

## Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Council Committee on Law & Government to hold hearings regarding campaign finance reform and public financing of municipal elections.

WHEREAS, Across the country and the Commonwealth, public participation in elections has been declining and has been demonstrated by low voter turnout and, locally, evidence of this trend has occurred in various elections including but not limited to last year's municipal election, where only 26% of the City's registered voters chose to participate in the election by voting; and

WHEREAS, A principal reason for the lack of public participation and low voter turnout is an erosion of the public's confidence in the electoral process due to the influence of special interest money in government; and

WHEREAS, In the last mayoral election, candidates spent a total of \$6.3 million; and

WHEREAS, To address this problem, various major cities and jurisdictions have enacted public financing laws and programs including but not limited to New York City, Los Angeles, Miami, San Francisco, and Suffolk County of the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Although the State of New York has some of the country's weakest campaign finance laws, New York City has been a model and leader in municipal election reform and adopted public financing of city elections in the wake of the 1986 corruption scandal where the U.S. Attorney tried and convicted a group of city officials that received lucrative benefits in exchange for an exclusive city contract; and

WHEREAS, Due to the public sentiment, former New York Mayor Ed Koch and many Democratic City Council members were anxious to distance themselves from the corruption scandal that had dominated newspaper headlines for two years and saw campaign finance reform and public financing of elections as the most visible means of demonstrating their commitment to good government; and

WHEREAS, In comparison to New York City, the current and ongoing federal corruption investigations and pay to play trials and convictions have dominated Philadelphia's public sentiment over the past few years and has contributed to a greater erosion of the public confidence in local government; and

WHEREAS, Public financing systems provide candidates with new and independent sources of funding, lessens considerate dependence on special interest money, allows candidates to spend more time discussing the issues with voters, increases opportunities for women and candidates of color, and provides the public with a stronger sense of government accountability and integrity in politics and elections; and

WHEREAS, Through these hearings, City Council will provide an opportunity for an open and public debate and dialogue regarding campaign finance reform and public financing of elections; and

WHEREAS, This public debate and dialogue will enable citizens and City officials to engage in an in-depth, several month-long discussion and legislative drafting process that will create legislation that regains and

renews public confidence in future City elections, local government, and political leadership; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That the Council Committee on Law & Government hold hearings regarding campaign finance reform and public financing of municipal elections.