

Fair Elections for Prince George's County

To Ensure a Government by the People



Our democracy is based on the premise that our government works for everyone, regardless of wealth. Too often, large campaign contributions determine who can run for and win office, and what priorities our government tackles. Candidates shouldn't have to spend their time courting wealthy and corporate special interests when they should be getting to know the people they wish to represent.

Fair Elections in Prince George's County will allow candidates to run free of big money and ensure our elected officials are accountable to their constituents, not wealthy special interests. Fair Elections empowers candidates to run for office on the strength of their ideas and support from their communities, instead of on access to large and corporate donors. Bringing this program to Prince George's County will build a more accessible and accountable local government.

How It Works

- ✓ Candidates agree to only accept small contributions from everyday residents.
- ✓ Once candidates prove they have significant community support, the small donations to their campaigns are amplified with matching funds through the Fair Elections Fund.
- ✓ Only contributions from county residents are matched, and the smallest contributions are matched at the highest rate.
- ✓ Participating candidates remain true and accountable to their citizen base while able to effectively compete against candidates taking large checks, including from special interests.

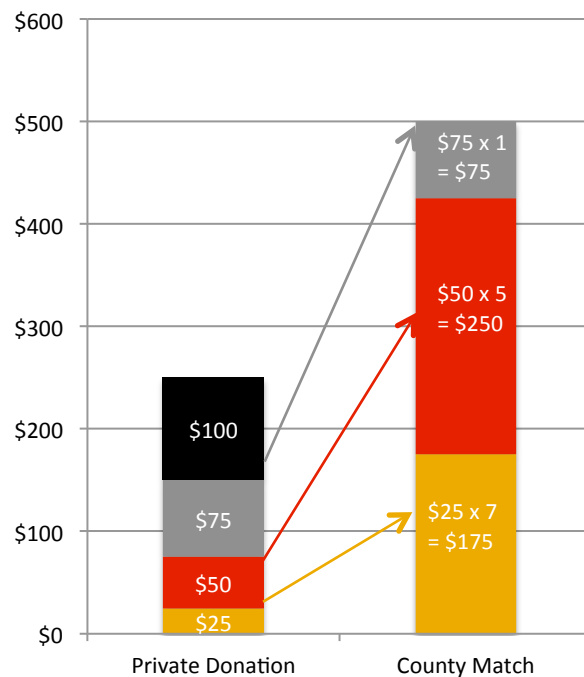
To qualify, candidates for County Council District Seat must:

- Demonstrate community support by raising \$7,500 from at least 150 residents.
- Take NO more than \$250 from each donor.
- Take NO donations from special interest groups such as corporations or PACs.

The chart on the right shows how a \$250 donation from a Prince George's County resident to a County Executive candidate would be amplified with the small donor match.

- The first \$25 is matched 7 to 1.
- The next \$50 is matched 5 to 1.
- The next \$75 is matched 1 to 1.
- No match above \$150.

Amplifying the Power of Small Donors
\$250 donation + \$500 match = \$750 total



Breaking Down the Barriers to Running for Office

Candidates from all backgrounds should be able to run for office based on the strength of their ideas and support from the community, not access to wealth or donors. Money is a significant barrier, taking away opportunity for talented leaders from our community, particularly women and people of color, to run for and win office. In order to elect the best people and build a representative government, we need to address the barriers that prevent ordinary Americans from running for office by giving candidates from all backgrounds the opportunity to run, regardless of their access to wealth.

Encouraging Civic Participation

By providing matching funds for small contributions from Prince George's County residents, community members without deep pockets are able to have their voices heard in the political process and candidates are encouraged to seek broad support in the community. This can help rebuild faith in our democracy and increase participation in local elections.

Investing in Democracy

Fair Elections is a worthwhile investment in our democracy and the integrity of our elections. The program is estimated to cost \$1.2 million per year, which is a tiny fraction -- three-hundredths of one percent (0.03%) -- of the county's \$4 billion operating budget. Compare it to a family with an annual household income of \$50,000 needing \$15 for a high priority item. It is a small investment to help ensure that politicians are using our tax dollars to address the most important unmet needs in Prince George's County and are accountable to their constituents alone, not special interests. Just as we pay for poll workers and voting machines, this is a critical investment in the health of our democracy.

Maryland is a Leader in Advancing Fair Elections

Momentum is growing for Fair Elections programs. In 2014, Montgomery County became the first county in the state to establish a small donor matching program for county council and executive elections. In the summer of 2017, the Howard County Council established a similar small donor program that candidates can utilize for the 2022 election. At the gubernatorial level, both Governor Hogan and Democratic candidate Heather Mizeur, outsiders to the political establishment, used a public funding program for their campaigns in 2014. Nearby, in Washington, DC the Council recently unanimously voted to establish a Fair Elections program for the District. And, Maryland Congressman John Sarbanes has introduced a similar measure, the Government by the People Act, to establish a Fair Elections program for congressional elections.

The Fair Elections Maryland Coalition

The Fair Elections Maryland Coalition was founded to establish small donor campaign finance programs for local and state elections in Maryland. The coalition includes more than 45 labor, social justice, good government, and environmental organizations across the state.