



CITY of WILMINGTON North Carolina

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02/16/2010

City Council
City Hall
Wilmington, North Carolina 28401

Dear Mayor and Councilmembers:

This resolution is being brought to you for consideration at the request of councilmember Padgett and asks the North Carolina General Assembly and Governor to enact legislation that gives larger towns the authority to sponsor a public financing program for their local elections, if they so choose, using local resources, with technical assistance from the State Board of Elections.

The cost of running for local office is becoming unattainable to everyday citizens in many North Carolina communities and public financing programs that encourage small donations, voter participation, and voluntary spending limits are present at the federal and state level, including in North Carolina statewide judicial and executive branch elections. However, a North Carolina city or town could not implement such a program unless State law is changed to give local governments the authority to pursue this option.

Respectfully submitted,

Sterling B. Cheatham
City Manager

Resolution



City Council
City of Wilmington
North Carolina

Introduced By: Sterling B. Cheatham, City Manager

Date: 02/16/2010

Resolution To Consider Local Campaign Finance Reform Options

LEGISLATIVE INTENT/PURPOSE:

WHEREAS, the cost of running for local office is becoming unattainable to everyday citizens in many North Carolina communities; and

WHEREAS, the political “money chase” depresses voters and candidates alike, discourages healthy competition, and distracts from open dialogue and debate that are fundamental to the democratic process; and

WHEREAS, campaign spending by special interests and political action committees (PACs) distorts the free market and harms the principle of a free and fair marketplace; and

WHEREAS, public financing programs that encourage small donations, voter participation, and voluntary spending limits are present at the federal and state level, including in North Carolina statewide judicial and executive branch elections; and

WHEREAS, public financing programs free candidates from the burden of never-ending fundraising, increases voter contact with candidates and allows elections to be “voter-owned”; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Chapel Hill successfully implemented a public financing pilot in 2009, with participating candidates winning more votes than any of their non-participating opponents; and

WHEREAS, a North Carolina city or town could not implement such a program unless State law is changed to give local governments the authority to pursue this option; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Cary initiated a public financing program for town council elections but it was later halted by the courts, and other city councils in North Carolina have created committees to examine local campaign reform, but have been hamstrung in the absence of proper enabling language in State law;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

THAT, the Wilmington City Council calls upon the North Carolina General Assembly and Governor to enact legislation that gives larger towns the authority to sponsor a public financing program for their local elections, if they so choose, using local resources, with technical assistance from the State Board of Elections.

Bill Saffo, Mayor

Adopted at a _____ meeting
on _____, 2010.

ATTEST:

City Clerk