

Resolution Opposing Big Money PAC Influence in Seattle Elections

WHEREAS unlimited corporate PAC spending at all levels of the U.S. electoral process has undermined our nation's democracy, granting undue influence to large corporations and the super-rich; and

WHEREAS Seattle voters approved our first-in-the-nation Democracy Voucher program with the dual goals of publicly funding our elections while lowering contribution limits and placing caps on the amounts raised directly by campaigns; and

WHEREAS three PACs funded by big business and wealthy individuals in Seattle have together raised an unprecedented \$1.63 million, with much more expected, to try and sway the outcome of the Seattle City Council elections, including the Chamber of Commerce PAC (CASE) to which Amazon alone gave \$450,000, alongside the misleadingly named People for Seattle and Moms for Seattle PACs; and

WHEREAS allowing big money interests to wield more influence over the outcome of Seattle's elections than the vast majority of voters may result in a bias against progressive taxation, making Seattle less likely to raise needed revenues; and

WHEREAS an independent study completed by McKinsey & Co. for the Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce showed necessary revenues to address the homelessness and affordability crisis to be at least \$400M annually; and

WHEREAS the majority of the expenditures for these PACs have been spent on racist, sexist, and deceptive mailers meant to depress the vote for progressive candidates; and

WHEREAS PAC spending this year has already undermined our local democratic process in that "candidates who saw PAC spending in opposition to their campaigns underperformed expectations," as reported by Crosscut; and

WHEREAS unregulated independent expenditures of this nature undermine Seattle's Democracy Voucher program by dwarfing the amount of money candidates are allowed to raise under the program. This has had the effect of releasing candidates in the program from spending limits and causing others to stay out of the program in anticipation of large amounts of money being spent against them;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 43rd LD Democrats oppose the undue influence of PACs funded by big money interests in Seattle, including the Chamber of Commerce PAC (CASE) as well as the misleadingly named People for Seattle PAC and the Moms for Seattle PAC, and call on them to cease their efforts to influence elections through negative and deceptive campaigning; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 43rd LD Democrats call on all candidates and elected representatives in Seattle to unite in public opposition to big money PAC spending in Seattle elections, to further commit to not seek support from these groups, and to publicly reject any spending on their behalf by these groups; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 43rd LD Democrats support the proposed city ordinance introduced by Seattle City Councilmember Lorena González that would limit corporate PAC contributions as an important step in the right direction, while also supporting further and immediate action to expose and mitigate the influence of big money PAC spending on the 2019 Seattle City Council elections; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that copies of this resolution be sent to all current Seattle City Council Members and candidates for Seattle City Council.

Submitted by Amy Madden, State Committee Member; Jessi Murray, Membership Chair; Ellen Eades, Secretary; and Shaun Scott, 43rd Member, for consideration by the 43rd Legislative District Democrats at their September 17, 2019 meeting.