



Seattle City Council

Senator Patty Murray
2988 Jackson Federal Building
915 2nd Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98174

January 11, 2016

Dear Senator Murray,

We are writing to you today to encourage you to co-sponsor the Fair Elections Now Act (S. 1538), authored by Senator Durbin. In supporting this bill, you will help the end the dominance of big money in our elections. A similar bill, the Government by the People Act (H.R. 20-Sarbanes) has been introduced in the House.

Our democracy works best when it lives up to the principle of one person, one vote, and when the strength of a citizen's voice doesn't depend on the size of their wallet. Elected officials at all levels of government have become increasingly dependent on super PAC and large donors' contributions. A [U.S. PIRG and Demos study](#) revealed that the top 32 donors to Super PACs, gave an average of \$9.9 million each in 2012. This is as much as all 3.7 million small donors to President Obama and Mitt Romney that year combined. Seattle recently passed District Elections in the hope that Councilmembers would become more accountable to voters. We do not want the voices of everyday residents in our new districted system to be drowned out by a flood of big money.

As you know, Seattle voters also approved the Honest Elections Seattle initiative in November. It passed by a twenty point margin and will fund four \$25 "democracy vouchers" registered Seattle voters. These vouchers can be given to local candidates agreeing to lower spending and contribution limits. Similarly, the Fair Elections Now Act would also facilitate participation of greater numbers of voters in the political process with a \$25 refundable tax credit for small donations. These small contributions would then be matched with public funds at a rate of six-to-one.

In this way, grassroots candidates relying on small donors can compete on a more level playing field with big money candidates. This also can make it more possible for candidates to focus more on the issues most important to the constituents they seek to represent.

New York City has established a strong record for small contributions that are matched six-to-one. In the 2013 NYC Council race, 92% of candidates participated in their program and those candidates received 61% of their donations from small contributions and matching funds.

City Hall, 600 Fourth Avenue, Floor 2, PO Box 34025, Seattle, Washington 98124-4025
(206) 684-8888 Fax: (206) 684-8587 TTY: (206) 233-0025

<http://www.seattle.gov/council>

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Eighty-five percent of people polled in a recent New York Times/CBS News poll believe the campaign funding system needs 'fundamental change' or that 'we need to totally rebuild it.' That Americans believe that special interests, lobbyists, and campaign contributors have so much influence over our elected representatives affects voter turnout and is damaging to our democracy. Please demonstrate your support for solutions to reclaim our democracy for the people by co-sponsoring the Fair Elections Now Act (S. 1538).



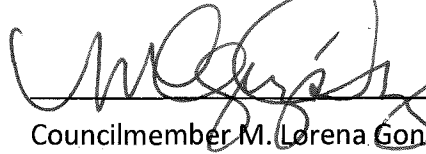
Council President Bruce A. Harrell



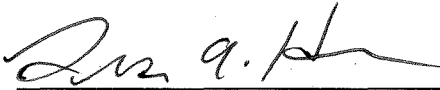
Councilmember Tim Burgess



Councilmember Sally Bagshaw



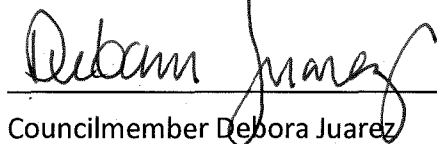
Councilmember M. Lorena González



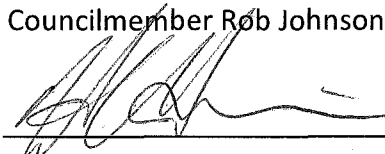
Councilmember Lisa Herbold



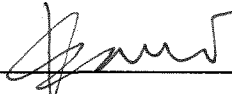
Councilmember Rob Johnson



Councilmember Debora Juarez



Councilmember Mike O'Brien



Councilmember Kshama Sawant

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Seattle City Council

Senator Maria Cantwell
915 2nd Ave., #3206
Seattle, WA 98174

January 11, 2016

Dear Senator Cantwell,

We are writing to you today to encourage you to co-sponsor the Fair Elections Now Act (S. 1538), authored by Senator Durbin. In supporting this bill, you will help the end the dominance of big money in our elections. A similar bill, the Government by the People Act (H.R. 20-Sarbanes) has been introduced in the House.

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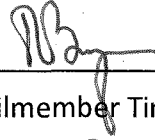
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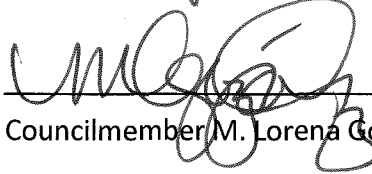
Council President Bruce A. Harrell



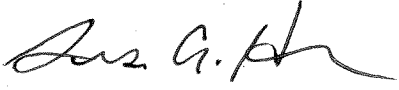
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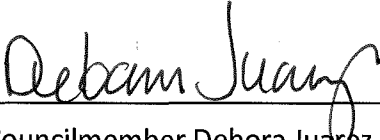
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