

# Arizona Advocacy Network

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## Criticisms of Clean Elections Are Not Supported by facts

### Clean Elections is not the cause of “extremist” candidates.

Frustrated pols and pundits are fond of pointing to Clean Elections as a primary cause of Arizona’s dysfunctional state government. They claim the system has enabled the election of far right and far left legislators who are unwilling to compromise on policy matters. As Republic Columnist Bob Robb points out, *eliminating Clean Elections would not cure this problem.*

Indeed far right candidates have ousted moderate Republicans during the past three elections, but not all of those races involved public financing. The argument negates other systemic and trend-related causes that have had a far greater impact on electing extremist candidates.

### Non-competitive districts and low turnout in primaries

Year	% Turnout
1998	20
2000	24
2002	25
2004	25
2006	24
2008	23

Most of Arizona’s legislative districts are non-competitive. Voter registration numbers favor one major party resulting in most races being decided in the primaries. Primary voters tend to be passionate partisans more likely to elect ideologically pure candidates and rejecting moderates. Turnout in the primaries is perennially low; moderates can win if they turnout their voters.

### Far right turn of the Republican Party at national and state levels



During the past ten years the Republican Party has shifted to the right both nationally and in the states, most of which do not have public campaign financing. Extremists in Congress make headlines on a daily basis. Leadership of the Arizona Republican Party has been taken over by far right ideologues. (Randy Pullen over Lisa James)



Just as we see at the national level, moderates in Arizona’s Republican Party have been unable to wrest party leadership away from the far right. In the legislature, even privately funded challengers have managed to unseat moderate Republicans.

**Arizona has a long history of electing colorful candidates.**

**Legislators elected with private funds include:**



**Wes Marsh**



**Barbara Blewster**



**Jeff Groscost**



**Russell Pearce**



**Karen Johnson**



**Jean McGrath**



**Jack Harper**



**Debra Brimhall**



**Jim Cooper**

Clean Elections allows candidates to communicate their messages to voters, and sometimes voters make choices the establishment doesn't like.

In a democracy, especially one with public financing, nothing prohibits moderate candidates from challenging extremists and taking their messages to voters.

Funding alone cannot win elections, but it is necessary for a fair fight. Candidates must also have strong campaigning skills and an ability to connect with voters.

**It's misleading to call Clean Elections Funds "taxpayer money."**

Funding for Clean Elections campaigns does not come out of the General Fund; most comes from a surcharge on civil and criminal penalties and fines. The rest comes from *voluntary* tax credits and contributions.

When money in the fund exceeds projections for what campaigns will need, the extra dollars are donated to the general fund, thereby helping reduce the general fund's deficit by \$15 million a year or more.

Even if all Clean Elections Funds were turned over to the general fund, it would only amount to \$15 - \$20 million, a tiny drop in a \$3billion bucket.

**Clean Candidates can run competitive campaigns in 2010.**

Most Clean Elections candidates will receive sufficient funds to run competitive campaigns. In 2007 grants for statewide offices were increased significantly. Those changes will go into effect for the first time in the 2010 election.