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## **Bipartisan Poll Shows Strong Support for Public Financing and Voters First Pledge**

### **MEMORANDUM**

**To: Interested Parties**

**From: Celinda Lake, David Mermin, and John Norris, Lake Research Partners; Christine Matthews, Bellwether Research**

**Subject: Recent National Survey on Campaign Finance Reform**

**Date: June 21, 2006**

A recent bipartisan survey of likely voters nationwide by Lake Research Partners and Bellwether Research (1) shows a significant majority of voters, across party lines, support publicly-funded elections. In the wake of lobbyist scandals, the soaring costs of campaigns, and discontent with Washington, voters are hungry for a more open, clean, and fair system of campaign funding.

- **Three out of four voters support a voluntary system of publicly funded campaigns.** (2) Seventy-four percent of voters support a proposal for voluntary public funding of federal elections (57% strongly) with only 16% opposed.
- **Support for public financing of Congressional elections cross all party lines.** Eighty percent of Democrats, 78% of Independents, and 65% of Republicans support this reform.
- **Support of this reform is strong across demographic and regional groups.** This reform enjoys strong support across gender lines, age groups, and regionally—garnering no less than 60% support and in most cases

around three-quarters support.

- **Support for public financing of elections helps Congressional candidates.** Respondents were given a generic congressional profile ballot, with standard “Republican” and “Democratic” issue platforms. On this initial test, the “Democratic” candidate outpaces the “Republican” candidate by 53% to 37%. Then half the respondents were told the “Republican” signed a pledge to support the reform and that the “Democrat” refused, and vice versa for the other half of respondents. In both cases the congressional candidate who signed the pledge was able to increase their lead substantially over an opponent who refused to sign it. The “Republican” candidate supporting reform wins 49% to 39% over an anti-reform Democrat. The “Democratic” candidate supporting reform wins 58% to 29% over an anti-reform Republican.

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- **Voters support this reform because of the positive changes they overwhelmingly believe will come from it.** Fully 82% of voters believe it is likely, as a result of publicly financed elections, that candidates will win on their ideas, not because of the money they raise, and 81% believe it is likely politicians will be more accountable to voters instead of large contributors. Additionally, voters also feel it is likely citizens with good ideas will have a fair shot at winning rather than just the rich and powerful (79% likely), and that special interests will not receive as many favors, tax breaks, and deals from politicians (77% likely).

- **The low perception voters have of congressional ethics is driving their support for this reform.** Voters’ unfavorable views of Congress (36% favorable, 52% unfavorable) and lobbyists (14% favorable, 66% unfavorable) spell trouble for the Washington status quo. Voters are angry about business as usual and are demanding significant change.

(1) The telephone survey of 1000 likely 2006 voters nationwide was conducted June 8-15, 2006, by Lake Research and Bellwether Research. The margin of sampling error is +/-3.1%. This survey was conducted for Public Campaign Action Fund and Common Cause.

(2) Text of proposal: "Under this plan, candidates who agree to spending limits and who agree to take no private contributions would qualify for a set amount of money from a public election fund. Each candidate would receive the same amount. Candidates would not be allowed to raise or spend additional money beyond what they receive from the fund. There would be tough enforcement and accountability with published reports open to the public."

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