

# Democracy North Carolina

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## NORTH CAROLINIANS ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM SUPPORT PUBLIC CAMPAIGN FINANCING TO ADDRESS CORRUPTION

The third poll in a month\* shows that most North Carolinians believe there's too much corruption in state politics – but [this new one by Public Policy Polling](#) also reveals that a bipartisan majority of voters believe changing the campaign financing system would be an effective way to address the pressures that lead to political corruption.

An unusually broad range of North Carolina members of Congress apparently agree. They are now backing a bill to provide qualified Congressional candidates with the option of using public financing in their campaigns. To qualify for public funds, the candidates would first have to raise hundreds of small donations from voters and refuse donations from special-interest groups.

The [Fair Elections Now Act](#) (HR-1826) has more than 100 co-sponsors in the U.S. House, including Republican Walter Jones Jr. and Democrats Larry Kissell, Brad Miller and David Price. The bill provides a limited amount of campaign money to qualified candidates from a public fund created from a surcharge on large government contractors and broadcasters using the airwaves.

The range of conservative, moderate and liberal supporters among N.C.'s delegation mirrors the broad support in Public Policy Polling's survey on public financing," said Bob Hall of the watchdog group Democracy North Carolina. "There are proven remedies that get to the problem's root causes."

The PPP poll of 1,100 North Carolinians shows that 84% think that "the large amount of money that politicians raise for political campaigns is a major cause of corruption in government." A similar 85% believe "the high cost of campaigns means candidates must be good fundraisers to win – and the need to raise a lot of money keeps a lot of good people from serving in public office."

To address the negative consequences of big-time fundraising, two out of three (65%) North Carolinians say it would be a "good idea" to provide candidates "with a limited amount of public tax money for their campaigns" if they qualify by raising lots of small donations from voters and refuse money from special-interest groups. The poll shows that 54% of Republicans and 72% of Democrats support a tax-funded public campaign option for candidates; Republican support jumps to 71% when the program is not funded by tax dollars. Both the N.C. legislature and Congress fund their public campaign proposals with new fees on special interests rather than with general taxes.

Hall pointed out that hundreds of political donors also support changing the campaign system to reduce the dominant role of fundraising in elections. More than 700 donors of at least \$1,000 to a state-level campaign are part of "[Campaign Donors for Campaign Reform](#)," which backs public financing in state races. And [NC Voters for Clean Elections](#), the coalition promoting reform, includes several dozen groups, from the NC Council of Churches to the NC Bankers Association.

"We are in danger of losing the ordinary voter's influence on public policy by the massive amounts of money injected into our elections process by special interests," said Dr. H. David Bruton of Southern Pines, a former chair of the State Board of Education and secretary of the Department of Health and Human Resources. "Public financing of political campaigns is the only way to defeat this corruption and take back our democracy from these concentrations of money and power."

\* *In the two other polls, 73% of North Carolinians said political corruption is "common" ([poll by Elon University](#)) and 55% said the corruption is worse than a generation ago ([separate PPP poll](#)).*