

## Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission Special Meeting

February 13, 2013

The Ethics and Elections Commission met February 13, 2013 in Room 4080 of the Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 Fifth Avenue, to hear from Ken Mayer from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and David Earley from the Brennan Center what the research showed the impact of public financing to be in other municipalities that have adopted public financing.

Vice-Chair Richard Cohan called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m. Commissioners Bruce Carter, Kendee Yamaguchi and Brad Axel were present. Commission staff members Anthony Adams and Polly Grow were present. Assistant City Attorney Jeff Slayton and City Council central staffer Michael Fong were also in attendance.

Mr. Earley outlined for the Commission how public financing worked in New York City. In response to a question, he told the Commission that New York City elections are partisan.

Mr. Earley said that one of the main goals of public financing is to encourage would-be candidates to run for office who otherwise could not because of a lack of financial support. The key is to provide enough money to them to run.

Vice-Chair Cohan asked how long New York City's program had been in place. Dr. Mayer said New York City began its program in 1989.

Vice-Chair Cohan asked how the public should gauge whether public financing was or was not working. Mr. Earley answered that more speech is a good thing. There are more contested races; candidates do not go unopposed, so it forces incumbents to take into account what the constituents want. He said, though, that it is difficult to quantify the impact of public financing.

Commissioner Yamaguchi was curious if the research and data that has been compiled support the policy reasons underlying public financing.

Dr. Mayer said that the research has shown an increase in the number of donors, small donors and overall contributions.

Polly Grow wondered if anyone had looked at the effect that money has on elections overall.

Dr. Mayer said that the more a congressional candidate spends, the worse they do. Raising and spending more money gives the impression that a candidate is in trouble and trying to spend their way to victory.

**The special meeting adjourned at approximately 3:20 p.m.**