

Larson Advocates for the Passage of the Fair Elections Now Act

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Congressman Larson speaking about the Fair Elections Now Act at the Connecticut Legislative Office. He was joined by Congressmen Courtney and Murphy, Common Cause President Bob Edgar, Speaker of the House Chris Donovan, Speaker Pro Tempore Donald Williams, House Majority Leader Denise Merrill, and members of the Connecticut General Assembly.

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Congressmen Larson, Courtney, Murphy and Common Cause President Dr. Bob Edgar Hold Press Conference on Fair Elections Now Act

Larson: "It is time to bring real change to Washington"

Hartford, CT- Today, U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01), Chairman of the Democratic Caucus, held a press conference to advocate for the passage of the Fair Elections Now Act (HR 1826). Described by experts as "game-changing" legislation, the Fair Elections Now Act would decrease the influence of money in politics and allow candidates more time to work for their people.

An original sponsor of the bill, Congressman Larson was joined by co-sponsors U.S. Congressmen Joe Courtney (CT-02) and Chris Murphy (CT-05), as well as National President of Common Cause Dr. Bob Edgar and House and Senate Leadership of the Connecticut General Assembly. Congressman Larson introduced the legislation with Congressman Walter Jones (R-NC) on March 31st.

This bi-partisan legislation will transform how Congressional elections are financed by providing grants and matching funds to qualifying candidates to run their campaigns. Modeled after Connecticut's successful Citizens' Election Program and public financing programs in Arizona, Maine and North Carolina, the Fair Elections Now Act would create a voluntary system where congressional candidates would limit their campaign spending to the amounts raised from small donors and matching funds from the newly created Fair Elections Fund.

"States across the country have acted as laboratories for reforms like the Fair Elections Now Act," said Congressman Larson. "Connecticut's first general election under its new system was effective and successful, with 81% of the members elected to the state legislature using the system. States have shown overwhelming success in reducing the influence of big donors. Lawmakers are able to tend to the business of their constituents rather than spending their time dialing for dollars. It is time to bring real change to Washington."

"President Obama showed us all how small donations and average Americans can make a difference in an election. With the Fair Elections Now Act, we can bring that sort of grassroots enthusiasm and involvement to our Congressional races."

Every member of the Connecticut Congressional Delegation has signed on as a co-sponsor of Congressman Larson's legislation.

"The State

of Connecticut has been a leader in campaign finance reform, and I was proud to help kick-off the debate when I was in the state legislature," said Congressman Courtney. "There is room for improvement in federal elections and Connecticut's experience is now being used to lead the discussion in Washington."

"With Congressman Larson's leadership as the Chairman of the House Democratic Caucus, I am optimistic that, as we did in Connecticut, we can make the case in Washington that it's time to change the way we finance our federal campaigns, said Congressman Murphy. "This system would not only level the playing field for candidates of lower economic status; it would also limit the influence of large contributors, corporations, and special interest groups in elections, and help restore the integrity and transparency of the entire process."

The Fair Elections Now Act has received support from respected national and local organizations including the NAACP, SEIU, League of Women Voters and most notably, Common Cause.

"Americans are tired of their elected representatives being indebted to the wealthy donors and special interests who paid for their campaigns," said Bob Edgar, President and CEO of Common Cause. "As you know in Connecticut, 'clean elections' puts elected officials in office with no strings attached, and the public's interest at the top of the agenda."

Below you will find a fact sheet about how the Fair Elections Act Now works:

-It's voluntary - no candidate for Congress is compelled to use this system.

-The Fair Elections Fund will be funded by ten percent of revenues generated through the auction of unused broadcast spectrum and is revenue neutral.

-Candidates must raise a minimum level of small individual contributions in order to qualify for the program.

-After qualifying, candidates will abide by various restrictions and disclosure requirements.

-Qualified candidates will receive an up-front grant for their primary campaigns, and if nominated, another grant for their general election campaign.

-Candidates will also receive a 4:1 match for contributions of \$100 or less from an individual; no individual may give more than \$100; that match will stop after a certain spending level is reached, but candidates may continue to raise donations of up to \$100 per individual without

a match.

-There is no overall spending limit. Candidates may continue to raise funds after they have reached the cap on their match.

-A new commission will administer the program, including the disbursement of funds and collection of reports.

-Coordinated expenditures with party organizations will be permitted up to an amount equal to a small percentage of the public grant.

-No contributions, fundraising, or bundling will be allowed from PACs.

-There will be special provisions for candidates in uncontested races (at significantly lower funding levels).

-Participating candidates could take only individual contributions of \$100 or less for their leadership PACs.

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