

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SOCIAL & ECONOMIC JUSTICE COMMISSION: 6/11/08

ISSUE	RECC	COMMENTS
<p>1. Due to questionable legality, and enforcement difficulty (particularly with regard to contributions under the reportable limit) should the geographic limitation be removed?</p> <p>1a. Alternatively, should the geographical limitation be loosened, from 10 % to a higher number (for instance 25%)?</p>	<p>NO</p> <p>YES</p>	<p>The Commission did not recommend removing this clause, but suggested waiting to see if it was challenged.</p> <p>Commissioners felt that the 10% limitation was low and could be raised to enable family, friends, and those who work or are students in Albany to contribute to a greater extent than currently possible. They did not recommend a new percentage, but felt 25% should be the maximum</p>
<p>2. Albany’s ordinance is unique in having a two-tiered contribution limit structure of \$100/\$250, based on whether voluntary spending limits are adopted by a candidate. Should the two tier system be maintained?</p> <p>2a. If so, should the amounts be changed to lower/raise the differential? For instance, \$150/\$250</p> <p>2b. If the two tier system should NOT be maintained, should the contribution limit be raised to \$250 for all, based on the limit that most cities have?</p>	<p>Further study needed</p>	<p>Overall, the Commission felt that providing incentives to limit campaign expenditures was a good goal. Although a single tier system is simpler, the Commission felt that the two tier system could be an incentive to participate in the voluntary limits. However, the question did arise as to whether the two tier system was indeed effective as an incentive system. Commissioners felt further study was in order.</p>
<p>3. Should the spending limit amount be raised from \$.50 to \$1.00 (and maintaining the CPI adjustment) to increase the voluntary limit from approximately \$6000 to \$12,000, enabling more candidates to feel comfortable with having a spending limit, but increasing the amount considered reasonable to spend on a campaign?</p>	<p>Yes, to at least \$.60 or \$.70 cents</p>	<p>A majority of Commissioners agreed that raising the expenditure limit would further encourage participation in the voluntary limits. One dissenting opinion felt that no increase was needed in the expenditure limit. Two members felt that a higher expenditure limit than \$.70 would be preferable.</p>
<p>4. Require EVERYONE to file a final Expenditure report in the week before the election, instead of just those who do not accept voluntary spending limits.</p>	<p>NO</p>	<p>Commissioners preferred to keep the incentive system of not having the final filing for those who agreed to the expenditure limit.</p>

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5. Remove the prohibition on accepting contributions from organizations. Very few other cities have this prohibition.	YES	Commissioners felt that organizations should be able to contribute to candidates within the contribution limit.
5(a) Remove contribution limits from general purpose committees, (delete section 7-3(b) and also from independent expenditures (this is currently in court anyway.)	YES	These two items are difficult to monitor and to enforce. Lawsuits around the state are currently underway. Commissioners were in favor of removing these restrictions.

**RECOMMENDATIONS THAT ARE NOT ORDINANCE RELATED**

6. Have City Clerk post all reportable information about contributions and/or expenditures on the City website.	YES	All agreed that this should be on the website
7. Recommend that civic organizations sponsor debates and that the City provide the resources to televise them on the KALB cable station and to also have them available via web streaming.	YES	All agreed that the more chances candidates have to get their message across without cost, the more people will be willing to accept expenditure limits.
8. Recommend that a separate Task Force be established, including funding for someone with expertise in this area, to spend a lengthier time assessing the issue and rewriting the ordinance.	YES	Commissioners felt that a more specialized group should be tasked with a lengthier assessment of the overall ordinance, and the many possibilities for changes. They also felt a system for public financing of campaigns should be included in this assessment.
8a. Include in the Task Force’s purview a recommendation to investigate public campaign finance issues.	YES	
8b. Include in the Task Force’s purview a recommendation to review and consider the proposed language that prevailing parties in legal actions would receive all attorney’s fees.	YES	

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9. Recommend that the City pay the \$75.00 fee for City candidates who choose voluntary limits to have their statement in the County voter pamphlet .	YES		Commissioners acknowledged that this was both an incentive for voluntary limits, and also a first step toward public financing.
10. When should each of these recommendations go into effect?	2010 ELECTION		A majority of Commissioners felt that the recommendations should go into effect in the 2010 election. One Commissioner felt that the issues that were of questionable legality (Items #1 and #5) should go into effect for the upcoming election.