limits. A core part of our advocacy and power building model is to not only educate folks about democracy vouchers, but to offer information to residents on which candidates best support the issues they care about.

2. **Definition of Member**: organizations see SEEC's current definition of "membership" as being too restrictive for the work they would like to do. If the first concern isn't met, and education around vouchers and candidates were subject to contribution limits, organizations would be limiting their focus solely on educating their organizations' members. Given the restrictive definition, we ask SEEC to consider using the PDC's definition of member, which is standard practice among most organizations.

3. **Clarification on "bundling":** as noted, organizations would use voucher education and mobilization as a vehicle to build power for their constituencies through some type of mechanism that notifies the candidate about who encouraged a particular individual to submit a voucher. For example, a resourced organization could send a branded, self-addressed stamp envelope to their members asking them to submit a voucher for a specific candidate. The candidate would then see the amount of vouchers from those organizational members. As is, we are unclear if this type of activity would be considered bundling and ask for clarification.

We appreciate SEEC's thoughtfulness and due diligence in implementing Honest Elections Seattle and the democracy voucher program in a way that increases access and power for communities most disenfranchised from our voting systems. We are available to answer any questions.

Honest Elections Seattle Implementation Coalition

The coalition consists of the following organizations:

Asian Counseling and Referral Services

Asian Pacific Islanders for Civic Empowerment (APACE)

Fix Democracy First

Fuse Washington

League of Women Voters Seattle King County

LGBTQ Allyship

One America

Planned Parenthood Votes Northwest and Hawaii

SEIU 775

Washington CAN!

Washington Conversation Voters

WashPIRG

Win Win Network

The concerns and issues raised in this memo come directly from coalition partners and allies through group meetings, individual conversations, and a survey completed by organizations doing political work in Seattle.