
PUBLIC POLICY AND EDUCATION FUND OF NEW YORK

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Poll Finds Strong Support Among New Yorkers for Clean Elections

Zogby International did a poll of 770 likely voters in New York in early April, commissioned by the Public Policy and Education Fund of New York. The poll asked New Yorkers about a specific proposal for public financing of election campaigns in New York (the proposal is known as Clean Elections; however the name was not used in the poll). The poll also asked about New Yorkers attitude toward state legislators. The questions in the poll were not “messed;” that is, the questions were either straight-forward descriptions of the public financing proposal or balanced arguments for and against the proposal.

Major Findings:

- The poll found very strong support for the public financing proposal, with 74% in favor, including 45% strongly in favor and 22% opposed (13% strongly). Upstate, suburban and independent voters were most supportive. The text of the proposal read:

Under a new proposal, New York State candidates would no longer raise money from private sources, other than contributions of \$5 to \$100 from NY voters. Instead, each candidate would receive a set amount of money from a publicly financed election fund. Spending by candidates would be limited to the amount they receive from the fund, and they would have to follow regular financial reporting requirements.
- When given a choice between strong arguments against the proposal (“*will only lead to higher taxes and force cutbacks in important programs like education and health care; welfare for politicians; taxpayers shouldn’t be paying for fringe candidates or negative campaign ads; a waste of our tax money*”) and arguments for the proposal, voters said they agreed more with the pro-proposal arguments by margins of 22% to 34%.
- After hearing strong arguments for and against the proposal, the margin of support for the proposal increased to 79% for and 18% opposed.
- Voters are strongly supportive of:
 - Candidates agreeing to limit spending – 83% support including 59% strongly;
 - Candidates agree to limit the size of contributions – 80% support including 59% strongly;
 - Candidates receive limited and equal amount of public funds – 73% support including 56% strongly.
- Most voters (59%) believe that state legislators are not doing what is right for residents of New York.
 - Half of voters (49%) say that if the proposal were to become law it would increase their trust in state legislators. 44% say it would make no difference.
- Most voters (58%) believe that state legislators listen more to campaign contributors than to the concerns of voters in their districts.
 - Three-out-of-four voters (74%) believe that the proposal would make it more likely that state legislators put the concerns of voters before that of lobbyists and campaign contributors.