



## ILLINOIS REFORM COMMISSION

Thursday, February 5, 2009

### Campaign Finance Comments from Website and Other Sources

As of Thursday, February 26, the Illinois Reform Commission has received 1039 comments, through [www.reformillinoisnow.org](http://www.reformillinoisnow.org). We have also received 173 comments via fax, phone, and regular mail. Of the comments, 232 were either logistical in nature, duplicate /"test" comments, or focused on personal concerns outside of the scope of the Commission. An additional 208 comments focused on policy concerns outside of the Commission's scope, e.g. second amendment rights and road surface conditions. (Many of these policy concerns have been forwarded to the Governor's office.)

The remaining 772 substantive comments vary in all respects. Some are short suggestions, e.g. "term limits." Some are longer comments that include several specific recommendations. Many are thoughtful and well-reasoned, but most do demonstrate a level of frustration or anger with the state government. In recent weeks, there has been an increase in non-substantive comments, including "spam" messages.

Approximately 18% of the substantive comments we have received touch on campaign finance reform. These comments expressed frustration with the disparity of funding, the use of campaign funds in pay-to-play deals, and the difficulty for outsider candidates to gain access to the ballot and voters.

Recent comments regarding campaign finance reform include calls to limit the duration of campaigns:

"I think it might be beneficial to a fatigued voter if the primary and general elections were structured to only allow for **3 months of campaigning** each." —Hoffman Estates, 2/18

The recent comments contain suggestions for contribution limits:

"Put a cap on all political donations. The state of Illinois should **cap all donations at \$2,000** per calendar year." —Evergreen Park, 2/22

"Allow citizen-only (not company or organization) **contributions of up to \$250, \$500 or \$1000**, indexed to inflation to prevent future abuse." —Geneva, 2/21

Commenters also suggest time limits on fund raising and expenditures:

“At least 80% of the campaign funds would have to be **spent within 180 days of receipt** or they would otherwise become taxable to the candidate.” —Barrington, 2/24

“There should be a **time frame for acceptance of campaign donations**. It should not be a perpetual bank account to use at a politicians whim.” —Lakewood, 2/22

Recent comments also express concern with accounting for campaign expenditures:

“If expenditures cannot be limited, then at least **require candidates to account for each expenditure and the total expenditures that have been paid from contributions.**” —  
Springfield, 2/24

Finally, commenters continued to support the idea of public financing.

“**All donated money needs to go to a state election commission.** All candidates get the same amount out of the pot. Candidates can't contribute their residue to another political campaign. They can lend themselves money, but it goes into the pot, is not tax deductible and isn't reimbursed after the election. The commission approves expenses, and the commission pays the approved candidates bills. Money left in the pot after the election goes into the treasury.” —  
Joliet, 2/24