



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL

September 5, 2017

Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission
PO Box 94729
Seattle, Washington 98124-4729

Dear Commissioners,

We appreciate the great work that the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission (SEEC) has done to implement and administer the Democracy Voucher Program in Seattle. As we undertake the first election cycle of this program, we have a great opportunity to increase access to our political system. It is also an opportunity to learn lessons on how best to carry out the program's objectives. We are writing to relay concerns we have received about the replacement voucher process of the Democracy Voucher program, and respectfully request that you consider allowing third party organizations to hand-out (but not collect) replacement voucher forms in a similar manner that the SEEC has allowed for candidates.

Our understanding is that the current process requires people who need a replacement voucher to have 1) access to the internet and a computer with a printer, or 2) access to a stable home address where they can reliably receive mail. Those two factors can pose barriers for voters who already have difficulty participating in our political system.

The SEEC has rightfully determined that the language of the law gives them the appropriate discretion to allow for alternate processes for allowing people to obtain replacement vouchers. The language of the states in Section 2.04.658: (emphasis added)

If a Democracy Voucher recipient believes that his or her Democracy Voucher was lost, stolen or fraudulently or improperly assigned or redeemed, SEEC shall require a notarized declaration or affidavit or **additional process in its judgment to find the relevant facts then provide relief it deems appropriate including Democracy Voucher replacement...**

As a result of this language, SEEC has developed a document for campaigns to both replace a voucher and collect the voucher in the same form. This allows the campaign to essentially hand-out replacement vouchers to people who believe they have lost their vouchers without any prior individual verification from SEEC. While we agree with this interpretation and agree that this process grants more access, we would ask SEEC to also consider a process where third party organizations could hand out (but not collect) a similar form.

We do not believe there is a compelling reason that candidates should be given more ability to replace vouchers than other groups. In fact, Section 2.04.620(d) clearly spells out that the only people who may collect completed vouchers are the candidates, the SEEC or the candidate's representative, but the law is silent on any limits to who may hand out replacement vouchers. Our understanding is that third-party organizations are not asking to collect vouchers, only to hand out replacement voucher forms in a

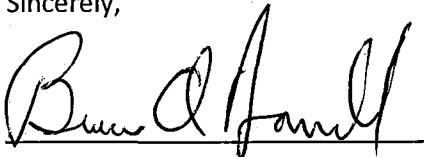
manner that addresses barriers to participation in the system. The replacement forms that candidates and their volunteers can distribute seem to help address those barriers.

Third-party organizations, particularly those based in communities of color and low-income communities, are in a much better position to help implement the intent of the law - to ensure that everyone can have their voice heard, regardless of their income level or political status within our city. Many of these organizations already help people with a myriad of services and civic engagement, and we believe it would be a reasonable extension of their services to offer replacement voucher forms in a simplified process.

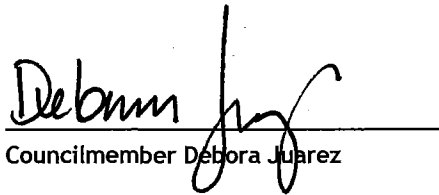
We understand that the Democracy Voucher program is new, and we are learning how best to implement this as we go. We appreciate the SEEC's willingness to work with organizations throughout this process. We also appreciate the SEEC's thoughtful consideration and administration of Initiative 122, and respect the Commission's role in determining the most appropriate path forward, as well as the most appropriate timeline for this path. Challenges are sure to arise when major policies are put into action, and with the Commission's guidance we have the opportunity to address one of these challenges that may be keeping many in our City from participating in the program.

Thank you for your consideration.

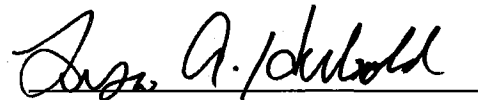
Sincerely,



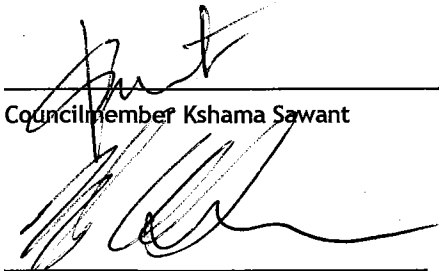
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